



## UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

**Remarks by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov,  
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

### **The Role of Cities in Advancing Global Efforts to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism**

**30 September 2021, 9:00am**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Strong Cities Network, the United States of America and North Macedonia for bringing us together.

2021 is a year of somber commemoration in our joint fight against terrorism. We honor the memory of nearly 3,000 people from 90 countries who were killed in the 9/11 terrorist attacks here in the United States – and thousands more injured, now twenty years ago.

The Security Council took swift action following the attacks to galvanize international counter-terrorism efforts. Its landmark resolution 1373 prescribed far-reaching measures to suppress the threat through law enforcement and criminal justice measures.

And fifteen years ago, the General Assembly adopted by consensus the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, setting out a holistic framework for multi-stakeholder efforts. It aims not only to counter terrorism, but also to address the underlying drivers.

The Secretary-General's Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism issued at the end of 2015 provided additional recommendations in this regard, including the importance of local action and engaging communities.

This year of commemoration is also a time for collective reflection to improve our responses to persisting challenges and tackle new terrorist threats, as societies emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am especially grateful that many of you participated in the Second Counter-Terrorism Week that we held in June, including the Second High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States.

And I look forward to working with Member States and all of you to implement the comprehensive resolution adopted by the General Assembly at the end of the Counter-Terrorism Week to reinforce the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

We are facing an expanded threat as Da'esh and Al-Qaida's affiliates have spread to new regions, alarmingly so in parts of Africa.

Today, terrorism inspired online can strike anywhere, anytime.

A threat that is accelerated by digital and other new technologies and that is more diversified as terrorists adapt their tactics and appeal to groups and individuals motivated by xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance, including misogyny.

Because this threat is enduring and unpredictable, Member States emphasized during the Counter-Terrorism Week that a bold investment is needed in prevention and building social and institutional resilience to terrorism.

This requires networked and inclusive multilateralism, as well as effective and inclusive governance, placing human rights and gender equality at its heart, and enabling all sectors to contribute to and leverage the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Because local actors, including municipalities are most often the closest to and most knowledgeable about the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, they can and must be close partners and provide impetus for such an approach.

The Strong Cities Network highlights the importance of the local level in counter-terrorism.

Terrorist attacks, especially against vulnerable targets, first of all impact the local communities where they are perpetrated, leaving victims to deal with destruction and pain.

Local communities who are on the frontlines can identify and address grievances, prevent polarization and terrorist radicalization and counter the spread of violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

And local communities play a crucial role in the reintegration after legal procedures into society of former terrorist offenders or other individuals with suspected links to terrorist groups, including those who return from conflict zones.

In this regard, I invite you to engage and collaborate with our various global programmes, for instance to prevent and counter violent extremism conducive to terrorism; to protect vulnerable targets, including public places, and strengthen major event security; or to address the situation of individuals returned from camps in Iraq and Syria. And of course, the issue of support of Victims of Terrorism, it is one of our global flagship programmes. The whole list of UNOCT global activities is available on our website.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Strong Cities Network since its launch six years ago has helped to connect and support cities and municipalities to take action against terrorism in joint efforts with national governments, civil society, and youth.

This is exactly the kind of initiative needed to reshape responses to all forms of violence, and boost partnerships that the United Nations Secretary-General called for earlier this month as part of Our Common Agenda for people, the planet, prosperity and peace.

You can count on the engagement and support of my Office.

Thank you.