



Global Programme to Counter Terrorist Threats Against Vulnerable Targets
**HIGH-LEVEL LAUNCH EVENT OF FIVE THEMATIC MODULES TO PROTECT
VULNERABLE TARGETS AGAINST TERRORIST ATTACKS**

Tuesday, 6 September 2022
10-11:45 AM EST-New York (4-5:45 PM Turin time)

Opening Remarks by Ms. Antonia Marie De Meo, Director, UNICRI

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues,

On behalf of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), it is a pleasure to join you at this launch of the thematic modules, part of the *Global Programme on countering terrorist threats against vulnerable targets*.

I'd like to extend my warm appreciation to my fellow speakers:

- H.E. Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations;
- Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT);
- Mr. Weixiong Chen, Acting Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)
- Ms. Nihal Saad, Chief of Cabinet and Spokesperson for the High Representative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.

I also welcome all the expert panel members and representatives of Member States, civil society, the private sector, and UN Global Counter-Terrorism Compact entities.

As leaders and members of the global community, we have a vested interest in ensuring that vulnerable targets are kept safe and secure. After all, these “soft” targets are, by their very nature, crowded public places where ordinary people go about their daily lives — from public squares and pedestrian areas to outdoor markets, shopping malls, concert halls, and museums.

Potential attacks against these soft targets have become increasingly attractive to terrorist organizations because the attacks can be carried out with minimal resources and little to no complex planning. This is frightening and demands our attention. It means that any public place can become a terrorist target, and anyone can become a victim by being “in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

While this vulnerability makes anticipating terrorist attacks extremely challenging, it also underscores the importance of developing effective safeguards and mitigating security risks.

As members of the Global Programme, we have a responsibility to ensure that Member States are equipped to develop and implement effective strategies to protect vulnerable targets and their populations. The Global Programme has developed guidance and practical solutions that easily can be adapted to a range of national contexts and security situations. The guidance is organized around the five thematic modules we are launching today. They include an introduction to the protection of “soft” targets, as well as modules on the protection of touristic venues, religious sites, and urban centers, and the threats posed by unmanned aircraft systems (UAS).

We have all contributed to these modules with our respective expertise and experience. I applaud UNOCT for coordinating this collective effort through the Global Programme. UNICRI is thrilled to be a key partner in this initiative! Such work is our *raison d’être* as the United Nation’s only research and training institute with expertise in the areas of crime, justice, and security.

The five modules build on existing good practices for the protection of critical infrastructure by focusing specifically on “soft” targets and their unique requirements vis-à-vis terrorist attacks. They present case studies, good practices, and action-oriented tools, which I am certain will be useful to policymakers and practitioners, in government and civil society alike.

I am particularly pleased that the modules incorporate principles and policies UNICRI has developed through its programmes and partnerships. These include UNICRI’s expertise in effective tourism security, developed with partners such as the Organization of American States, as well as in security of major sporting events, developed through our close partnership with UNOCT and the Global Sports Programme. The modules also draw on UNICRI’s 20-year history developing counterterrorism and security policies for major events and tourist destinations. Together, our collective efforts and expertise enhance the capacity of Member States to better protect vulnerable sites around the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please allow me now to highlight five key elements of the principles and policies reflected in the modules:

First and foremost, security planning and response must be holistic and integrated, taking into account the diverse perspectives of both public and private stakeholders. This must also include effective communication, which is essential to building and maintaining key stakeholder relationships and ensuring that the public receives accurate and trustworthy information in the event of an emergency.

Secondly, effective, integrated security planning must include gender and human rights considerations. A gender-sensitive perspective and genuine focus on gender equity and

human rights contributes to a more comprehensive, inclusive, and, ultimately, effective security plan for everyone.

Thirdly, effective, integrated security planning must always involve local communities and ensure that they benefit from improved security, along with tourist sites. Community engagement and community policing increase reciprocal respect, encourage intelligence exchanges, and create tourist destinations that are more resilient to crime and public disorder.

Fourthly, effective security planning and response must always consider improved and efficient public services, starting with public transportation and health. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted that public safety and public health are interrelated. And when it comes to the protection of vulnerable targets, this interplay is particularly complex. Under normal circumstances, many vulnerable targets rely on public services to function, and this reliance is compounded in the immediate aftermath of an attack. An attack on critical public services makes securing vulnerable targets more difficult, and an attack on vulnerable targets may, in turn, jeopardize critical public services.

Finally, we must consider both the short and long-term effects of crime on tourism. UNICRI has deep expertise in combatting criminal dimensions. While some illicit services and products may attract visitors in the short-term, this approach seriously undermines the welfare of local communities and ultimately damages the legitimate tourism industry. Community engagement, public safety and security are essential to creating safe public spaces and protecting tourist destinations.

In the spirit of the UN Global Compact, we have come together to produce an impressive and comprehensive framework that will equip Member States to better protect vulnerable targets worldwide and thereby to contribute to enhanced global security. We hope you will immediately put these modules to good use.

Thank you, and I wish you all a productive and engaging event.