



**Statement by Mr. Raffi Gregorian**  
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**Briefing to Member States**

**29 October 2020**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Dear colleagues,

Welcome to the Second UNOCT briefing to Member States this year. Six Global Compact entities will be joining UNOCT today. After the entities, Member States will be given the opportunity to provide comments from the floor on a first come, first served basis. Due to the time constraints, we kindly request that all speakers keep their interventions within the assigned limits. We will have a hard stop of this meeting at 12:00 p.m. Participants are also encouraged to use the chat box to ask questions. Those questions which will not be addressed immediately will be given a response in writing shortly after the meeting.

Thank you for joining us for this briefing to Member States by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact.

Worldwide, COVID cases have reached 43 million sickened, and some 1.1 million people have died from COVID-19 in the nearly six months since our last briefing in May, including 64 UN staff members deployed around the world.

So I hope that you and your loved ones are in good health and remain so.

Despite the pandemic, the recent attacks in Nice, Peshawar, Kabul and other places have shown us that the global terrorist threat has not disappeared.

We have all had to quickly adapt to the 'new normal' in both our professional and personal lives.

In UNOCT, ensuring business continuity hasn't meant business as usual – we moved rapidly to shift as much of our capacity-building training online as was possible and began conducting virtual consultations and assessment visits.

Today, I want to brief you on some highlights from the last five months, including the Virtual Counter-Terrorism Week, the growth of the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Platform, the third commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, and last month's High-Level Week of the 75<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly.

But I also want to look ahead to the seventh review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the Second UN Counter-Terrorism Week in June next year.

We are keen to hear your priorities and concerns, so we will leave plenty of time for questions and brief contributions from the floor after the Compact entities finish.

First, I want to thank you for your participation in the UN Virtual Counter-Terrorism Week in July.

Over 1,000 people from 134 Member States exchanged views and expert analysis on what the COVID-19 crisis means for the global counter-terrorism community.

Being one of the first major events marking the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations, it helped sustain the momentum we have built over the last 18 months through seven Regional High-level Conferences organized in partnership with Member States.

We have circulated a summary report of the week, which is also available on our website, but I wanted to mention a few key outcomes.

First, speakers assessed that the pandemic would likely lead to more diverse terrorist threats with the possibility of attacks involving cyber disruption of critical infrastructure and the weaponization of deadly diseases.

Second, they also argued that it was more critical than ever that counter-terrorism responses fully protect and promote human rights and the rule of law.

At a time when civic space is shrinking and human rights defenders are on the backfoot, there was a strong call to ensure comprehensive engagement with civil society to help shape counter-terrorism policies and programmes at global, regional and national levels.

And third, there was a clear consensus on the need for a renewed commitment to multilateralism to prevent terrorists exploiting the social and economic impacts of COVID-19.

UNOCT will continue to do what it can to strengthen international cooperation and collective action against the global scourge of terrorism.

The launch of the [Global Counter-Terrorism Compact Platform](#) in March, ahead of schedule, has significantly boosted our work in this area.

It has become a digital gateway to the counter-terrorism efforts of the United Nations, connecting 765 focal points from all Global Compact entities and 124 Member States.

The Platform has already been visited over 37,000 times and over 1,000 documents have been uploaded.

It gives Member States access to a library of 340 reference documents, a joint calendar, a contact directory of counter-terrorism focal points, the annual report to the Secretary-General and a bi-monthly newsletter on the implementation of the Global Compact.

I encourage Member States who have not yet done so to join the Platform; we stand ready to support you in this process.

Meanwhile, the Global Compact has continued to grow - the UN Institute for Disarmament Research joined as our 43<sup>rd</sup> member earlier this year.

We also held the fifth meeting of the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact Committee in August.

We were delighted to welcome His Excellency Ambassador Djani, Permanent Representative of Indonesia and Chair of the Security Council's 1267 Sanctions Committee; and the Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism, Her Excellency Ambassador Raz, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, and His Excellency Ambassador Santos Maraver, Permanent Representative of Spain - to brief us.

The Committee discussed thematic priorities and operational adjustments needed for continued support to Member States during and after the pandemic.

It was a productive meeting that set a clear strategic direction for the Compact's work over the coming months.

August saw Under-Secretary-General Voronkov brief the Security Council on the eleventh report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL to international peace and security.

He also briefed the Council in August on the report of the Secretary-General on the linkages between terrorism and organized crime, alongside Ms. Ghada Waly, the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

And he joined Ms. Michèle Coninx, Executive Director of CTED, to brief the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee earlier this month on the strengthened collaboration between UNOCT and CTED.

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In August, the Secretary-General opened the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to Victims of Terrorism.

I would like to thank all of you who joined in and heard powerful testimonies about how the pandemic has put an additional burden on victims and survivors of terrorism, with vital services being delayed or stopped.

The event was a timely reminder that the rights and needs of victims must remain at the very top of the agenda of the international community and the United Nations.

They are why we do what we do.

If you have not yet done so, I recommend you watch the short film on remembrance which was launched during the event and can be found on our website.

The High-level Week last month was of course affected greatly by COVID-19.

We had anticipated that the focus on the pandemic would cause terrorism to slip far down the agenda during the General Debate.

But 97 Member States referred to tackling terrorism and violent extremism in the statements of their heads of states and governments.

This is slightly lower than last year, but demonstrates that countering terrorism remains one of the top priorities of Member States, even in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis.

