



VIRTUAL DIALOGUE WITH
**HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERS ON BUILDING
A BETTER PARADIGM TO PREVENT AND COUNTER TERRORISM**

..... 25-26 MAY 2021

**Opening Remarks of Mr. Vladimir Voronkov
United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism**

Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,

I would like to warmly welcome you to this dialogue among Member States, human rights and civil society partners. My Office is proud to convene this timely dialogue on a crucial subject together with the Government of Spain.

I thank Her Excellency Ms. Arancha González Laya, Foreign Minister of Spain, for joining us today and for the invaluable partnership between UNOCT and her ministry.

In less than a month, we anticipate that the General Assembly will be adopting a consensus resolution for the seventh biennial review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. This will also mark the beginning of the second Counter-Terrorism Week at the United Nations.

The review process is ably facilitated by the Permanent Representatives of Oman and Spain to the United Nations, Ambassador Al-Hassan and Ambassador Santos-Maraver, who are with us today – and whom I salute for sparing no effort to forge consensus.

It is in this context that this dialogue brings us together to discuss how to build a better paradigm for preventing and countering terrorism, placing human rights and the rule of law at its centre.



I look forward to hearing your experiences, perspectives and suggestions in this regard, as we are convinced that working together, through an all-of-society approach, is the only way to design effective and sustainable responses to the threat of terrorism.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

ISIL, Al-Qaida and their regional affiliates commit the most heinous human rights abuses, and despite the pandemic, they have increased their nefarious activities.

Meanwhile, neo-Nazi, white supremacist and other violent extremist movements are gaining traction, with many resorting to terrorist tactics.

The human rights abuses of terrorists tear apart the social fabric and undermine citizens' confidence in state authority.

Terrorists violate socio-economic, cultural, civic and political rights, fuel gender inequality and racism, and prolong violent conflicts.

Dear Colleagues,

Upholding human rights and the rule of law is not only a matter of moral commitment to the principles and values of the United Nations Charter and an obligation under international law.

It is a prerequisite for the strategic, operational effectiveness and sustainability of counter-terrorism efforts.

That is why I invite you to take full advantage of this dialogue to reflect on how to root human rights, gender equality and the rule of law more effectively into counter-terrorism efforts.

We need a human rights agenda for counter-terrorism to pinpoint priority areas on which to focus. We need additional ideas, up-to-date tools, and sharing of practical experiences on how to mainstream human rights into counter-terrorism efforts.



We must identify challenges on the horizon, including the human rights implications of new technologies.

A constructive engagement and collaboration with human rights and civil society partners, based on mutual respect and trust, is the only way to move forward.

Dear Colleagues,

UNOCT has now some initial staff capacity to ensure the mainstreaming of human rights and gender equality across our capacity-building, policy and coordination work.

We are finalizing a Gender Policy for our Office, building a dedicated capacity to ensure compliance with the United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy, and developing a new Global Human Rights Programme to expand our provision of human rights training and guidance to counter-terrorism, law enforcement and border security officials.

All of these efforts complement the longstanding and leading work of UNOCT to amplify the voices, champion the rights and address the needs of victims of terrorism.

Twenty-five per cent of the projects implemented last year by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre in my Office specifically helped implement the human rights pillar of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Human rights and gender equality are integral to all of our programme development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and will be centerstage in the next Strategic Framework to guide the work of our Counter-Terrorism Centre.

We have been implementing our Civil Society Engagement Strategy since March last year in an effort to have more systematic and meaningful outreach and partnership with civil society, across all areas of our work.



But we can and will do more, heeding the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights, and working closely with our United Nations partners, especially those with the primary mandate to advise and build capacity on human rights and gender equality.

Dear Colleagues,

The Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact that I chair is committed to strengthening human rights, rule of law and gender equality as cross-cutting priorities in the work of its 43 participating entities, based on their respective mandates.

I would like to emphasize here the leading role played by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, and her Office – as chair of the Global Compact Working Group on Human Rights and Victims of Terrorism.

I also welcome the role played by UN Women, my friend Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka – as chair of our Working Group on ensuring a gender-sensitive approach to preventing and countering terrorism – which led, with seed-funding from my Office, a global digital consultation with civil society to inform the review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

I would like to pay tribute also to the work of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism.

Ms. Fionnuala Ní Aoláin performs a key mandate in the United Nations counter-terrorism architecture, with very limited resources.

Ensuring sufficient, predictable and sustainable funding for these efforts to support Member States is crucial. I would like to express my gratitude to all our donors. I hope for their continued and increased support.

Dear Colleagues, dear friends,

My message is simple: counter-terrorism is not effective without human rights, and human rights cannot be protected without effective counter-terrorism.



We need a better paradigm to prevent and counter terrorism with a focused agenda and practical ideas to integrate human rights, gender equality and the rule of law, in close cooperation with civil society organizations.

In closing, let me stress that this event is part of an ongoing and inclusive dialogue.

It is intended to help us to frame the issues going into next month's Counter-Terrorism Week, and lay firm foundations for the major in-person conference in Málaga, which the pandemic forced us to move to early next year to ensure as wide a participation as possible.

I count on and greatly look forward to your active engagement in the discussions.

I thank you.

