



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

Remarks of Under-Secretary-General Voronkov

PAM–UNOCT Virtual Meeting “Challenges of the post-territorial ISIL context”, with E-Signing of the UNOCT-PAM Memorandum of Understanding

Monday, 15 February 2021,
16:00–16:35 CET/10:00-10:35 NY

Thank you, Mauro. [*Mauro is the Moderator.*]

Excellencies,
Distinguished Members of Parliament,
Dear participants,

It is my pleasure to welcome you at today’s joint meeting of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM).

It is an honor to deliver my opening remarks alongside the PAM President Emeritus, Senator Alia Bouran and the Chair of PAM’s Special Parliamentary Committee on Counterterrorism, Honourable Gennaro Migliore.

I would also like to warmly welcome the Speaker of the Shura Council of Qatar, His Excellency Mr. Al Mahmoud, and the Assistant-Secretary-General of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, Ms. Coninx.

UNOCT recognizes the critical role played by Members of Parliament in preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism.

This is why, with a generous support of the Shura Council of Qatar, UNOCT will be opening a Programme Office on Parliamentary Engagement in Doha in the coming months.

To effectively— and sustainably— deliver our mandate and promote a ‘whole-of-society’ approach to countering terrorism, we rely on strong partnerships, including with PAM, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and the OSCE and Commonwealth of Independent States’ parliamentary assemblies.

Distinguished Members of Parliaments, dear colleagues,

The focus of today’s discussion fully reflects the United Nations’ concerns and demonstrates that Parliaments are vital partners in addressing the complex challenges brought by the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon.

We rely on parliamentarians to work hand-in-hand with governments to adopt legal frameworks and policies to implement the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and relevant Security Council resolutions.

This includes Security Council resolutions 2178 (2014) and 2396 (2017) which call on Member States to criminalize activities related to foreign terrorist fighters in compliance with international law.

While effective laws are necessary to tackle such threats, they are not sufficient. Without comprehensive prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration (or PRR) responses, there are significant risks of broken lives, fractured communities and endless cycles of recidivism and violence.

Representing people and constituencies, you have the power to facilitate the development of such responses in order to avoid stigmatization and social exclusion of returned individuals and prevent further radicalization.

The matter is increasingly urgent. Following ISIL’s territorial defeat, foreign terrorist fighters continue to pose a serious threat, including in the Mediterranean.

In particular, I am deeply concerned with the complex situation of ISIL-associated women and children, who are detained in dire conditions in camps in northeast Syria.

ISIL’s encouragement of escapes, violence in the camps and the continued threat of COVID-19 highlight the urgency for Member States to repatriate their nationals from Syria and Iraq.

It is urgent to bring these people, first of all children, back to their home countries.

At the recent Security Council Arrria Formula Meeting on repatriation of children with alleged family ties to terrorist groups from conflict zones, I stressed that the best interests of the child should be the overarching consideration to address this challenge.

Shortly after ISIL's territorial defeat in March 2019, Secretary-General Guterres issued a set of "Key Principles for the Protection, Repatriation, Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Women and Children with Links to United Nations Listed Terrorist Groups."

Based on these principles, as well as relevant Security Council resolutions, UNOCT and UNICEF led the development of a Global Framework on United Nations support to Member States on individuals returned from Syria and Iraq, bringing together 15 UN entities.

We stand ready to assist Member States to implement comprehensive, gender-responsive and age-sensitive prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration approaches in line with international law, which must hold individuals accountable while promoting social cohesion and community reintegration.

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

I would like to commend PAM's Secretary-General Sergio Piazzzi, for mainstreaming counterterrorism-related issues in PAM's agenda.

I am glad that in a few minutes, we will sign a long-awaited Memorandum of Understanding between UNOCT and PAM, further consolidating our partnership.

Through its new parliamentary office in Doha, UNOCT is looking forward to working with PAM and the global parliamentary community to achieve a safer world—one without terrorism—for present and future generations.

I thank you.