



## UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

### **Statement of Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov Group of Friends on Sports for Development and Peace**

**Tuesday 22 October 2019**

Your Excellency, Ambassador Alya Al-Thani,  
Your Excellency, Ambassador Isabelle Pico,  
Dear Members of the Group of Friends on Sports and Development and Peace,  
Distinguished Guests and Fellow Panelists,

I am grateful to the State of Qatar and the Principality of Monaco for the opportunity to brief this Group of Friends on the work of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism to leverage sports to prevent and counter violent extremism.

With the High-level Week of the General Assembly behind us, we have entered in earnest a new period in our work, which will lead us to the Second United Nations Counter-Terrorism Week in July 2020.

My Office has listened carefully to the priorities of Member States raised during the General Debate. On the margins, I held bilateral meetings with many distinguished interlocutors, including Heads of State and Government. All of them confirmed that counter-terrorism and preventing violent extremism clearly remains a top priority for Member States, with the expectations that the United Nations should continue to play a leading role in fostering a multilateral response, in this regard.

Many of you emphasized the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses the conditions conducive to terrorism and tackles the spread of terrorist narratives, both online and offline.

Sports and its values have an important role to play in this regard, as was highlighted during the recent High-level Event on the power of sports to prevent and counter violent extremism, which I had the honor to co-host with the United States and Qatar, and with the contribution of the Football for Peace Foundation.

Since I assumed my position as Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism, I have taken a keen, personal interest in this topic.

Sports are extremely popular in my home country, across all ages and segments of society. Sports bring us together across borders.

The role of sports is enormous in teaching positive values, forging bonds and building bridges within and between our societies.

I strongly believe in the transformative and unifying power of sport and have highlighted this potential in the context of our counter-terrorism and prevention of violent extremism efforts in my engagements with many Member States and Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities.

Sport helps shape attitudes and behavior; it can offer an outlet and help channel energy and ambition.

It teaches rules, hard work and persistence, as well as self-confidence, collaboration, solidarity and mutual respect.

Sport can offer a sense of belonging, partnership and has the power to reach marginalized groups and individuals.

There is a long list of potential benefits that you are all too aware of as Friends of Sports for Development and Peace. Benefits which help address some of the very drivers and factors that make individuals vulnerable to terrorist radicalization and recruitment.

Terrorism and violent extremism are complex social phenomena and we know very well that a security approach alone is not enough. We need to be proactive and preventive, through multidimensional responses.

We need to apply all the tools that we have at our disposal, and this of course includes sports. We should harness the power of sport and the opportunities it offers for governments, civil society, youth organizations, the private sector and others to work together in partnership.

Excellencies, dear Colleagues,

Partnership – this is the basic method of work of my Office, and the approach we are taking in our engagement on sports and preventing and countering violent extremism.

We want to build on the experience and expertise of Member States, Global Compact partners, and non-governmental organizations.

With the generous support of Qatar and China, we will launch soon a global programme on the ‘Security of Major Sports Events’ and the ‘Promotion of Sport and its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism.’ These two global projects will start implementation at the beginning of next year. We are already at the final stages of development of this project and a number of countries did contribute to the initial draft. I think it is very important to start with the

implementation because the time is right and we need to use also this channel, this tool in order to be more effective on prevention. This is the role of the United Nations.

This three-year programme will focus on the security of sports venues which are often terrorist targets.

Our programme seeks to draw on and disseminate these global best practices. It will also support the development of strategies to use sports as a means to prevent and counter violent extremism, including through a “Global Awareness Campaign to Say No to Terrorism”, which will involve some of the world top athletes.

This programme will be implemented in cooperation with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the United Nations Interregional Criminal Justice Research Institute, and the International Centre for Sport and Security. It will also benefit from the valuable experience of the Football for Peace Foundation.

Let me close by inviting this Group of Friends, and all its individual Members, to join this partnership to harness the power of sports to address terrorism, one of the worst threats to international peace and security, sustainable development and human rights

Thank you for your attention.