



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

Video message from Mr. Vladimir Voronkov

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News Generation against Hate: Empowering local youth to create alternative narratives and champion diversity in the media

New York, 4 May 2022

Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,

I would like to thank the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations for inviting me to participate in this important event.

Today is an occasion to highlight the importance of working together with youth to build a future without terrorism.

Engaging and empowering young people has always been high on the agenda of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and the United Nations as a whole.

This engagement can be linked to the numerous Security Council resolutions on youth, peace and security, the Secretary-General's Youth Strategy, or the United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, in which youth empowerment is a first priority.

For my Office, the reasons for working together with youth in the area of countering terrorism and violent extremism are obvious and straightforward.

On the negative side, terrorists often target, radicalize and recruit young people in digital spaces, such as video games and adjacent platforms, or other places where youth gather for leisure and extracurricular activities. Terrorist groups exploit discrimination, polarization, intolerance, and hate among and towards specific youth groups, which fuels the scourge of terrorism.

However, on the positive side, youth can be a force for good in our joint fight against terrorism and violent extremism. Initiatives such as the ‘News Generation against Hate’ are highly useful in addressing conditions conducive to terrorism, as they empower young people to counter misinformation, hate speech, cultural stereotypes, and promote interreligious understanding.

Online gaming, to name another example, can be a positive and productive pastime, allowing youth to forge new connections and opportunities in support of conflict resolution and the strengthening of mutual understanding.

I am impressed by the innovative actions undertaken by young people all over the world against hate speech, violent extremism, and terrorism.

Through our own work, we have learned that engaging youth at the grassroots level can be a powerful and effective tool against terrorism, by using peer-to-peer approaches that empower them to be agents of change in their own local communities.

This engagement fosters the potential and peaceful nature of youth, creates an alternative, and breaks the false stereotype that young people are inherently prone to violence.

It also strengthens resilience to terrorist propaganda and hate, and helps create more peaceful, tolerant and diverse societies – which in turn denies terrorists as a space to advance their purposes.

My Office recently concluded a joint project with our close partner, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, on engaging young religious leaders and media makers. Co-creating this initiative with youth has led to greater and more meaningful impact.

And this year, we are co-chairing the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, to continue advocating for youth-inclusive approaches.

Working in partnership with youth is crucial in building and sustaining peaceful societies, and in line with the Secretary-General's vision for inclusive, networked, and effective multilateralism.

You can count on my Office to continue to amplify young people's voices, and support your efforts towards a peaceful, sustainable and inclusive future.

I wish you a successful event with fruitful discussions.

Thank you.