
Department of Political Affairs (DPA)

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Year of Establishment: 1992

CTITF Working Group Membership:

- Preventing and Resolving Conflict (lead)

The Department of Political Affairs is the leading United Nations Department for peacemaking and preventive diplomacy. Among its core activities, DPA monitors and assesses political developments to detect potential crises, provides electoral assistance, offers substantive and secretariat support to the Security Council, and supports the General Assembly's standing committees on the Rights of the Palestinian People and Decolonization.

Following the 2004 High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change, which identified the need for increased resources to support UN mediation efforts, DPA was restructured to include a Mediation Support Unit (MSU). Established in 2008 following approval by the General Assembly, MSU was envisioned to support UN peace processes, including relevant UN departments as well as representatives, envoys, and resident coordinators. The MSU also provides support to UN partners, including regional and subregional organizations, and states. Consequently, DPA's work in this area is closely related the first pillar of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy, to address "the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism,"⁴¹ by helping to reduce conflicts which can provide an enabling environment for terrorism.

At UN headquarters, DPA has been an instrumental party in developing a framework for an integrated UN response to terrorism. In the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Kieran Prendergast chaired the Policy Working Group on Terrorism and oversaw the development of the report, which formulated, for the first time, a comprehensive vision of how the United Nations might best contribute to efforts to combat global terrorism. With the creation of the CTITF in 2005, the working group was abolished, and in 2009, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force office was institutionalized within the Department of Political Affairs.⁴²

DPA has taken a leading role in the CTITF's Working Group on Preventing and Resolving Conflicts, which has focused on an initiative to implement the UN's 2006 Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (henceforth, Global Strategy) in Central Asia. In this effort, DPA is working closely with the United Nations Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) and key

stakeholders in the region to develop a platform to address conditions conducive to terrorism and enhance capacity building to prevent and combat terrorism at the national and regional levels. A series of meetings and workshops to discuss each pillar of the Global Strategy will inform the development of a regional action plan to be adopted by participating states.⁴³

Earlier, DPA had also taken a role in increasing awareness and understanding of the Global Strategy among member states. In 2007, one year after the General Assembly adopted the Global Strategy, DPA worked with the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to organize an international conference in Tunisia to spread understanding and commitment of the strategy, attended by more than two hundred political and religious leaders as well as experts, NGO representatives, and representatives from civil society groups.⁴⁴

Though DPA's work is not directly related to counterterrorism capacity building, it supports important initiatives that contribute to the broader objectives of the first pillar of the Global Strategy, which addresses "the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism,"⁴⁵ by enhancing states' capabilities to prevent and resolve violent conflict that may engender terrorism and violent extremism. For example, DPA holds a joint program with The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on Building National Capacity for Conflict Prevention to provide assistance to governments, political parties, and civil society. This joint program provides technical and financial resources to governments, political parties, and civil society for the development of effective tools for the peaceful settlement of disputes. Additionally, the program provides seed assistance for concrete conflict prevention initiatives on the ground. To ensure system-wide coherence in prevention, DPA convenes the Executive Committee on Peace and Security and participates in the Inter-Department Framework for Coordination on Early Warning and Preventive Action.

Additionally, DPA has created a website—UN Peacemaker—which provides assistance and guidance to negotiators and other practitioners engaged in mediation or conflict resolution. It also provides a database of peace agreements, informational and technical literature, and guidelines for managing peace processes, which can be

accessed at <http://peacemaker.unlb.org>.

The institutionalization of the CTITF Office within DPA provides greater opportunities for collaboration and information sharing between staff members in order to develop more effective approaches to implementing the Global Strategy.⁴⁶ Though operating largely as an independent unit, CTITF Office staff members are regular participants in DPA briefings and have greater access to desk officers working on countries or regions where terrorism and violent extremism may be of particular concern, and vice versa.