



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

Statement of Mr. Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General Human Rights Council Side Event on Respecting Human Rights while Countering Terrorism 11:00am – 12:30pm, 11 September 2018

Madam Chair,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, I would like to thank the Swiss and Mexico Missions and OHCHR for co-organizing this side-event with the Office of Counter-Terrorism. It is an honor for me to be with you here at the Human Rights Council.

This event comes at an important time for my Office and myself. It has been slightly over a year since the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism was established in last June by the General Assembly. We are very young; only one year old. We are now taking stock internally to see how we can improve our support to Member States.

As you know, the UNOCT's core responsibilities include enhancing the coordination and coherence of the UN on counter-terrorism issues. We also deliver capacity-building assistance to Member States on their request.

UNOCT's mandate originates in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which was adopted by the General Assembly in 2006. The Strategy aims to enhance national, regional, and international counter-terrorism efforts through a balanced and comprehensive approach outlined in its four pillars. The first pillar is addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. The second pillar is countering and preventing terrorism. The third pillar is international cooperation. The fourth pillar is human rights and the rule of law, which I will be focusing on today.

The General Assembly successfully concluded its 6th Review of the Strategy this June in New York. After the review, the Secretary-General also convened the first-ever UN High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies. It was the first time in the UN history we had a "counter-terrorism week."

During the Review and the High-Level Conference, many Member states and civil society representatives stressed the importance of Pillar IV of the Strategy. They reaffirmed that effective counter-terrorism measures and protection of human rights are not conflicting goals, but complementary and mutually reinforcing.

The Global Strategy, and its subsequent review resolutions, make clear that we need to abide by the three main tenets of law - international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law. The GA resolution on the 6th Review also introduces principles such as dignity, respect, truth and justice.

These are crucial parts of the UN's efforts to implement the Strategy in a balanced and integrated manner. The UN Global Coordination Compact Working Group on Promoting and Protecting Human Rights and the Rule of Law is particularly important in this regard. I am sure my colleague Kate from OHCHR will elaborate on the work of the Group later.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism is deeply committed to implementing Pillar IV of the Strategy. Let me give you a few examples.

Firstly, UNOCT is increasing the technical assistance we provide to Member States on human rights issues. Together with OHCHR, we provide human rights training to law enforcement officers in terrorism related investigations and pretrial detention. Several Member States, including our Swiss hosts, have contributed to this important project. We count on continued support.

UNOCT is also working to promote a human-rights approach to treating children accompanying foreign terrorist fighters. We are developing a handbook to compile international human rights standards and good practices in this area. We are cooperating closely with UN agencies like OHCHR, UNODC and the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict. In two days, my Office is holding a consultative meeting in Paris to gather the views of European member states, civil society actors, UN entities and other experts on this issue.

Secondly, UNOCT has also mainstreamed human rights in our work under the other Pillars of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We are working with OHCHR to develop a human rights training module for border security officers. This is part of our border security and management programme under Pillar II,

Finally, my Office also prioritizes the important issue of victims of terrorism. Pillar IV of the Strategy emphasizes the need to promote and protect the rights of victims and survivors of terrorism.

Victims and survivors of terrorism are powerful messengers in our fight to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism. We must continue to give them a platform to speak and raise awareness of their needs.

My Office has implemented several key programmes in this area. Last month, we commemorated the first International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism. The Secretary-General Guterres marked this with a major multimedia exhibition at UNHQ in New York. Before that I travelled to Kabul and met over 100 victims of terrorism to show solidarity and support with the victims of terrorism.

UNOCT has also convened international conferences on victims' rights and recorded testimonies of victims and survivors. We have also worked to build the capacity of victims and survivors to speak out about terrorism.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Respect for human rights is a critical component of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) also recognizes this as a key priority area. Prevention is a part of a comprehensive approach to address the conditions underlying radicalization and violent extremism. The Plan also recommends that Member States consider developing their own national and regional plans of action.

Shortly after the Plan's launch, the UN and the Swiss Government convened a landmark Conference on PVE here in Geneva in April 2016. The Geneva Conference brought the international community together to share experiences and good practices and build political support for the United Nations PVE work. My Office, together with UNDP, implements a Global PVE programme designed to support regional and national efforts to develop PVE Plans of Action.

I am pleased to launch today a Reference Guide on Developing National and Regional Action Plans to Prevent Violent Extremism. The Guide was elaborated by UNOCT, with inputs from UNDP, OHCHR and other UN entities. English copies of the Guide are available here. We will also be releasing the Reference Guide in other UN official languages.

PVE is a demand-driven process. Despite political challenges, an increasing number of countries are requesting PVE assistance. We are currently more than 200 projects with other UN entities in 84 countries. We are also cooperating with the Group of Friends of PVE in New York. Member States support for PVE is crucial. As is our cooperation with other entities, such as UNDP, which brings its strong field presence around the world, multiplying our efforts.

The Reference Guide stresses the importance of a holistic, multi-disciplinary and evidence-based approach to PVE. It outlines substantive principles for action. It also offers specific examples of UN activities, to give Governments inspiration on how to adapt projects to their own national contexts. It suggests overarching principles that Member States can consider when developing their own national PVE action plans.

I hope that you will find this Guide useful. It is an important element of the Joint Global PVE Policy Programme between UNOCT and UNDP, which I mentioned before.

This strategic partnership between UNOCT and UNDP is crucial. We are combining UNOCT's policy expertise and coordinator role with UNDP's field presence in over 170 countries around the world.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to end by touching on an important issue highlighted in the Reference Guide. The Guide recommends an inclusive process to developing PVE action plans. It stressed the need to involve relevant non-governmental partners, at all different stages, from design to delivery and evaluation.

This is because civil society actors play a critical role in counter-terrorism and PVE efforts. They are part of a “whole of society” approach. We are reaching out to PVE partners, as civil society represent a bridge between communities and Governments. This is a fundamental condition to build resilient societies.

Civil society experts also have a deep reservoir of skills and experiences. The UN counter-terrorism family needs to benefit from that in a well thought-out and organized manner. In this context, I am now looking to establish a new unit within UNOCT to improve the way we engage with civil society stakeholders.

Excellencies,

UN Office of Counter-Terrorism stands ready to support your counter-terrorism and PVE efforts while ensuring national ownership of these initiative.

Thank you very much.