



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM**

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

**UNOCT Annual Briefing to Member States
4 February 2022, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Dear Colleagues,

Good morning and welcome to the UNOCT Annual Briefing to Member States, during which we will review progress made in the previous year and frame our strategic priorities for this year.

I am honored to be joined today by my UNOCT colleagues and other senior United Nations officials.

I invite you to watch a short video to set the frame for my remarks.

[VIDEO INTERLUDE]

As you saw in the video, UNOCT did not let COVID-19 stand in the way of continuing to deliver on its mandate in 2021. This would not have been possible without the strong support of Member States, UN Global Counter-Terrorism Compact entities and our partners, as well as the commitment, dedication and hard work of UNOCT staff.

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Dear Colleagues,

1. 2021: A year of milestones, achievements, and new challenges

Together we marked the somber twentieth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. We reflected on what has worked—and what has not worked—over the past two decades.

While the overall number of terrorism-related deaths and attacks has declined since its peak a few years ago, we were sobered by the fact that Al-Qaida, Da'esh and their affiliates have extended their activities in Africa and emerged strengthened in Afghanistan.

We have witnessed a growth in terrorism and violent extremism driven by xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance which have found fertile ground in hateful ideologies that amplify and reinforce each other across borders. This type of terrorism also finds support among those distrustful of their governments, and among those who have sought refuge from the pandemic online and are vulnerable to disinformation.

But once again, the United Nations has demonstrated its resolve to counter these threats to the Charter. During the Second Counter-Terrorism Week in June, and again during the High-Level General Debate of the 76th Session of the General Assembly in September, Member States demonstrated their continued support for multilateral responses to preventing, combatting, and recovering from terrorism. The General Assembly adopted a comprehensive and forward-looking resolution following its seventh review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, refreshing the UN's counter-terrorism approach for the coming decade.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Global efforts against terrorism have seen numerous successes in the past two decades.

The assessment of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate is that Member States have continued to strengthen their legislative and administrative frameworks, prioritized law enforcement and security cooperation, and enhanced measures to counter the financing of terrorism, while also confronting terrorists' exploitation of information and communication technologies.

Member States have flushed terrorist groups from key hideouts and foiled hundreds of terrorist plots, saving many lives in the process.

Many Member States have also strengthened crucial preventive initiatives and efforts to build societal resilience to terrorism.

At the same time, several trends and developments demonstrate that the terrorism threat has become geographically more diffuse, ideologically more diverse, and tactically more varied.

Examples can be found in Da'esh's recent attack on a prison in north-eastern Syria in an attempt to free its imprisoned fighters and reportedly involving the use of detained children as human shields, and its attack on an army barracks north of Baghdad hours later, which killed 11 soldiers.

These two attacks illustrate Da'esh's resurgence in Iraq and Syria, as the group works to reconstitute itself across both countries.

In recent months, Da'esh affiliates have also expanded their hold in parts of Africa, posing a grave threat to civilians and seriously undermining Member States' efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

We are also closely monitoring the evolving situation in Afghanistan which could have far reaching implications for peace and security around the world.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

Looking forward, I would like to highlight our key priorities for this year: in 2022, we must work to meet the challenges we face with renewed determination and relying on inclusive approaches, based on the guidance provided by Member States in the seventh review resolution of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and in line with the vision outlined in the Secretary-General's report on "Our Common Agenda." Our priorities are the following:

First, we will continue to strengthen and reinforce counter-terrorism cooperation and coordination, both within and beyond the United Nations, including through the Secretary-General's Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact.

In the past three years, the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact has grown into one of the largest and most comprehensive coordination frameworks at the United Nations. The Global Counter-Terrorism Platform, now connects over 911 focal points from 131 Member States, the European Union and 43 United Nations and non-United Nations entities.

The 2021-2022 United Nations Multi-Year Appeal for Counter-Terrorism demonstrates one of the practical outcomes of our joint efforts, with United Nations entities collaborating to facilitate a common approach to resource mobilization to meet the priority needs of Member

States, based on the technical assistance needs identified by CTED, and with a strong focus on human rights and gender mainstreaming.

Second, we will bolster our engagement with Member States and regional organizations to maintain the momentum on multilateral cooperation, including by organizing a number of high-level conferences.

In the beginning of March, we will hold a regional conference in Tashkent dedicated to the Joint Plan of Action for Central Asia, in cooperation with the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe and the Government of Uzbekistan.

In late March, we will organize the 'Annual Forum of Beneficiaries of Technical Assistance' in Doha, convened jointly with the State of Qatar.

In May, we will organize a high-level conference on Human Rights and Civil Society engagement in Malaga, Spain, together with the Spanish government.

For the second half of the year, we plan to organize a regional conference in Dushanbe, Tajikistan in October, and envisage a CARICOM conference in Port-of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago in November.

The Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism will also be organized sometime later this year, most likely in the fall, with the final date still to be decided.

Third, we will consolidate our current and planned field presences of regional programme offices and individual staff in 13 countries to ensure the delivery of impactful and more cost-effective and coherent capacity-building through an 'all-of-UN' approach.

To this end, we will continue to work in close coordination with the wider UN presence on the ground, as well as strengthen our cooperation with regional bodies and other providers of technical assistance.

Fourth, our Human Rights and Gender Section within UNOCT will be critical to our efforts to mainstream human rights and gender across all our activities and programmes, while our Victims of Terrorism Programme will continue to advocate for the rights and needs of victims around the world.

We will also enhance our engagement with civil society and youth, including through digital platforms, for a more sustainable approach to preventing and countering terrorism.

Fifth, given the spread of terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism in Africa, we are planning to further strengthen our collaboration with African Member States.

In this regard, I am delighted to report that the launch of our Regional Programme Office in Nairobi will take place in March. The Programme Office will serve as a platform to enhance UNOCT's support to East African Member States.

Finally, we will step up our support to Member States to responsibly harness the potential of new technologies, and counter their exploitation for terrorist purposes.

We will also continue to make the best possible use of innovative technologies in our programming to expand our reach in a cost-effective manner, as we transition to a post COVID-19 environment. The recently launched Connect & Learn Platform, which also featured in the video we just watched, is just one example of this approach.

2. Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to sincerely thank our 35 donors for their trust in UNOCT, in particular, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Qatar, whose generous contributions have accounted for 71 per cent of the total of received funds since the creation of the Trust Fund for Counter-Terrorism, as well as the European Union as a major supporter of several of our flagship programmes.

We are also grateful to France for joining the ranks as our newest donor in 2021, and to those Member States that showed their commitment to our Office through new pledges in 2021, namely Australia, Canada, the UN Peace and Security Trust Fund funded by China, as well as Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. I wish to also sincerely thank the other longstanding donors including The Netherlands, who have supported the Office over the years.

I am deeply grateful to all Member States, as well as our partners within and outside of the United Nations, for their invaluable support to my Office during the past year.

I also take this opportunity to thank the now 180 staff members of UNOCT, who come from 69 different countries and 55% of whom are women, for their efforts in implementing all components of our mandate.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with all of you as we begin this new decade in the fight against terrorism.

Thank you.