



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

**Signing of the Memorandum of Agreement between the United Nations Counter-Terrorism
Centre (UNCCT) and Etidal**

1 April 2021

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Dear Colleagues,

It is my great honour to join you today in signing the Memorandum of Understanding between Etidal and the United Nations Counter Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) in the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT). I recall with fondness my visit to the Etidal Centre in Riyadh, hosted by Dr. Al-Shammari in September 2019, where it became clear that our respective Centres should join forces in our global work to confront and combat extremist ideology and promote peaceful and tolerant societies. I would like to thank Dr. Al-Shammari for showing the work of Etidal and his warm hospitality.

I would also like to thank His Excellency Ambassador Abdullah Al-Muallimi, Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations and Chair of the UNCCT Advisory Board, for his strong personal support in establishing this partnership between our two Centers of Excellence.

Etidal plays a significant role in the international community's efforts to counter terrorism through its focus on combatting violent extremist ideology. Understanding not only what terrorists are communicating, but how, to whom and why is key to effective counteraction.

Etidal takes a leading approach in tackling terrorist narratives through an innovative combination of technology and multifaceted research.

Building global capacities in counter and alternative narratives is also a key focus of my Office and is an important aspect of the direct support to Member States on implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Security Council resolution 2354 (2017).

One of the key programmes of UNCCT, the Global Programme to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism, includes significant capacity building and technical assistance to Member State governments, regional organisations and civil society to use strategic communication as a tool for prevention. UNCCT works globally to build the skills of government officials on digital resilience and communication and empowerment of young women and men, including young religious leaders, to design and deliver PCVE communication campaigns, enabling them to counter terrorist narratives in their own social networks.



The Memorandum of Understanding between UNCCT and Etidal marks the start of our plan to develop a sustainable, practical partnership between our two organisations.

It leverages our respective comparative advantages in technology, analysis and global capacity building and allows UNCCT and Etidal to find synergies in our work as Centres of Excellence in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, to share good practices in combatting the spread of violent extremist ideology.

I very much appreciate the active participation of Etidal in the first meeting of Centres of Excellence that UNCCT convened last November, and I look forward to its continued engagement with this Forum. This is very important and I hope to work with Etidal to develop this.

Dear Colleagues,

Terrorists and violent extremists have taken advantage of the way the world has changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The international community is faced with new and emerging challenges to counter violent extremism both online and offline.

We have seen terrorists use old and new social media, messaging and gaming platforms to target vulnerable audiences, taking advantage of people, and especially the young, who are spending significantly more time online due to the lockdown and stay at home orders.

We must remain agile in understanding and combatting violent extremist and terrorist ideologies as they continue to evolve. This partnership between UNCCT and Etidal is an important step in addressing the spread of violent extremist discourses globally, and denying terrorists a platform to spread their hateful ideology.

I look forward to a fruitful, practical partnership that will enhance the effectiveness of the work of UNCCT and Etidal as a key line of global defense against the spread of violent extremist ideologies.

I thank you for your attention.