



UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM
UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT)

Statement by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov
Under-Secretary-General
United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism
Executive Director, United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre
(UNCCT)

The first Steering Committee Meeting on the implementation of
joint UNOCT/UNCCT-UNODC- UNCTED programme
“Supporting the management of violent extremist prisoners and
the prevention of radicalization to violence in prisons”

online
28 September 2020, pre-recorded video statement

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,
Dear participants,

Good morning to those in Tunis and good afternoon and good evening for our colleagues joining from Europe and the other side of the Atlantic.

It is my pleasure to address you at the opening of the first meeting of the Steering Committee on the implementation of two joint initiatives: “Supporting the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and preventing radicalization to violence in prisons” and “Tawassol”.

First of all, let me thank His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Boussetta (Мухамед Бусетта) Minister of Justice, His Excellency Mr. Othman Jerandi (Отман Джеранди), Minister of Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad, and Mr. Ilyes Zalleg (Ильяс Залэг), Director of the General Committee of Prisons and Rehabilitation of Tunisia for co-hosting this event.

I would also like to thank the representatives of the European Union and the Netherlands for their generous contribution to the project on “Supporting the management of violent extremist prisoners and the prevention of radicalization to violence in prisons,” which is implemented not only in Tunisia, but also in Kazakhstan and Uganda.

I am also very proud of our partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), which illustrates the true value of an ‘All-of-UN approach’ to preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism.

Preventing radicalization inside prisons is of utmost priority. Prison officials are working on the frontlines of the fight against terrorism and extremism.

Their everyday routine work provides an opportunity to positively impact the attitudes and behavior of violent extremist offenders and may help prevent radicalization and recruitment—which are underlined as two main problems related to work in prisons in the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Security Council Resolution 2397.

Prison officials should not, however, be expected to change the behavior of violent extremist prisoners or prevent the radicalization of prisoners by themselves. They should not be alone in this important task.

Preventing and countering violent extremism requires a ‘whole-of-society’ approach. The prison service, communities and civil society organizations, media, academia and local leaders must come together and cooperate for these efforts to be successful and sustainable in the long term.

It is my hope that this will be the first of many Steering Committee meetings that will bring together representatives of all relevant government agencies and civil society organizations to create a platform for future discussions and support for the project.

I hope that these discussions will help Tunisian authorities find the best modalities for project implementation as well as opportunities for cooperation with the colleagues from Kazakhstan and Uganda.

This project not only has strategic value for Tunisia, but also for other countries which face similar challenges in dealing with the issue of deradicalization and disengagement of violent extremist prisoners. Others can learn and benefit from the work you are doing in Tunisia.

I wish the project and all of you great success and fruitful work in the coming days.

Thank you.