



**Opening remarks by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov,
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)**

**High-level virtual event to launch five new specialized guides (modules) on the protection of
vulnerable targets against terrorist attacks**

6 September 2022, 10 a.m. (NY time)

Excellencies,
Distinguished representatives,
Dear colleagues,

I would like to warmly welcome you to this high-level virtual event to launch five new specialized guides—or modules—dedicated to the protection of vulnerable targets against terrorist attacks.

I am very pleased to share this opening session with Her Excellency, Ambassador Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations.

The development of these guides could not have been possible without the strong support of the State of Qatar, which is the main contributor to our Global Programme on Countering Terrorist Threats Against Vulnerable Targets.

I am also delighted to have my colleagues, Mr. Weixiong Chen, Acting Executive Director of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), Ms. Antonia Maria De Meo, Director of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Institute (UNICRI), and Ms. Nihal Saad, Chief of Cabinet of the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), who joined us today. Welcome dear colleagues.

Together, we have forged a strong partnership under this Global Programme on the Protection of Vulnerable Targets.

Since its launch last year, the Programme has engaged with more than 100 countries; launched a Global Network of Experts with more than 150 representatives from Member States, international and regional organizations, civil society, the private sector and academia; and undertaken 12 activities both at the policy and technical levels.

And today, we are launching five new guides that complement the “Compendium of Good Practices on Critical Infrastructure Protection” that UNOCT, CTED and INTERPOL produced in 2018, by focusing on the protection of public places or “soft targets.”

Specifically, these modules put the spotlight on international good practices to better prevent, respond, and recover from terrorist attacks against urban centres, tourism venues, religious sites, and the cross-cutting threat of unmanned aircraft systems.

And this is just the beginning. I am happy to report that the mandate of the Programme, which is implemented from our new Programme Office in Madrid, has been renewed until the end of 2024 due to its concrete results, growth potential, and increasing support from Member States.

We will continue to provide tailored assistance to support Member States’ efforts to address terrorist threats against critical infrastructure and soft targets.

In doing so, we will help to respond to the call of the General Assembly, particularly in its seventh review resolution of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, to strengthen efforts to improve the protection of vulnerable targets against terrorist attacks.

We will also support the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2341 (2017), 2396 (2017) and 2617 (2021), as well as the Counter-Terrorism Committee Madrid Guiding Principles and its 2018 Addendum.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

Only a couple of weeks ago, Al-Shabaab attacked a hotel in Mogadishu, Somalia, killing at least 21 people and wounding more than 100.

Last month, an explosion during evening prayers at a Kabul city mosque killed 21 people and injured more than 30 others. And just last week, another explosion in a mosque in the city of Herat resulted in dozens dead. And only yesterday, a terrorist attack outside the Consular Department of the Russian Embassy happened in Kabul with 10 people killed.

The terrorist massacre in Saint Francis Catholic Church in Owo, southwestern Nigeria, left nearly 50 worshippers—including children— dead last June.

Earlier this year, four people were killed in a stabbing attack near a shopping centre in the southern Israeli city of Be’er Sheva. Just two days ago, a similar attack happened in Canada.

All of these are only a few examples of how real the terrorist threat against soft targets is. A threat that transcends the rhetoric of resolutions or declarations and goes to the heart of the principles of openness, tolerance and social cohesion that our societies defend and terrorists want to destroy.

Because terrorists aim to frighten and divide us, only by working together at all levels, we can successfully address this threat.

The guides that we are launching today are a common effort.

I would like to thank all Member States that shared with us their good practices on the protection of urban centres, tourism venues, religious sites, and unmanned aircraft systems.

While we could not include all experiences, tools, and case studies in these modules, we created an online library to compile them.

I therefore invite all Member States to continue to send us their good practices so we can create a comprehensive and geographically diverse repository that will help realize the call of the General Assembly to [and I quote:] "...establish or strengthen national, regional and international partnerships with stakeholders, both public and private, as appropriate, to share information and experience in order to prevent, protect against, mitigate, investigate, respond to and recover from terrorist attacks." [End quote]

Let me conclude by wishing you a productive discussion in the expert panel session that will follow this opening, and by expressing my sincere appreciation for your continued engagement and support.

And now, I have the pleasure to give the floor to Her Excellency, Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations, to deliver her remarks.

Thank you.