

**Keynote Address by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov,  
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

**Joint United Nations - Hungary Regional Conference for Central Europe on  
Prevention of Radicalization to Terrorism: Regional Policy Responses and  
Risk Mitigation**

**Budapest, 7 November 2019**

*Your Excellency, Mr. Péter Szijjártó, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary,  
Your Excellency, Mr. Crnadak, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina*

*Your Excellency, Senator Gabriela Cuevas Barron, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,*

*Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,*

Let me begin by expressing our solidarity with the victims of terrorism around the world and with all the countries that have suffered terrorist attacks.

I respectfully request all of you to kindly stand up for a minute of silence to honor the victims of terrorism.

Dear Colleagues,

I thank the Government of Hungary for co-organizing this landmark conference with the United Nations, and for the warm hospitality extended to all participants.

I would also like to commend the commitment and contribution of Hungary to strengthening international cooperation against terrorism, including through their support and close collaboration with my Office.

I am also grateful for the discussions between the United Nations and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade over the past months that have brought us to today's signing of a Host Country Agreement between the United Nations and Hungary.

The Host Country Agreement for the UN Programme Support Office when ratified will officially bring the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism into the family of UN entities present in Budapest, which includes now more than fifteen hundred UN staff members from various UN

entities, including UNICEF, UNHCR, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Health Organization, among others.

Dear colleagues,

Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations remains a pressing and evolving global challenge.

It seeks to rip apart the social fabric that binds our shared humanity.

It causes lasting damage to individuals, families, communities and countries.

And it risks destabilizing entire regions by spreading across borders.

That is why this conference is so important, with its emphasis on regional policy responses to prevent radicalization to terrorism, is so important.

The transnational nature of terrorism and violent extremism demands that we strengthen multilateral cooperation, at all levels, to tackle the common threats we face.

Through the Regional Conferences we are bringing together Member States, regional and sub-regional organizations, civil society and non-government organizations, and, women and youth groups, to help strengthen global, regional and national counter-terrorism efforts, through the exchange of innovative ideas, best practices and experiences.

Helping Member States build resilient societies and deliver meaningful results on the ground is one of our top priorities.

This is the fifth regional conference that the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism has organized with Member States to build on the momentum of the first High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States convened by the United Nations Secretary General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, in June last year.

Let me outline what this conference here in Budapest will aim to achieve, both in Central Europe and beyond.

First, I hope it leads to a renewed and sustained focus on preventing terrorist radicalization, including addressing the underlying conditions that cause young men and women to be lured by terrorism.

This includes preventing and solving conflicts, strengthening state institutions, and promoting sustainable development to tackle the inequality, lack of opportunities, exclusion and marginalization that feed despair and provide a breeding ground for recruiters.

We need to focus on enhancing national and community resilience by ensuring good governance, tackling corruption and fully respecting and advancing human rights and the rule of law.

As Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has stated “Terrorism is fundamentally the denial and destruction of human rights, and the fight against terrorism will never succeed by perpetuating denial and destruction. We must relentlessly fight terrorism to protect human rights.”

We know that preventative approaches are cost-effective and, more importantly, they work. Prevention saves lives.

So, we must ensure that prevention is at the heart of all national and regional counter-terrorism efforts, in line with the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and relevant Security Council resolutions.

The UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism also provides additional important recommendations in this regard.

Second, I hope this conference promotes the sharing of good practices and innovative solutions in countering the manipulative narratives of terrorists and violent extremists.

ISIL, Al Qaida and other terrorist groups continue to twist religion to serve their evil ends.

At the same time, violent supremacist groups and far-right terrorists are also exploiting anxieties and using the Internet as a platform to spread their divisive and dehumanizing ideas, to mobilize support, connect, radicalize and inspire new followers across borders.

I look forward to hearing how you are promoting positive narratives based on mutual respect, tolerance and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, as persuasive alternatives to the nihilistic propaganda spread by terrorists.

This is indeed a battle for the souls of people vulnerable to terrorist radicalization.

We must harness the influence and reach of technology companies, civil society and religious actors to help us rise to this challenge.

Victims of terrorism also have a key role to play.

