



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

**Opening statement by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov,  
Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism and  
UNCCT Executive Director**

**21<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the UNCCT Advisory Board  
27 October 2020**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear colleagues,

Welcome to this second virtual UNCCT Advisory Board meeting. I hope you, your families and your staff are all safe and healthy despite these trying times.

I am pleased to inform you that UNCCT staff continue to do well while rising to the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. While many have had to work from their small apartments, taking care of kids that cannot go to school, and while we all miss the daily engagement with colleagues, we continued to work and deliver impactful capacity-building assistance to requesting Member States during the past few months.

My colleagues will brief you shortly on some of the main activities of UNCCT since we last met, but first let me outline some of the key results over the past two quarters.

In this period, we have delivered 28 outreach events, 21 workshops, 17 expert meetings, and one virtual scoping mission. More than one thousand and a half individuals from 172 countries have participated in UNCCT's workshops.

The third quarter showed a significant increase in the number of activities organized by UNCCT compared to the second quarter— a testament to the way used to adjust to the COVID-19 situation and get ready to continue delivering on its programmes.

We are currently finalizing the quarterly report for the period July-September, which we will share with you soon.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear colleagues,

On 9 October I received KPMG's final report of its evaluation of the UNCCT 5-Year Programme, which was shared with you on 14 October.

I want to reiterate my appreciation to our Chair, the distinguished Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, His Excellency Abdallah Al-Mouallimi, for his proposal to undertake this evaluation.

I also want to thank all the Advisory Board members who took the time to speak with the KPMG consultants about your experiences with UNCCT. I know this added tremendous insight that KPMG was able to draw on in making its recommendations. I was pleased to see that the vast majority of you have an overall positive perception of the Centre's contribution to the implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

I hope you have had a chance to study the report as well as the attached management response. I would like to provide some initial thoughts on the findings as well as some details on the envisaged way forward in response to the recommendations.

Let me begin by highlighting the overall positive result of the evaluation: across the evaluation criteria, the Centre has performed in a satisfactory manner. Stakeholders – including beneficiaries and implementing partners – had the perception or experiences of positive outcomes from our projects. KPMG also noted positive trends in the Centre's ability to work with other parts of the UN and external partners.

I was also pleased to see the finding that UNCCT has benefitted from the transfer to UNOCT, becoming an integral part of the Office. The report stated that UNCCT's performance has improved since this transfer. This has been one of my key objectives since assuming office as both Under-Secretary-General of UNOCT and Executive Director of UNCCT in 2017. The evaluation stresses the value of UNOCT's leadership and resources to the improved integration of UNCCT into the UN counter-terrorism architecture.

Let me just recall that this evaluation follows the OIOS evaluation in 2018. Both were overwhelmingly positive, without no one critical remark, while also providing concrete recommendations for improvements. By the way, despite very young age of UNOCT – only three years old – we have already been audited internally and evaluated externally. I think it is a unique situation for the UN system.

The majority of the 16 recommendations relate to programmatic issues and the need to develop a 'results culture.' I am taking immediate steps to respond to some of the recommendations in this regard, including by improving knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation and updating our standard operating procedures.

I will return to the development of our new Strategic Programme Framework in a moment, but we are already ensuring that it will be a vehicle to advance a results culture.

Structurally, KPMG recommends the capacity-building work of UNOCT to be consolidated in UNCCT. KPMG also made some suggestions related to our UNOCT Programme Review Board and organizational arrangements for monitoring and evaluation.

While I agree in principle with these recommendations, the current structure was the result of a deliberate change management process that took time, so altering it further will require careful consideration of UN administrative, financial and regulatory requirements as well as appropriate understanding of stakeholders, including main donors of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. I therefore intend to use the time leading to the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy review to undertake consultations with Member States on how best to implement these recommendations. Any step forward in implementation of the recommendations shouldn't put at a risk the current operational and financial sustainability of the Office.

In the meantime, I have asked Mr. Mauro Miedico—who is serving as UNCCT's Deputy Director *ad interim*, while Mr. Steven Siqueira is on loan to DPPA to support the establishment of UNITAMS in Sudan—to ensure that the activities of our Special Projects and Innovation Branch (SPIB) are closely coordinated with those of UNCCT.

While there are no specific recommendations in terms of the further development of UNCCT as a Centre of Excellence, KPMG does provide a so-called 'Roadmap to Excellence', which suggests focusing on the achievement of 'excellence', including through the effective response to their recommendations.

