



# UN GLOBAL CONGRESS OF VICTIMS OF TERRORISM

Advancing the rights & needs of victims of terrorism

## Chair's Summary

**Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General**

**United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

**United Nations Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism**

**9 September 2022**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to present the Chair's Summary for the first United Nations Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism, which concludes today.

Let me first express my gratitude to the two co-chairs of the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism the Republic of Iraq and the Kingdom of Spain, and the other members of the Group of Friends, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Qatar, as well as the Federal Republic of Germany for their kind support to this event.

I am grateful to our distinguished speakers and participants for having shared their views and insights.

My heartfelt appreciation also goes to the victims and survivors of terrorism who have courageously shared their powerful stories and experiences over the past days.

This Congress truly was for, about, and with victims of terrorism. You inspire us to be and do better.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is the first United Nations Global Congress dedicated to advancing the rights and needs of victims of terrorism.



Much progress has been achieved in recent years, with Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, including the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and its review resolutions. They have emphasised the importance of recognising and protecting the human rights of victims of terrorism, and meeting their physical, medical, financial and psychosocial needs.

Today, all of us here are convinced that our solidarity and support for victims should continue to move from rhetoric to reality. I wish to recall the main aspects of the three-pronged approach I proposed in my opening remarks yesterday:

First, we must include victims of terrorism and victims' associations in our efforts to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

Second, Member States need to strengthen their national commitment to victims by enshrining their rights in domestic legislation, and developing national comprehensive assistance plans, as called for in General Assembly resolution 73/305.

Third, we all need to strengthen our international cooperation in providing support to victims of terrorism.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the Call to Action, we heard a clear message from victims of terrorism that the time has come to match the rhetoric with concrete action. They called for a comprehensive approach to fulfilling their rights and needs. We, together with Member States, heard the message. Now, we must act.

In the "Memories" film, we saw how by reinforcing victims' resilience, showing solidarity, and supporting victims, we can contribute to rebuilding the fabric of communities torn apart by terrorism.

Societies benefit when victims are treated with dignity and respect, and their human rights are realised. Remembrance is also key. We must not forget the damage done, the people lost, and those who live with the after-effects of terrorism. Remembrance is important to the recovery of victims, and it demonstrates society's duty of care.

We learned how survivors of sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated by terrorists suffer long-lasting mental and physical harm, and about the impact this has had on their communities.

There is a crucial need for specialised gender-sensitive services embedded in communities, whilst providing protection, reparation, and access to justice for victims and survivors.

In the “Victims Spotlight”, we heard about the transformational experiences of victims who have supported others, contributed to initiatives aimed at preventing violent extremism, and advocated for the rights of victims of terrorism.

And we have also learned in the past two days that the rising threat posed by terrorist attacks on the basis of xenophobia, racism or intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief, requires greater attention.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we held another rich discussion. It showed we must ensure that our efforts to uphold victims’ rights are based on a human-rights approach.

The present and former Special Rapporteurs on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism demonstrated that although we have come far, there remain significant challenges that need bold action if we are to make a difference. More work is required to recognise victims as rights bearers, and to enshrine those rights in domestic and international legislation.

The effects of terrorism dramatically impact on the public and private spheres. Today’s panel on the right to privacy highlighted the need to hold the media, including social media, to the highest standards to protect the privacy, reputation and psychological integrity of victims of terrorism. The safety and security of victims of terrorism is also paramount. Member States have a responsibility to ensure victims’ safety from intimidation and retaliation throughout the course of judicial and other proceedings.

National and regional systems can play a vital role in helping victims of terrorism who require long-term support to recover and cope with the impact of terror attacks, including medical, financial, and psychosocial support.

Child and youth victims process their experience of terrorist acts differently to adults and are often among those most vulnerable to their effects. Children require specialized and age-appropriate support delivered with the best interests of the child as the primary consideration.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We live and work in an increasingly interconnected world, and terror attacks can impact anyone anywhere. Cross-border victims face additional challenges, such as in navigating different support systems and accessing justice. It remains vital that we strengthen international cooperation.

Our final sessions focused on protection and support for victims during criminal justice processes and highlighted good practices in safeguarding victims' human rights before, during, and after a trial.

We also heard about the importance of adequate and effective reparation for victims. Member States can build on the good practices that address the right to remedy and reparation of victims of crime, as well as victims of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Global Congress has shown the complexity of the issues faced by victims of terrorism. Many of the actions we must take require the commitment of financial resources and political will. Member States need to maximise existing systems and legislation for the benefit of victims. I am pleased to outline how the United Nations plans to turn these ideas into concrete actions:

1. The United Nations will continue to support the mandate of the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism, by sharing good practices and lessons learned with requesting Member States to support victims of terrorism and their families.
2. The United Nations will continue to produce practical toolkits to assist Member States and civil society to better support victims. My Office will publish a Handbook of Best Practices for Member States in assisting Victims of Terrorism in 2023.
3. The United Nations stands ready to assist requesting Member States in developing National Comprehensive Assistance Plans. We are also ready to help further strengthen and develop legislation on victims of terrorism, in line with the Model Legislative Provisions that were produced by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

4. We understand the power and strength of partnerships. We see it today. We value our collaboration with victims and victims' associations. We know that to be effective in countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism, we need to continue to work closely with and alongside these partners. To this end, the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism intends to launch the UNOCT Victims of Terrorism Association Network (VOTAN) in 2023. The Network would bring together victims, victims associations and civil society organisations to work together to further the rights and support the needs of victims and survivors of terrorism.
5. The UN Victims of Terrorism Support Portal, launched in 2014, will be revitalised. It will become a dynamic hub to inform and raise awareness on and for victims.
6. At the beginning of the Congress, I called for an international conference to be held on a rotational basis every two years, which will review the progress of the previous years and action over the next two. I welcome the Kingdom of Spain's initiative to hold the first such follow-up conference in 2024.
7. A report summarising key themes and outcomes emerging from the Global Congress will soon be shared – it will chart the way forward and be a Roadmap for our efforts until the next international conference.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Global Congress has been held at a time when much progress has been made, but it has also shown us all that much more needs to be done. Let us learn from each other, and build upon the momentum created here over the past two days.

I thank you all for attending the Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism.

I would like to thank all my UNOCT colleagues for the enormous contribution to the success of the Global Congress. We end the Congress with a memorial ceremony. I would like to invite His Excellency Mr. Agustín Santos Maraver, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Spain and His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Hossein Mohammed Bahr AlUloom, Republic of Iraq to accompany me to lay a rose at the foot of the podium in honour of, and to remember all those who are no longer with us and those whose lives have forever been changed as a result of terrorism.