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## **A Global Strategy for Fighting Terrorism**

*By Kofi A. Annan*

One year ago, 192 innocent people were brutally murdered in the terrorist attacks on Madrid's commuter trains. Over the past few years, thousands more have fallen victim to terrorism, in all parts of the world. Terrorism is a threat to all states and all peoples.

It is also a direct attack on the core values the United Nations stands for: the rule of law; human rights; protection of civilians; mutual respect between people of different faiths and cultures; and peaceful resolution of conflict.

So the United Nations must be at the forefront in fighting against it. What we need is a principled, comprehensive strategy, which all the world can support and implement. That is what I am now proposing, under five headings which I call the "five D's".

First, we must dissuade disaffected groups from choosing terrorism as a tactic. They choose it because they think it is effective, and that it will win them popular support. Such beliefs are the true "root cause" of terrorism. Our job is to prove them wrong.

For too long the moral authority of the United Nations has been weakened by protracted debate about what terrorism is — whether States can be guilty of it, as well as non-State groups, and whether it includes acts of resistance against foreign occupation.

It is time to end these arguments. Deliberate use of force by States against civilians is already banned by international law. And the right to resist cannot include the right to deliberately kill or maim civilians.

Let us say clearly that any action is terrorism if it is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants, with the purpose of intimidating a population, or compelling a Government or international organization to do something, or not to do something. Such a definition would have great moral force. I urge world leaders to unite behind it.

Secondly, we must deny terrorists the means to carry out their attacks. That means making it difficult for them to travel, to receive financial support, or to acquire nuclear or radiological material.

Nuclear terrorism is still often treated as science fiction. I wish it were. But unfortunately we live in a world of many hazardous materials and abundant technological know-how, while some terrorists are openly determined to inflict catastrophic casualties.

Both the Group of Eight and the UN Security Council have taken steps to eliminate hazardous materials, impose effective export controls, and plug gaps in the non-proliferation regime. President Bush's Proliferation Security Initiative is another important step. These measures must be fully enforced.

My third D is the need to deter states from supporting terrorist groups.

In the past the UN Security Council has repeatedly applied sanctions against states that harbour or assist terrorists. This firm line must be maintained and strengthened. All states must know that, if they give any kind of support to terrorists, the world will crack down on them firmly.

Fourth, we must develop the capacity of states to prevent terrorism.

Terrorists exploit weak states as havens where they can hide from arrest, and train or recruit personnel. Making all states more capable and responsible must therefore be a major part of our global counter-terrorism effort. This means promoting good governance and the rule of law, with professional police and security forces who respect human rights.

Few threats illustrate the need for this more vividly than biological terrorism. There will soon be tens of thousands of laboratories around the world capable of producing designer bugs with awesome lethal potential. And deadly infectious diseases can be spread across the world — intentionally or not — in a matter of days. The best defence against this is to strengthen public health systems, especially in poor countries where they are often deficient. The World Health Organization has done an impressive job monitoring, and responding to, outbreaks of deadly disease. But in an overwhelming outbreak — natural or man-made — local health systems will be in the front line. We need a major initiative to build them up.

Last, but far from least, my fifth D is to defend human rights and the rule of law. Terrorism is a direct attack on these core values. So we must not sacrifice them in our response. If we do, we are handing a victory to the terrorists. Upholding human rights is not merely compatible with a successful counter-terrorist strategy. It is an essential element in it.

I am asking all UN departments and agencies to play their part in carrying out this strategy. But it's the member states of the UN who must do the heavy lifting. I urge them to adopt my five-point strategy, and work together to apply it.

That is the least we owe to the victims of terrorism worldwide. In their name, let us do whatever we can to spare others from meeting their fate.

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