



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

Remarks for Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General, UNOCT High-Level meeting on Sports Values for Preventing Violent Extremism

18 September 2020 – 10:15

Excellencies, distinguished guests, colleagues, and friends,

First of all, let me thank you for your participation in this event.

As all of you know, the United Nations is marking its 75th anniversary these days.

The values embedded in the United Nations Charter in 1945 aimed to make the world a better place for all.

As a part of Member States' efforts to realise this goal, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) was established, recognizing the importance of countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism in our common endeavour for a peaceful world.

There are few allies as powerful and effective to achieve this goal than sport and its values. Sport is a synonym of tolerance, respect, honesty and teamwork.

It is for this reason that terrorist groups have historically attempted and continue to strike sporting events. Most recently, the attacks against the Sri Lankan cricket team in March 2009 and the bombing of the Boston Marathon in April 2013, among other attacks and foiled plots, are stark reminders of this reality.

Some of you here have performed at the highest levels of sport, some have managed outstanding athletes, others have helped bring sports to all, and many of us, like me, are fans!

But we all know that sport and sporting events play a significant role in addressing and preventing violent extremism by empowering youth, showcasing the importance of gender equality, and facilitating integration and community resilience.

In today's particularly volatile world, sport is a critical shelter for young and vulnerable people.

Sport helps children and teenagers across the globe to build the psychological and emotional strength to be better, more tolerant and respectful citizens. Sport equips them with the right tools to resist terrorist propaganda.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to open this High-Level meeting, which reflects the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism commitment to actively engage on the promotion of sport and its values to prevent violent extremism.

And I am very proud to do so in partnership with our good friends and colleagues from the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and the International Centre for Sport Security.

I truly appreciate the generous contributions from the State of Qatar, the People's Republic of China, and the Republic of Korea which have made our programme, including today's event, possible.

Let me conclude by encouraging all of you to actively contribute to the International Expert Group Meeting that my Office will host from Monday to Wednesday next week.

Defeating terrorism and violent extremism is a marathon. Let's join forces to further enhance our determination to cross the finish line.

Thank you.