

Statement by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov,
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism
Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism

28 September 2020

Excellencies,

It is a pleasure to attend this second Ministerial meeting of the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism.

I would like to thank the co-chairs - Afghanistan and Spain - for their continuing dedication and vision in leading this Group.

We meet online due to COVID-19, which has shaken the foundations of our world to the core.

The full political, socioeconomic and security impact of the pandemic, and its interaction with other global challenges and trends, is still unclear.

But we know that terrorists are determined to exploit the current disruption, uncertainty and fear to further disseminate their hateful narratives, strengthen their operations, challenge state authority, raise funds and recruit new followers.

The virus is likely to act as a catalyst in the spread of terrorism by fueling grievances and inequalities, undermining social cohesion and exacerbating conflicts.

Victims of terrorism are especially vulnerable to the consequences of the pandemic.

Lockdowns have had a detrimental effect on their mental health and isolated them from loved ones.

They have struggled to get the wide-ranging support and they need to recover and heal.

And their long and painstaking fight for justice has often been further delayed.

So, today's meeting is an important opportunity to reiterate that we stand in solidarity with all victims of terrorism, during and beyond the pandemic.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

Discussions during the first Virtual Counter-Terrorism Week at the United Nations in July demonstrated that we understand that supporting victims of terrorism is a critical human rights priority, and that we know what must be done to address it.

Thanks to our common efforts, victims of terrorism are increasingly recognized as facing specific needs and challenges—and we are increasingly aware that these needs and challenges are different to those of victims of other forms of violence and serious crimes.

Last 21st of August, we held with the Group of Friends a memorable commemoration of the third International Day of Remembrance of, and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism.

In his remarks, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres called for strengthened support to victims, including to “put in place measures that uphold their rights to justice, protection, support and rehabilitation, so they can rebuild their lives.”

This Group of Friends has a critical role to play in this regard. Your efforts are vital to sustain, build on and translate into action the growing momentum at the international level to support victims of terrorism.

This Group is leading the way in strengthening international solidarity and implementing concrete measures to uphold the rights and address the needs of victims.

Secretary-General’s report on ‘Enhancement of international cooperation to assist victims of terrorism’, issued last April, stressed the importance of better and more sustained coordination and coherence to support victims.

This includes enhanced engagement with victims, civil society organizations and victims’ associations, to exchange expertise, collect data, identify gaps, and share good practices.

The report also sets out options for comprehensive national assistance plans for victims of terrorism to be voluntarily funded.

This would be a very positive and much-needed development.

I urge this forum to explore the options listed in the report.

Excellencies,

Let me conclude by saying that I look forward to seeing you all in New York next year at the first United Nations Global Congress on Victims of Terrorism.

In the months ahead, as we prepare for this landmark occasion, we must also ensure that the seventh review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy fully reflects the importance of upholding the rights and addressing the needs of victims.

You can count on us to keep victims of terrorism high in the international agenda; to ensure that our pledged solidarity translates into actions on the ground; and to help victims heal and rebuild their lives.

Thank you.