



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

**Statement by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov
Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism**

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**Distinguished colleagues,
Dear Colleagues,**

It is a great honour for me to address this distinguished audience.

I am pleased to be with you in my home city of Moscow, and I wish to convey to you the warmest greetings of Mr. Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations. Mr. Guterres was grateful for the invitation extended to the United Nations to attend this prestigious international Conference and wished you fruitful deliberations.

I would also like to thank the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation for bringing us together for the 7th edition of this Conference which has become an important substantive contribution to promoting international security cooperation in the face of complex and evolving challenges.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The global security is a complex mosaic of over-lapping and intertwined factors which are creating new fault lines around the world. Terrorism is among one of the most negative and dangerous results of such fault lines.

Today the fight against terror is entering a new phase. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has experienced major military setbacks in Iraq and in the Syrian Arab Republic. It has lost all its urban strongholds. Its infrastructure and military capacity have suffered devastating blows under the combined efforts of the Iraqi and Syrian governments with the support of the international community, including the Russian Federation.

Yet, we should not drop our guard and relent in our efforts. ISIL and its affiliates continue to pose a significant and evolving threat around the world, and so does Al-Qaida.

Over the last three decades, global terrorism has rapidly captured vast areas and has become an unprecedented threat to international peace, security and development.

No country is immune from this threat, and no one country, no matter how powerful, can solve the problem by itself. The scourge from terrorism transcends cultures and geographical boundaries and should not be associated with any religion, nationality or ethnic group.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Terrorism is a sophisticated threat. We need to stay at least one step ahead to anticipate, prevent and counter new attacks. Terrorists are not sitting idle. They are actively on the look-out for the next blow they can inflict, the new opportunity to outsmart us and escape our vigilance.

The military defeat of ISIL has led to the emergence of a new threat: returning or relocating foreign terrorist fighters. Many returnees are well trained and equipped to carry out new terrorist acts and strengthen and activate underground sleeper cells. Terrorists are trying to abuse new technological advances, including communication technologies, drones, and artificial intelligence. They are using social media, including encrypted communications and the dark web, to spread their “sinister expertise”, coordinate or incite supporters to carry out attacks in other countries. The next battleground against terrorism will be in the cyberspace.

Terrorist groups continue also to seek ways to acquire weapons of mass destruction. There has been progress in enhancing disarmament and non-proliferation regimes, but we must remain alert to the threat of WMD terrorism.

Yet, terrorists are ready to use whatever does the trick: vehicles, bladed weapons and the rest of it. Such attacks of course do not require special training and planning and are therefore extremely difficult to detect. Many of these attacks have been carried out in public areas to maximize casualties and instil fear.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The stakes are high and the challenges ever more complex but the international community is not starting to counter this scourge from scratch. There is a strong international legal and political framework against terrorism already in place.

The consensus UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, adopted in 2006, provides a necessary international framework, further developed in relevant Security Council resolutions on counter-terrorism. Our focus now should be on its balanced implementation.

There is a need for Member States to enhance their cooperation against terrorism at the global, regional and bilateral levels, in accordance with all their commitments and their obligations under international law.

The exchange of information, lessons learnt and good practices among law-enforcement, judicial and counter-terrorism practitioners needs to become more proactive and systematic. Operational information should be shared through relevant databases, like those of INTERPOL, and through national initiatives, such as the International Counter-Terrorism Database administrated by the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation.

UN Member States should step up international and national inter-agency cooperation to counter the financing of terrorism. Financial intelligence needs to be effectively integrated within broader counter-terrorism efforts, including investigations and prosecutions. In this regard I would like to express my appreciation for the Russian Federation, which championed the adoption of the milestone UN Security Council resolution 2199 (2015) on countering the financing of ISIL, Al-Nusrah Front, Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups. I would also like to particularly note the Russian initiative to combat the propaganda of terror on the Internet.

Besides interstate and interagency cooperation, it is important to tap fully into the potential of public-private partnerships. State authorities have the primary responsibility for counter-terrorism but engaging with industry and businesses is instrumental to counter terrorism financing, to prevent terrorists' misuse of new technologies, to protect vulnerable targets and critical infrastructure, including from cyberterrorism.

An approach focused on dismantling already existing terror networks and thwarting attacks is not enough. The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to countering terror, including to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and stem the involvement of new recruits into this criminal activity. Not only the State, but the entire society should play a responsible part in this.

We can put terrorists in jails, but we cannot put ideas in jail. We must confront terrorism on the emotional and ideological level to win hearts and minds, and in the first place - of the youth. This has become an essential component of our fight against terror – perhaps the most difficult yet most important part of our battle for ultimate victory.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations Secretary-General included countering terrorism into his top priorities. In this context he has emphasized two key themes: first – promoting broad international cooperation and second.

To translate these ideas into practice, the Secretary-General's first reform initiative was to create the Office of Counter-Terrorism, which I lead. Its task is to provide general leadership to United Nations counter-terrorism efforts.

In the context of further reform, the Secretary-General initiated in February the signing of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact. The Compact aims to further strengthen the coordination and coherence in the counter-terrorism activities of thirty-five different United Nations entities, plus INTERPOL, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the World Customs Organization.

The United Nations Secretary-General will convene an international High-Level Conference of Head of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States on 28 and 29 June to enhance international counter-terrorism cooperation. The Conference will focus on practical aspects of our efforts, including (1) sharing of information, expertise and resources; (2) addressing violent extremism when conducive to terrorism including misuse of new technologies; (3) countering the Foreign Terrorist Fighters phenomenon; and (4) role of the United Nations in promoting international cooperation.

We hope that this High-Level Conference will be attended by Member States at the level of their senior-most officials (ministers) in charge of counter-terrorism, heads of law-enforcement and intelligence agencies and national counter-terrorism coordinators, many of whom are present in this room today.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In June, Member States of the United Nations will review the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. This biennial review of the Strategy provides a good opportunity to Member States to review the global threat of terrorism anew and identify gaps in the implementation of the UN Strategy. I am positive that the upcoming discussion and its results will reinforce international consensus against terrorism and set a clear direction for international efforts in this area over the next two years. I count on the active involvement of the Russian Federation in this important and timely conversation under the auspices of the United Nations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to stress terrorism is a threat, which continues to evolve. It is not expected to vanish in the near future. There is an urgent need therefore for an adequate response from the international community to this plague of the 21st century, which threatens all countries without exception.

Only by working together, focusing on practical collaboration and assisting those Member States most affected by terrorism, will we be able to win.

I thank you for your attention.