

**Pre-recorded opening remarks by
Mr. Vladimir Voronkov,
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)**

**Launch Event of the Project on Protecting Vulnerable Targets by Using Behavioural
Insights to Strengthen Law Enforcement Capabilities**

Madrid, Spain, 10 November 2022

4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Madrid time

10 a.m. to 1 p.m. NY time

Excellencies,

Distinguished representatives,

Dear colleagues,

I would like to welcome you to this formal launch of the first joint project of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism Programme Offices based in Madrid, Rabat, and Doha. Today's event focuses on protecting vulnerable targets by strengthening the capabilities of law enforcement officials through behavioural insights.

Let me start by thanking the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Spain for hosting this event; and the State of Qatar for generously funding this project.

While I would have very much liked to be in Madrid with all of you for this event, I am very pleased with the strong interest that it has attracted.

I also warmly welcome the representatives from Member States, academia, civil society, and the private sector attending today's event, either in person in Madrid or online around the world.

Only through multi-stakeholder and multidimensional cooperation can we protect vulnerable targets, including critical infrastructure and public places or 'soft targets', from terrorist threats.

This is also the philosophy that inspires this unique project, which brings together the know-how of three UNOCT Programme Offices to leverage our expertise on vulnerable targets protection, law enforcement training, and applied behavioural insights.

I am confident that this project will help Member States to stay ahead of the terrorist curve through the consolidated and coordinated delivery of specialized technical assistance.

Studies and public inquiries have indicated that if certain suspicious behaviour of terrorists had been flagged and addressed in a timely manner by relevant security actors, important preventive measures could have been taken prior to certain terrorist acts.

From a preventive approach, law enforcement officials in charge of the protection of vulnerable targets, and especially major public events, should be the primary beneficiaries of the insights that applied behavioural science brings.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,

From the recent attack in Shiraz, Iran against a religious site to the car-bombs that exploded in the city centre of Mogadishu, Somalia less than two weeks ago, the conclusion is clear: terrorists around the world are increasingly targeting public places.

We therefore cannot remain complacent and keep the same training methodologies and content we had 20 years ago.

We need security forces that are better prepared to identify new terrorist modus operandi, that act quickly, decisively, and with full respect for human rights.

To this end, the project we are launching today combines cutting-edge research, world-class expertise, and the latest knowledge tools to help Member States be more effective against emerging terrorist threats against vulnerable targets.

During the event, we will give you more details on the project, including its activities and focus on Africa. We will also provide some international good practices on public places protection, law enforcement training, and applied behavioural insights that will further highlight the importance of working together in this endeavour.

Let me conclude by wishing you a productive discussion, and by expressing my sincere appreciation for your continued engagement and support.

Thank you.