



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

Statement of the Deputy Under-Secretary General for UNOCT

Mr. Raffi Gregorian on

2022 International Women's Day

8 March 2022

"Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow"

Today we celebrate International Women's Day. This year's global theme recognizes the contribution of women and girls around the world, who are leading the charge on climate change adaptation, mitigation and response, to build a more sustainable future. It is aligned with the global topic defined by the Commission on the Status of Women: *"Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes"*.

While climate change is not in and of itself a direct cause of terrorism or violent extremism, terrorism often adds to the misery of countries suffering from climate change, especially those in the Sahel, the Middle East, and South Africa. In such places terrorist and violent extremist groups seek to exploit climate-related vulnerabilities to manipulate local tensions and recruit or impress new members into their ranks.

We know that in those same countries women and girls are disproportionately affected by climate change, as it increases inequalities and fuels gender-based violence. According to UNDP, around eighty per cent of the displaced by the climate crisis are women and children. Similarly, thousands of people, predominantly women and children, are displaced due to threats posed by terrorist groups. In most cases, terrorist groups, whose ideologies include misogyny as a common feature, often directly target women and girls by using sexual violence and/or by limiting their rights and access to services and resources.

Despite being disproportionately affected by climate change and terrorist violence, women are largely left out of the decision-making processes that shape their governments' responses. That is both an affront to the UN Charter and its up-front promise of equality for men and women, but

it also makes for sub-optimal policy. That is why UN Member States should ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the development and implementation of strategies, policies and action plans to address the effects of climate change, as well as efforts to prevent and counter-terrorism. Effective fight against terrorism and addressing the negative effects of climate change both require sustained integration of gender perspectives, as not to further the existing gendered impacts and inequalities.

In the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, we are committed to gender mainstreaming across all our programmes, policies and activities. To turn this commitment into practice, last year, UNOCT adopted the Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Action Plan, which will guide UNOCT's direction and strategy for mainstreaming gender equality and the empowerment of women throughout its activities. I am also proud to announce that on 1 January, UNOCT created a new Human Rights and Gender Section. This section reinforces our commitment to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in a human-rights compliant and gender-responsive manner.

This year, UNOCT plans to further step-up gender mainstreaming efforts. UNOCT will establish a Global Gender Programme, which will include outcomes that support an increase in the participation of women peacebuilders, women human rights defenders and women-led civil society in the design and implementation policies and programmes for preventing and countering violent extremism.

We will also launch an online Gender and Identities Factors Platform, which will serve as the knowledge hub for gender and intersectionality issues in counter-terrorism and preventing and countering violent extremism.

Finally, one of the pilot initiatives within UNOCT's Global Prevention of Violent Extremism Programme will be dedicated to exploring the nexus between climate change and violent extremism.

On this International Women's Day, UNOCT reiterates its commitment to strengthen its efforts to furthering gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and to continue integrating gender considerations at the core of our programmes and policies.