



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

(Pre-recorded statement)

Opening Remarks by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov,

Under-Secretary-General

United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism

**Regional challenges, global priorities: a strategic partnership with
Africa to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism**

9 March 2022, Nairobi, Kenya

Your Excellency, Dr. Fred Matiang'i, Cabinet Secretary of the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government of the Republic of Kenya,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

I am honoured to be speaking today alongside our guest of honour, Cabinet Secretary Matiang'i, in launching the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism Programme Office in Nairobi.

Let me begin by thanking the Government of Kenya for its close collaboration with UNOCT and for hosting our Programme Office, which is another mark of its commitment to multilateral counter-terrorism cooperation.

The last time the Cabinet Secretary and I were together was during the 2019 African Regional High-level Conference on Counter-Terrorism and the Prevention of Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism, convened by Secretary-General António Guterres who aptly said that to “prevent violent extremism in Africa and to fight effectively terrorism in Africa is not only a matter of interest for the Africans, it's a matter of global security.”

This newly established Programme Office is therefore a key part of a broader initiative to give new momentum to multilateral cooperation to address the evolving threat of terrorism and violent extremism in eastern Africa.

Kenya's political commitment – as illustrated by the presence of Cabinet Secretary Matiang'i here today – has been instrumental in UNOCT being able to finally realize the launch of its Nairobi office, despite the obstacles presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Africa remains a priority for the Secretary-General and my Office.

The expansion of terrorist groups in many sub-regions of Africa has become increasingly worrisome, especially with Al-Shabaab posing a protracted threat to Somalia and its Eastern African neighbors.

While Member States have the primary responsibility for tackling terrorism and protecting their citizens, it is in everyone's interest to strengthen African-led and African-owned counter-terrorism efforts.

The increase in the frequency and lethality of terrorist attacks across the continent, and specifically in East Africa, shows that much more needs to be done to address terrorist threats and its root causes.

We know that resilient communities are a key to stability.

We can contribute through additional programmatic activities and technical support to prevent and counter violent extremism in communities and with populations most vulnerable to infiltration, by supporting law enforcement teams, by protecting civilian targets vulnerable to attack, and by sharing and building on lessons learned through south-south cooperation.

During the United Nations second Counter-Terrorism Week held in New York in June 2021, a number of Member States highlighted the importance of international support for the efforts of African countries and regional organizations to prevent and counter terrorism, and address the interplay of terrorism with conflict, organized crime, governance challenges, and development gaps.

In the resulting General Assembly resolution on the Seventh Review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, Member States agreed by consensus on the need to support capacity-building efforts of African countries and regional partners, a theme which was echoed during the General Debate of the 76th Session of the General Assembly.

UNOCT continues to work with regional organizations such as the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Southern African Development Community and the East African Community. Our presence on the ground in East Africa will facilitate this work.

We recognize that no State or region, big or small, can effectively tackle the threat of terrorism alone. With Member States in the lead, the United Nations and other multilateral, regional and subregional organizations can contribute to a strong, networked response.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a wake-up call on the need for whole-of-society efforts within and between countries to recover better together, and an opportunity for Member States to make a strategic investment in prevention and resilience.

Preventing and countering violent extremism must include everyone to ensure that we leave no one behind.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I am committed to strengthening our collaboration with African Member States.

It is my intention that the Nairobi Programme Office will leverage the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact to achieve this goal. We will work closely with relevant UN entities to facilitate an “all-of-UN” approach in supporting the region’s efforts to prevent, counter and respond to terrorism and violent extremism.

This new office will also enable us to draw on our global programmes more effectively to complement the work of Compact partners when Member States in the region request our support, in line with our respective mandates and comparative advantage.

We are taking a regional approach because we know that terrorism does not respect borders.

We have seen over the years, that the cross-border threat posed by violent extremism in the region requires a coordinated and collaborative response.

Recent history has shown that while terrorist groups can start out in one country, too often they cross national boundaries and become regional threats.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I am confident that the Programme Office in Nairobi will make an important contribution to countering terrorism in Eastern African and beyond, by sharing critical information, good practices and lessons learned in a more proactive way between countries to build trust, knowledge and institutional capacities.

But this is only made possible as a result of the ongoing support of the entire community here today.

I would like to sincerely thank our 35 donors for their trust in UNOCT, in particular the support provided by the United Nations Peace and Development Fund (UNPDF) funded with a generous contribution from the People’s Republic of China. The UNPDF is the 4th largest donor to UNOCT with a total contribution of 7.9 million dollars, out of which almost 900,000 dollars are dedicated to the UNOCT Programme Office in Nairobi.

I am also grateful to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Qatar, whose generous contributions have accounted for 71 per cent of the total of received funds since the creation of

the Trust Fund for Counter-Terrorism, and the European Union as a major supporter of several of our flagship programmes.

I am deeply thankful to the Government of Kenya for its steadfast commitment to supporting UNOCT's work in the region. I would also like to thank Ambassador Kimani, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the UN, for all his support.

Finally, I would also like to thank all Member States, regional bodies, the 43 UN Global Coordination Compact entities, and all the partners that have enabled coordinated and coherent common action in the field of counter-terrorism, for impactful results on the ground.

Let us continue to build these relationships through our new UNOCT Programme Office in Nairobi.

I thank you all.