They are powerful and credible messengers and their experiences put a human face to the devastating impact of terrorism.

We cannot succeed in the struggle against terrorism without addressing the plight and recognising the sacrifices of victims and survivors.

Third, I hope this Conference will provide an opportunity to discuss practical ways to assess and mitigate the risks posed by returning or relocating foreign terrorist fighters.

This will be the focus of session two later today.

The Addendum to the Madrid Guiding Principles, which was adopted by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee last December, thanks to excellent work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), is a useful tool to assist Member States in addressing the complex matter of returning foreign terrorist fighters.

It also provides guidance to identify individuals who demonstrate signs of terrorist radicalization, also with a gender perspective.

The Addendum highlights the need for risk assessment measures to manage those convicted of terrorism-related offences and foster their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

I hope we can have a frank and honest discussion about the challenges in repatriating foreign terrorist fighters, and their family members, from territories previously controlled by ISIL.

In April this year, the United Nations Secretary-General Guterres produced a set of key principles for the UN System regarding the protection, repatriation, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of women and children with links to terrorist groups.

We have shared these principles with Member States to help them design their own policies and measures in compliance with international law and human rights standards.

I would strongly encourage Member States to consider repatriating their women and children from detention centers in Syria and Iraq. This is utmost important.

Fourth, I hope this conference underlines the importance of adopting comprehensive, holistic and inclusive “whole-of-society” approaches to preventing and countering terrorism at the grassroots level.

This means recognising the vital role that civil society organizations play in building social cohesion and promoting tolerance.

No government or multilateral institution is able to reach as broadly or deeply into a society as our civil society partners.

I am delighted to see civil society representatives from around the world here today.

I want to pay tribute to the incredible work that they do, often in difficult and dangerous circumstances.

This conference is also an opportunity to share innovative ideas to ensure that women are at the center of our efforts to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

Their meaningful inclusion will strengthen our own responses.

We must draw on their leadership and influence and tap into their expertise and experiences. Let us not forget that misogyny often underpins violent extremism.

Fifth, I look forward to our discussion tomorrow morning on identifying concrete ways to harness the creativity, energy and power of young people to strengthen resilience against terrorism.

Young people are the main target of recruitment efforts of terrorist groups.

Many young people display extraordinary resilience in the face of adversity. They courageously face terrorism and violent extremism among their peers and in their communities.

We need to recognize their unique role and further engage and support them as meaningful partners and respected leaders.

And we must include them in the design, development and implementation of relevant strategies and programmes, as set out in the 2015 Amman Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security and Security Council resolution 2250.

Finally, I am keen to hear from you how the United Nations can enhance its counter-terrorism support to Member States.

The establishment of my Office and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact provides a clear framework and a solid platform for our joint work with Member States.

We are implementing capacity-building projects on a wide range of issues such as mitigating the threat of foreign terrorist fighters, empowering and engaging youth, countering terrorist financing and travel, supporting victims of terrorism and their families.

And we have developed strong relationships with key global and regional bodies, such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union, to enhance our practical support to the countries most affected by terrorism.

But there is always more that we can do together, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Dear Colleagues,

This brings me to my final point, which is to update you on our plans for the Second United Nations Counter-Terrorism Week, which will take place from 29 June to 2 July 2019. The Counter-Terrorism Week will be held under the overarching theme of “Building Institutional and Social Resilience to Terrorism” and will consist of three main elements.

First, the seventh biennial review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy under the leadership of the President of the General Assembly, with the concluding debate to take place on 29 June.

Second, the first-ever Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism will take place on 30 June.

This event will be a historic global gathering of Member States, civil society organizations and other key stakeholders to lift the voices of victims and strengthen our efforts to address their needs and highlight the day to day challenges they are facing.

Dear Colleagues,

To prevent terrorist radicalization at global, regional and national levels, our efforts must be holistic, predictable, well-funded, and backed by strong political will.

This conference is an important opportunity to think outside the box, develop new partnerships and strengthen multilateral counter-terrorism cooperation.

By focusing on preventing radicalization to terrorism, we are not only addressing the challenges of today but stand ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

I thank you for your attention.