



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

Opening Remarks by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Office of Counter- Terrorism (UNOCT)

Global Youth Town Hall Doha, State of Qatar 29 March 2022

Excellencies,
Dear friends,

I would like to welcome all speakers and participants joining us in person and virtually for this Global Youth Town Hall organized by our behavioural insights hub based here in Doha.

I thank Hamad Bin Khalifa University for hosting us and extend my appreciation to Dr. Michael J. Benedik, Provost, and Dr. Leslie A. Pal, Founding Dean of the College of Public Policy, for their hospitality.

I have the pleasure to open the event together with Dr. Majed Al-Ansari, Advisor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I am delighted to be joined by His Excellency Ambassador Agustín Santos Maraver, Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations.

We are living in challenging and unpredictable times. Geopolitical tensions are growing expeditiously.

A raging infodemic of misinformation is contributing to a global breakdown of trust and truth. Growing inequality is threatening social cohesion, stability and progress. Human rights and fundamental freedoms are under assault.

COVID-19 has taken more than six million lives and sickened hundreds of millions of people while efforts meant to control its spread have damaged economies and alienated and polarized societies.

The climate crisis threatens our very existence.

On top of all this strife are terrorists who thrive on misery, turmoil, intolerance and fear. They exploit fragility, commit wanton violence, derail development, and assault the values and principles of the United Nations Charter.

Indeed, the international community has made progress against terrorism. Da'esh was territorially defeated, and its leadership decimated. Al-Qaida also suffered serious setbacks. Hundreds of plots have been foiled and the perpetrators sent to prison.

Despite these successes, Da'esh, Al-Qaida and their regional affiliates have intensified their activities in several geographical areas, including in parts of Africa, while seeking to gain strategic high ground in Afghanistan and reconstitute an external operations capability.

Terrorism based on xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief, has also re-emerged and grown in various parts of the world.

Moreover, there are increasing concerns over terrorist presence in cyber space and the misuse of new technologies for terrorist purposes.

Every day, terrorists try in person and online to mislead, deceive, groom and recruit new members to their ranks, focusing most of their efforts on young people.

While some succumb to these efforts, most do not. This brings to question the inflection points in a person's choices that lead some to go astray while others stay on the path.

We need to learn more about both the risk factors that make someone susceptible to terrorist narratives as well as the protective factors that support resilience against them.

That is why we launched the International Hub on Behavioural Insights to Counter Terrorism as a United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism Programme Office in Doha.

Behavioural insights, by drawing on diverse disciplines, can help us better understand the ideological, psychological and social factors contributing to radicalization and design interventions to prevent radicalization both online and offline.

It can show us why some people, young and old, fall prey to radicalization, and even more importantly, why most people do not, and instead reject terrorism categorically.

Every day, we see young women and men demonstrate their resolve to live on a peaceful planet with the courage to stand up against intolerance, hate, and terrorism.

We also know anything that is intended for youth that does not involve them will never achieve the desired results. That is why youth inclusion is the imperative of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism Youth Engagement and Empowerment Programme.

Our goal for this townhall is therefore to learn from each other by sharing our experiences and perspectives and to consider some of the ways that youth can help us work towards our goal of a future without terrorism.

Thank you.