



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

**Recorded Statement by Mr. Raffi Gregorian, Deputy to the Under-Secretary-General,
United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism (UNOCT)**

**Regional Workshop on Strategic and Crisis Communications (involving the Philippines,
Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand), Bangkok, Thailand
3 April 2023**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to officially welcome you all to the Regional Workshop on Strategic and Crisis Communication in Southeast Asia, organized by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, and made possible thanks to the generous contribution of the European Union.

First and foremost, I would like to thank our counterparts in your governments for their support in organizing this important regional workshop: the *National Counter Terrorism Agency* of Indonesia, the *Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism* of Malaysia, the *Philippines Anti-Terrorism Council Program Management Center*, and the *National Security Council* of Thailand.

Having worked closely with you during the national workshops, today's capstone event marks the next important milestone in our partnerships with you.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to our partners in the European Union for making it possible for UNOCT to provide fit-for-purpose PCVE capacity building and technical assistance to the region, with training, toolkits, and cutting-edge crisis simulation software.

Furthermore, I would also like to thank our partner, the United Nations Development Programme, for its role in helping implement this project and provide support to the national workshops on strategic and crisis communication in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

Terrorism is still a serious threat in Southeast Asia, making the increased spread of violent extremist narratives across the region particularly worrisome. Foreign terrorist fighters from Southeast Asia who travelled to Iraq and Syria have amassed significant followings on social media and across local communities. Their return poses significant challenges, especially as they are now the key node in complex terrorist networks between Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

Daesh-affiliated terrorist groups in the region are capitalising on this. They aim to destroy the social fabric of communities by using disinformation and hate speech to undermine trust and foment division, particularly in times of crisis.

Strategic communication remains a key component to preventing and countering these threats by reinforcing common values, reducing fear, and fostering a sense of community. This is the work we must do before we are faced with the crisis of dealing with the aftermath of a terrorist attack, focusing the whole-of-government and whole-of-society responses the General Assembly has urged for years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With this context in mind, I welcome the opportunity this regional workshop affords all of us to share, collaborate, learn from each other, and build on the impressive work achieved within your respective countries.

Terrorists' increasingly sophisticated use of hate speech and violent extremist narratives is a threat that affects us all and requires integrated and coordinated responses and solutions. We need strong policy and programmatic synergies across countries to prevent these phenomena, particularly in relation to crisis preparedness and response.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism will continue to invest in innovative, evidence-based practices to counter terrorist narratives through our Global Programme on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism. This includes continuing our work in enhancing strategic and crisis communications capacities through the development of practical tools such as UNOCT's Crisis Communications Toolkit; using crisis simulation software to pressure-test learning; and creating opportunities to connect and share good practices through an online community of practice on crisis communications using UNOCT's Connect and Learn Platform.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,

I am confident that the tools and technical support that you will receive during this workshop will help you deepen your understanding of the vital role of strategic and crisis communication in preventing and countering violent extremism, and that it will help build and foster your regional network of expert partners in this field.

You can count on the engagement and continued support of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. I wish you a successful and productive workshop.

Thank you.