



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

**Opening Remarks by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov,
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
Office of Counter-Terrorism
Second High-Level Meeting of the Marrakesh Platform**

2 June 2023, Tangier

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to this event dedicated to preventing and countering the threat of terrorism in Africa.

Allow me to start by expressing my sincere gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco for its immense support to the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and for hosting the second annual Marrakesh Platform meeting, this year in Tangier.

I am honoured to be joined on the podium by my friend, His Excellency, Mr. Mohamed Yassine Mansouri, Director General of the General Directorate for Studies and Documentation of the Kingdom of Morocco.

I am very grateful to my dear friend, His Excellency Mr. Nasser Bourita, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates, for the continued support to the UN Office of Counter Terrorism in New York.

Since we met with many of you in Marrakesh last year, African Member States have suffered numerous atrocious attacks, varying in scope and scale, spanning through different parts of the continent. In Burkina Faso, terrorists killed 116 civilians in an attack on a village in June 2022. In Nigeria's Borno State, which also faced three major attacks by Da'esh affiliate in West Africa and Boko Haram in May 2022. In Mali, innocent civilians are under relentless attacks by Al-Qaida affiliate JNIM where 110 civilians were killed in June last year. The list goes on.

I would like to express my solidarity with all countries fighting against terrorism and start off by honoring the victims and survivors of terrorism and pay my tribute to them. Please join me in a minute of silence.

Excellencies,

Al-Qaida, Da'esh and their affiliates pose a significant threat to regional peace, stability and development across West Africa and the Sahel.

In his address to the Security Council in March this year, Secretary-General António Guterres stated that “no age, no culture, no religion, no nationality and no region is immune to terrorism. But the situation in Africa is especially concerning. Community by community, terrorist groups are trying to extend their reach.”

According to the 2023 Global Terrorism Index report, the Sahel region is severely affected by terrorism, accounting for more terrorism deaths in 2022 than both South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa combined. Sub-Saharan Africa now accounts for sixty per cent of all terrorism deaths globally.

We share serious concerns over the connection between terrorist's groups and organized crime networks, in addition to the reports of an increased influx of foreign terrorist fighters in some countries of the region.

Excellencies,

The increasingly complex nature of the terrorist threat requires multilateral cooperation and multiagency approaches to create a stronger and more cohesive regional response.

The Marrakech Platform is an important contribution to that end.

I am happy to see the Marrakesh Platform evolving with a growing level of participation and welcome the opportunity to once again have an open discussion with national stakeholders about the strategies and approaches to reinforce regional cooperation on counter-terrorism issues.

The work of the agencies you lead is vital in the fight against terrorism. I encourage you to engage in discussions over the next two days, which will provide an opportunity to address common challenges to interagency cooperation, share good practices for intelligence-led strategic decision-making, and strengthen national intelligence-led approaches to counter-terrorism.

Excellencies,

Africa remains a priority for my Office. This is why we are planning to co-organize with the Government of Nigeria an African Counter-Terrorism Summit on the theme “Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Institution Building to Address the Evolving Threat of Terrorism in Africa,” in Abuja in early 2024.

As one of its possible outcomes, we have been exploring with Member States the idea of African-led strategic action groups. These groups would be comprised of African members supported by the United Nations and other contributing partners that would help identify and agree on group and bilateral actions to be taken against the transnational terrorist networks.

I would like to recall that, in June last year, with the strong political support and generous financial contribution by the Government of Morocco, the United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism opened its Rabat Programme Office and Training Center for Counter Terrorism in Africa. In this regard, we also established new partnerships, such as this very valuable one with the General Directorate for Studies and Documentation of the Kingdom of Morocco. Thank you for this support.

I am very proud to say that since its opening, the Rabat Office has already conducted important capacity-building activities together with our partners from Morocco.

Last year marked the beginning of the Specialized Training Curriculum on Counter Terrorism Investigations, which is an accredited course and will have its second iteration next month. It is an example of how valuable such partnerships are, as it brings scientific and pedagogic expertise of the higher education sector and awards an Executive Certificate upon completion. This boosts the impact and quality of support provided to Member States in preventing and countering terrorism.

Moreover, United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism staff members from the Counter-Terrorism Investigations Programme, Kidnap for Ransom Project, and the Global Fusion Cells Programme now also operate out of Rabat, ensuring their close proximity to African Member States, and facilitating more tailored and effective delivery, some of which is reflected in a newly produced training catalogue that highlights UNOCT's recent efforts in Africa.

All these activities would not have been possible without the support, including financial, of Member States. I would like to take this opportunity to thank again the Kingdom of Morocco, and our observers, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Qatar, Brazil, and the European Union. We are grateful for your support, which allows us to grow and effectively deliver our programmes throughout the continent.

Excellencies,

In two weeks from now, my Office will organize the Third United Nations Counter-Terrorism Week in New York, during which Member States will debate the eight biennial review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in a plenary session of the General Assembly.

It also includes the Third High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States, as well as 45 side events on priority topics on countering terrorism. I hope to see you at the Conference and hear your valuable insights.

My Office remains committed to support Member States in preventing and countering terrorism.

I look forward to hearing your ideas and perspectives at this conference on how best to work together to respond to the threat of terrorism in Africa.

Thank you.