Member States emphasized the continuing threat posed by ISIL, Al-Qaida and their affiliates.

They also expressed serious concerns about the increase in xenophobia, hate speech and mis- and dis- information, which have been stoked by the COVID-19 'infodemic', as the UN Secretary-General refers to it.

UNOCT co-organized two events during the High-level Week.

We held a high-level meeting on sports and their value as a tool to prevent violent extremism.

This was followed by a three-day Expert Group meeting where over 150 representatives from governments, international and regional organizations, sports bodies, civil society, academia and the private sector shared good practices of sports-based PCVE interventions.

We also organized a side event with our partners from the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia to highlight the Central Asian experience in repatriating women and children associated with UN-listed terrorist groups from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.

We supported the organization of the Second Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism, chaired by Afghanistan and Spain.

And Under-Secretary-General Voronkov signed two Memoranda of Understanding to formalize new partnerships in support of our capacity-building work.

One was with the Director-General of the International Air Transport Association, which will contribute to our work on countering terrorist travel, aviation security, and border security and management.

The second, with the Executive Secretary of the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law, will assist our work on prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration, and training for law enforcement officials.

We now have Memoranda of Understanding with all three institutions inspired by the Global Counterterrorism Forum – Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), Hedayah Centre of Excellence for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and the IJJ.

Mr. Voronkov met with the Permanent Representative of Qatar to mark the signing of a new Contribution Agreement for the establishment of the ‘International Hub on Behavioural Insights to Counter-Terrorism’, as a UNOCT Programme Office in Doha.

We are preparing for the launch of the International Hub later this year, which will make an important contribution to supporting the counter-terrorism efforts of governments, regional organizations and civil society.

I would like to express our appreciation to the Government of the State of Qatar for its generous contribution to the International Hub and to Ambassador Al-Thani for her personal engagement and dedicated support to strengthening collaboration with UNOCT on the deliverance of its mandate.

As Mr. Voronkov briefed you last week, he signed a Contribution Agreement with Morocco earlier this month to establish a UNOCT Programme Office in Rabat - the first in Africa - which will serve as a counter-terrorism training hub for North African and sub-Saharan African Member States.

These two new offices are part of our plan to increase our presence in the field to more effectively deliver our mandate.

You may recall we talked about this in December last year.

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Looking ahead, our attention is now firmly focused on the seventh review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

We have requested inputs from Member States to update the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Strategy, which we published in February this year. Let me take this opportunity to encourage you to provide us your submissions as soon as possible, as we are set to begin drafting the update to the report in the near future.

As we did last year, we are particularly keen to ensure that civil society organizations are fully engaged in the review process.

So we have invited them to respond to a survey by 6 November in order to fully reflect their views in the updated Secretary-General's report.

We look forward to supporting the President of the General Assembly, whichever co-facilitators he appoints, and all Member States to ensure a strong outcome and mandate for UNOCT for the next two years.

As we heard during Virtual CT Week, terrorists across the ideological spectrum are seeking to exploit the social and economic hardships caused by COVID-19. We expect this topic to be reflected in the debate next year.



Neo-Nazis, white supremacists, and other hate groups that use violence are stirring up divisions online and offline in the wake of the virus and global equality protests following the killing of George Floyd.

The Global Counterterrorism Forum and other multilateral networks have highlighted how the threat of racially- and ethnically-motivated violent extremism and terrorism have spread and become increasingly transnational. Other groups have taken up the issue as well.

However, differing views remain on how to delineate the scope of the phenomenon and on terminology.

I wanted to reassure you that the United Nations is seized of this issue and is considering how best it can support Member States address this threat upon request and within existing mandates.

We are also responding to calls from Member States to ensure that counter-terrorism responses fully protect and promote human rights and the rule of law.

As Under-Secretary-General Voronkov announced at the end of Virtual CT Week, we will organize a Regional High-level Conference on Human Rights, Civil Society and Counter-Terrorism in Malaga in spring next year, with the support of the host nation -- Government of Spain.

This conference will be an opportunity for Member States and civil society groups to share practical experiences and good practices of integrating counter-terrorism approaches with human rights protections.

Every session of the conference will be open to civil society and every panel will include representatives from civil society and local voices from the field.

I wanted to confirm that the Second UN Counter-Terrorism Week will take place in June 2021 to coincide with the biennial review of the Strategy.

It will include the Second High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States and the inaugural Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, dear colleagues,

2021 will be a year of milestones: the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11, Security Council resolution 1373 and the establishment of its Counter-Terrorism Committee.

It is also the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre.

It will be an opportunity to strengthen our unity and solidarity to fight terrorism as we seek to build back better after the pandemic.

I would like to sincerely thank all our generous donors, especially the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Qatar, for their tremendous support and flexibility in these difficult times.

We are always looking to learn lessons and improve the way we work.

That is why we asked KPMG to undertake an independent evaluation of the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre, at the suggestion of the Advisory Board Chair.

KPMG's evaluation confirmed that the General Assembly's decision to create UNOCT has helped lift up UNCCT's profile and performance. The report makes recommendations on how to improve performance and deliver real, measurable impact to beneficiary states by building on the management processes UNOCT instituted over the past 18 months. We will extend a culture of results and excellence across all our capacity-building and technical assistance work, informed by CTED recommendations, and imbued with the values of the UN Charter, and the guidance of relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

We are now developing an Action Plan to implement many of these recommendations and we will share further information with you in due course.

Thank you.