



Press Release

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Note to Correspondents

EXPERT FORUM ON COUNTERING NUCLEAR TERRORISM, AT UN HEADQUARTERS, TO HIGHLIGHT ENTRY INTO FORCE 7 JULY OF GLOBAL TREATY ON SUPPRESSING NUCLEAR TERRORISM

Is the international community prepared to face threats posed by nuclear terrorism? A distinguished international panel of experts will explore this theme during a forum organized by the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs at United Nations Headquarters on 18 June 2007 from 3:00 to 6:00pm in Conference Room 4.

The event is organized to highlight the entry into force of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, which received its twenty-second ratification last week, triggering the Convention's entry into force in 30 days, on 7 July. As at 11 June 2007, there are 115 signatories and 22 parties to the Convention.

The panel discussion, entitled "Nuclear Terrorism: Prevention, Security and the Counter-Terrorism Legal Framework" brings together the following experts:

Vladimir Salov, Senior Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations; Gustavo Zlauvinen, Representative of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency to the United Nations; Walter Gehr, Project Coordinator, Terrorism Prevention Branch, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; Matthew Bunn, Senior Research Associate, Project on Managing the Atom, Belfer Centre for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University; and Larry Johnson, Assistant Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, will moderate the forum.

The forum will offer a broad overview of the various challenges that nuclear terrorism poses to the international community, as well as the measures being taken to prevent its occurrence. The panellists will review issues such as:

- How effective are international legal instruments in countering nuclear terrorism?
- What are the main difficulties in implementing international counter-terrorism instruments?
- Is the international cooperative structure efficient enough and how can it be improved?
- What roles do domestic or regional considerations play in the fight against nuclear terrorism?

The Legal Counsel of the United Nations, Nicolas Michel, has stated that "nuclear terrorism is potentially one of the most serious threats to international stability -- since one single act of this nature would have widespread negative repercussions. The International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism is an important part of the legal counter-terrorism framework of the United Nations system, and its adoption two years ago represented a significant milestone in the work of the General Assembly to combat the scourge of international terrorism".

Apart from drawing attention to the nuclear terrorism Convention, the panel is being organized in preparation for this year's treaty event, which will take place between 25 and 27 September and 1 and 2 October 2007. The event will offer States the opportunity to become party to the Convention, as well as to any other treaty deposited with the Secretary-General. The panel discussion is open to all.

Background on Nuclear Terrorism Convention

The International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism was adopted by the General Assembly on 13 April 2005. The adoption of the Convention marked a significant contribution towards strengthening the international legal framework for suppressing and combating international terrorism. The Convention complements the 12 universal sectoral antiterrorism conventions and protocols existing before its adoption. Since then, three additional universal instruments have been adopted in the context of the International Maritime Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The Convention criminalizes specific, concrete acts of nuclear terrorism and is intended to prevent attacks involving a broad range of possible targets, including nuclear power plants and nuclear reactors. It also applies to threats and attempts to commit such crimes. Under the Convention, the alleged offenders must be either extradited or prosecuted. It also encourages States to cooperate in preventing terrorist attacks by sharing information and assisting each other in connection with criminal investigations and extradition proceedings. Additionally, it obliges them to make every effort to adopt appropriate measures to ensure the protection of radioactive material, taking into account relevant recommendations and functions of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The text of the Convention took seven years to negotiate. The negotiations were held in the framework of the Ad Hoc Committee (on terrorism) set up in 1996 by the General Assembly. This Ad Hoc Committee also negotiated the 1997 International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombing and the 1999 International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. The Ad Hoc Committee is currently negotiating the draft text of a comprehensive convention on terrorism.

For more information on the panel discussion please contact Tara Sarathy, Office of Legal Affairs, e-mail: sarathy@un.org, tel: 1 917 367 3509; or Janos Tisovszky, Department of Public Information, e-mail: tisovszky@un.org, tel: 1 917 367 2068.

For more information on United Nations actions to counter-terrorism, please visit the following website: www.un.org/terrorism.

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