



## UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

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### Commercial Unmanned Aircraft Systems in Counter-Terrorism Contexts

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8:30 - 10:00 a.m.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening to the more than 100 of you dialing in from all around the world. Welcome to the Second UN Counter-Terrorism Week side event on Commercial Unmanned Aircraft Systems in Counter-Terrorism Contexts.

This event couldn't be more timely. Over the past few years, terrorist organizations such as ISIL have become bolder and ever more creative in their use of unmanned aircraft systems, or UAS. They have used them to conduct surveillance and reconnaissance of both soft and hard targets, and even to attack security forces and UN peacekeepers, benefitting from the shock of such attacks, even using them in combination with ground forces and often using video of them for propaganda purposes.

Terrorist use of UAS has undermined the long-held assumption that Member States had exclusive control of the aerospace domain. Consequently, Member States find themselves needing to adopt counter-measures to defend themselves against attacks from above as well as from the ground.

Where are the terrorists getting these systems? In some cases they are able to procure commercial off-the-shelf UAS. In other cases, they contrive and assemble them using a variety of components and parts procured separately, much as they have done with respect to their employment of improvised explosive devices.

And just as has been the case with IEDs, I submit to you that the international community will therefore need to take much the same approach in confronting the challenge of UAS; namely, we must develop not just counter-measures to defeat the UAS themselves, but we must also develop measures to identify and take down the networks that design and operate them as well as supply the parts. Attempts to understand, regulate and counter terrorist use of UAS must reflect this reality.

At the same time, as we will hear today, UAS can be and already are force multipliers for the international community.

UNOCT's Global Counter-Terrorism UAS Programme, launched in January of this year, focuses on both aspects of the problem.

Led by UNOCT's Special Projects and Innovation Branch with support from our Counter-Terrorism Centre, the programme is designed to enhance coordination, raise awareness, increase the knowledge base and –most importantly – strengthen the capacity of Member States to address the challenges posed by terrorist use of UAS. I would like to thank the State of Qatar and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for funding the programme's first year, and without which this event would not be possible.

Before turning to our panelists. Let me highlight some of the topics that this event will explore today:

First, the importance of international cooperation and concerted action on UAS related threats. It is crucial that Member States, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, civil society, and academia complement each other's efforts to analyze, prevent and respond to potential threats.

Second, effective measures to counter terrorists' use of UAS. Strategies such as controlling access to UAS and UAS components, line-of-sight analysis, radar operations, point of origin raids, as well as kinetic, electromagnetic and other means of disrupting terrorist UAS operations are key concepts to which the international community will need to become accustomed.

Third, the use of UAS to support non-lethal counter-terrorism and terrorism prevention efforts. Member States can use UAS to conduct intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations, help support their borders, detect chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear materials, protect critical infrastructure and vulnerable targets, and collect force protection and other valuable intelligence that can be used to detect, prevent and respond to UAS attacks.

Fourth, Human rights considerations in the use of UAS for counter-terrorism efforts. We must consider the issues that can sometimes arise from Member State use of UAS, such as those that impinge on privacy and data protection rights and build in appropriate safeguards.

As we begin this conversation, it is important to recognize that the UAS market is diverse, encompassing high-tech products developed by major companies in the aerospace and defence industry, with price tags of tens of millions of dollars per system; sophisticated but cheap UAS made for civilian recreational markets; and low-tech products, which states and non-state groups assemble from re-purposed civilian market products.

Before turning to our panel, let me first ask Mr. Talal Rashid Al-Khalifa, Deputy Permanent Representative & First Secretary, Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the United Nations, to offer a few remarks.

Mr. Al-Khalifa, the floor is yours