



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

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

Joint ICAO and INTERPOL Passenger Data Exchange Forum

25-28 May 2021

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor to greet you in this important forum organized by the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Criminal Police Organization, on the use of travel information for law enforcement purposes.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism is proud to be partnering with you.

Building stronger counter-terrorism partnerships to support Member States' efforts to prevent and counter terrorism is one of the top priorities of my Office.

The effective processing and analysis of passenger data therefore is essential to the identification, detection and interception of FTFs and other serious criminals, including those that are otherwise unknown to authorities, both before, during and after travel. That is why our work on countering terrorist travel and enhancing the use of Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Records is paramount.

Members of terrorist organizations and other transnational organized crime groups continue to take advantage of weak detection capacity across the globe. Despite the current downturn in air travel as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, travel volumes are still projected to double over the next 20 years.

While pandemic-related travel restrictions imposed by Member States may have temporarily reduced the movement of those who pose a terrorism-related threat, their operational networks have relied on digital platforms to maintain recruitment, communication and possible planning for future attacks.

Hence, there is the potential of escalating terrorist activity as restrictions are lifted. This creates the need for continued vigilance and enhanced border security and management. We should therefore be using this lull to bolster States' capacities to detect and intercept the travel of known and suspected terrorists.

Several Security Council resolutions require that Member States strengthen their national detection capabilities using travel data, enhancing the exchange of information, and making better use of existing data bases of known and suspected terrorists.

Annexes 9 and 17 to the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation also contain standards and recommended practices relevant to the detection and prevention of terrorist threats involving civil aviation.

Let me use this opportunity to commend ICAO for its significant achievement in developing new PNR global standards.

I also want to acknowledge INTERPOL's commitment to leverage its databases and notices to make API/PNR capabilities as effective as possible. I am very pleased to see that our strong collaboration in this area is continuing under the framework of the United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel Programme.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In May 2019, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres launched UNOCT's flagship initiative – the Countering Terrorist Travel Programme – as an “All-of-UN” partnership with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Office of Information and Communications Technology, ICAO, and INTERPOL.

Since then, 41 Member States across the world have confirmed their participation in the Programme. Many more have indicated their strong interest in benefiting from this initiative.

The goal of this global Programme is to assist Member States to meet their Security Council obligations to have and use capabilities to collect and analyze travel data and disseminate the results to national and international competent authorities. The UN's programme support is compliant not only with Security Council resolutions 2178 (2014), 2396 (2017), and 2482 (2019), but also ICAO Annex 9 standards and recommended practices (SARPs), as well as other international law obligations, and with full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Programme assists Member States in four critical areas for establishing an effective API/PNR system: legal; operational; engagement with the transportation industry; and technical assistance support, including the provision at no cost of the state-of-the-art UN 'goTravel' software system, which has been developed from a system generously donated by the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

In addition to air passenger data, the Countering Terrorist Travel Programme is adding a maritime component as well as other technological developments.

The Programme promotes also a regional approach, providing Member States an opportunity to participate in regional informal working groups and in a Cooperative Online Platform to share best practices and facilitate efficient information exchange.

Despite the operational challenges that emerged as a result of the global pandemic, the Countering Terrorist Travel Programme has continued to expand.

Despite limited travel to beneficiary Member States and direct physical engagement with the government counterparts, the UN CT Travel Programme is facilitating and providing much-needed technical assistance through virtual platforms and mechanisms, to aid in the establishment of effective API and PNR data systems.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me close by thanking all our generous donors, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the European Union, the United States of America, the State of Qatar, Australia, Japan, the Republic of India, and Hungary, as well as other partners, who have supported and collaborated with the Programme to-date.

I look forward to hearing about the results of these discussions over the next days and to continue working with all of you to strengthen our efforts to counter terrorist travel.

I thank you for your attention.