It is one of the few areas where I respectfully disagree with KPMG as I do not see an inherent contradiction between continuing to improve, which we will, and the fact that UNCCT is already a Centre of Excellence in many fields. UNCCT is already recognized as a leader in areas such as support of victims of terrorism, preventing and countering violent extremism, border management, cybersecurity, strategic communications, strategy development and countering the financing of terrorism.

UNCCT is in high demand by Member States seeking technical assistance and its staff are frequently invited as expert speakers at major international conferences, raising the profile of the Center.

I believe Ambassador Al-Mouallimi and I are in agreement and will continue working together towards further positioning UNCCT as a Centre of Excellence.

Finally, you will have seen that there are some political recommendations that to some extent lie outside my control as UNOCT Under-Secretary-General and UNCCT Executive Director such as the recommendation to increase UNOCT's regular budget funding. Your views as Advisory Board members will be critical in determining in what way we can implement these indisputable recommendations.

Let me conclude this part with a note on one of the key take-aways from the evaluation. As we discussed in our last meeting, instilling a results culture requires that we can measure the success of our work in the beneficiary countries. This means engaging with these countries to determine if

the desired outcomes were achieved. We need to move from our current system of self-assessing if UNCCT did its work well to a system where we can also assess the contribution of our work to enhanced efforts to counter terrorism and prevent and counter violent extremism of a Member State.

In a nutshell, we should not only ask if our trainings took place and the participants were satisfied, but also if they learned something useful, and are actually using the knowledge acquired and the competencies developed to counter and prevent terrorism in an improved manner.

KPMG also recommends that human rights and gender mainstreaming work should be funded through the regular budget. While I fully support this recommendation, especially as we continue to see that a new UNCCT funding is hard-earmarked for specific programmes, the next urgent need for regular budget funding is for senior management positions, which can help make programming dollars go further. We will also need regular or new un-earmarked funding to continue supporting and expanding the monitoring and evaluation functions.

I will continue to consult with Ambassador Al-Mouallimi on the way forward in responding to these recommendations in a considered and thoughtful manner. I have asked my Deputy, Mr. Raffi Gregorian, to oversee the action plan to implement the management response to the KPMG recommendations, making sure that this is aligned with the development of whole of the Office, not only UNCCT, strategic plan.

Excellencies,

At our last meeting I had the opportunity to present the draft outline of UNCCT's new Strategic Programme Framework (SPF), which will follow the current UNCCT 5-Year Programme. I am grateful for the inputs you provided at that time.

As mentioned, the Strategic Programme Framework will take into account many of KPMG's recommendations. At the same time, we need to ensure a full consultation with relevant stakeholders, including through the review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

I have therefore proposed to the Chair that we consider a 6-7 month roll-over of the current 5-Year UNCCT Programme, allowing ourselves the necessary time for the required consultations as well as the opportunity to ensure that the final Strategic Programme Framework reflects the outcomes of the review and the next UN Counter-Terrorism Week.

Ambassador Al-Mouallimi and I have agreed that we could present a draft Strategic Programme Framework at the forthcoming high-level Advisory Board meeting, tentatively scheduled for early April in Saudi Arabia, for consultation with the Board, and then finalize it with your input and that of other Member States immediately after the General Assembly review and the UN Counter-Terrorism week.

Given the transition that I have implemented over the past several years to focus on larger thematic programmes— such as victims of terrorism, countering the financing of terrorism and border security, I do not believe that the roll-over will have a negative impact on beneficiary Member States.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me now turn to the important aspect of visibility, as my last point.

Since we last met, Ambassador Al-Mouallimi and I launched the Virtual UNCCT Expo, which was promoted extensively throughout the Virtual CT Week in early July. I want to again thank those of you who took part in this event.

The Expo was a tremendous success with more than 4,000 website visits and nearly 200,000 video views. It was also mentioned in more than 20 press articles around the globe. While the formal Expo period has ended, we have maintained and translated the website into the six UN official languages, so if you have not had a chance to visit it, I would strongly encourage you to do so. My colleagues will share the link in the chat.

The Expo was a highly innovative approach to user engagement and expanded visibility featuring videos, animations, games, interactive maps, and simulations. We are now integrating these products in our work and also translating many of them for wider use.

I would like to end by showing you the UNCCT Expo introduction video, but I should caution that we have found that Microsoft Teams is not always the best programme for videos. So, I hope you forgive us if we need to cut the video short.

After the video, I will ask Mr. Miedico, who is backstopping the Director of UNCCT, Dr. Khan, to provide a more detailed briefing on the work of the Centre in the last two quarters and on the findings and recommendations of the KPMG report.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.