



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism

The Role of Youth in Preventing Violent Extremism Through Sports

23 June 2023

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this side event on the *Role of Youth in Preventing Violent Extremism Through Sports*, co-hosted by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the United Nations.

Sport has immense potential in helping to build a lasting legacy of peace and positive values, which are critical for sustainable responses to terrorism and violent extremism. Sports can reach all segments of society, including those most marginalized.

The General Assembly has encouraged Member States and other relevant actors to consider instituting mechanisms to involve youth in the promotion of a culture of peace, tolerance, and intercultural and interreligious dialogue, including through sports and physical activities.

The Security Council has also recognized the value of youth in peacebuilding through resolutions 2250, 2419 and 2535 on Youth, Peace, and Security. These resolutions call on Member States to effectively engage with youth to prevent and counter violent extremism and address the conditions conducive to terrorism.

Youth are uniquely positioned to mobilize their peers and to be stakeholders of societies that are increasingly free from stereotypes, discrimination, and extremism.

Building on the valuable work undertaken in the framework of the United Nations Global Sports Programme, I am pleased that we are joined today by athletes, youth representatives and regional organisations to discuss *Policy Recommendations From a Youth Perspective on Preventing Violent Extremism Through Sport* - a key deliverable of our Programme.

I also wish to highlight our successful #MoreThanAGame campaign, which we successfully launched in partnership with Generation Amazing Foundation during the 2022 FIFA World Cup hosted by the State of Qatar.

It features inspiring testimonials from young athletes, alongside professional football player Nadia Nadim, aimed at promoting the power of sports in making real and positive change.

These young athletes are beneficiaries of a grant that we launched in 2021, which supports grassroots civil society organisations to implement community-level sport-based projects to prevent violent extremism.

Our Global Sports Programme also works closely with the African Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to promote human rights-based and youth-centric practices to address the conditions conducive to terrorism and violent extremism through sport.

Before I conclude, I wish to express my gratitude to all our Programme partners, including United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities, as well as the entire community of national focal points, youth leaders, sports federations and associations, and civil society organisations who worked closely to prepare the *Guide for Policymakers for the Use of Sport for the Prevention of Violent Extremism*, which will be officially launched today.

This tool will assist Member States to integrate sports in national and regional strategies and plans of action to prevent and counter violent extremism.

Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen,

Young people are critical to building resilient societies and ensuring lasting solidarity, through mechanisms such as sports, which push people to be better, aim higher and reach further.

I look forward to hearing the insights that emerge from today's discussion.

Thank you.