



# UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON VICTIMS OF TERRORISM

8-9 OCTOBER, 2024 • VITORIA-GASTEIZ, SPAIN



## Concept Note

### *Education as a Tool for Prevention, Peacebuilding and Empowerment of Victims of Terrorism*

#### Introduction

This concept note provides a draft framework for the United Nations International Conference on Protecting and Promoting the Rights and Needs of Victims of Terrorism (hereon ‘the International Conference’) to be co-hosted by the Kingdom of Spain and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT). The International Conference will be held at the Europa Congress Palace in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain, on 8-9 October 2024.

Consistent with its leading advocacy and engagement on the issue of victims of terrorism, Spain announced during the first United Nations Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism in 2022 its intention to host a follow up conference in 2024 to review progress made on the commitments of the Global Congress. The International Conference will therefore build on the momentum created by the Global Congress and provide an opportunity to bring together Member States, experts, practitioners and victims of terrorism to discuss the role of education in supporting the rights and needs of victims and survivors of terrorism, and contributing to preventing and countering violent extremism and terrorism.

The international conference will explore aspects related to the role of victims and survivors of terrorism as educators, agents for change, peacebuilders, and communicators, highlighting their centrality in prevention efforts, healing and recovery, social cohesion, peacebuilding, and empowering their communities. Discussions will examine ways in which the international community, member states, victims’ associations, and victims and survivors can help to educate and sensitize new generations about the impact of terrorism, contributing to fostering empathy and solidarity with victims and nurturing a culture of peace and resilience. Additionally, the conference will explore how member states and civil society can best support the needs and uphold the rights of victims of terrorism and promote inclusivity, tolerance, and social cohesion in communities affected by terrorism.

By bringing together experts, practitioners, and stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, the international conference aims to foster collaboration, inspire innovative solutions, and advocate for a holistic approach to addressing the needs of victims of terrorism while striving to build more peaceful and resilient societies globally.

## Preparatory Process

### Consultative Groups

UNOCT-UNCCT will engage key partners to plan and develop the programme of the International Conference, including with the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism, the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact's Working Group on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and the Rule of Law while Countering Terrorism and Supporting Victims of Terrorism, victims of terrorism, victims' associations, academics, experts, and other civil society organizations. This will also include regional consultations with victims of terrorism to ensure that the programme focuses on timely and relevant victims' issues and needs.

### Methodology

The International Conference will take place over two days, including a half day of side events organized by relevant entities, including the UN, Member States, and civil society organizations. The International Conference will offer numerous opportunities for genuine interaction amongst all participants, including through panel and plenary sessions, exhibitions, and networking opportunities.

A comprehensive communications strategy for the International Conference will be developed for social media, traditional media, and relevant UN and Member States websites. A series of communication products will be developed for use throughout the International Conference.

## Programme Structure

The International Conference will focus on education as a tool for prevention, peacebuilding and empowerment of victims of terrorism, and will include a number of plenary sessions and panels, including a high-level opening session, with interventions from the Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism, the co-chairs of the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism (Spain and Iraq), senior representatives of the UN system and the international community, regional organizations, civil society, and victims of terrorism and victims' associations from across the world.

The subsequent plenaries will cover a range of topics, discussed in more depth below, featuring speakers representing Member States, victims and survivors of terrorism, victims' associations, UN entities, civil society organisations, experts, academia, and relevant representatives from the private sector. The International Conference will conclude with a closing ceremony on the second day of the event. Due care will be taken to ensure appropriate geographic, gender, and age representation, with particular focus given to participants from the Global South to participate as speakers and attendees. The selection of victims will be based on the UNOCT-developed selection criteria complemented with a case-by-case review.

## Programme Content

### Panel 1: Voices of resilience: Victims of Terrorism as peace advocates and educators

This panel will delve into the pivotal role that victims of terrorism can play as agents of change and peace educators, and how their voices can help raise awareness of the human consequences of terrorism and violent extremism. It will explore how individuals who have experienced the devastation of terrorism firsthand often emerge as powerful advocates for reconciliation, healing, and social change. Through their resilience, survivors of terrorism transform personal tragedy into collective strength, advocating for peacebuilding initiatives, fostering dialogue, and promoting understanding among diverse communities. The panel will highlight the diverse ways in which victims of terrorism contribute to building peaceful societies, from sharing their personal narratives to engaging in grassroots activism and educational outreach. By amplifying the voices and experiences of victims, the panel seeks to inspire collective action and empower individuals and communities to work towards a future defined by peace, solidarity, and resilience.

### Panel 2: Institutional action to ensure victims and survivors are granted their rights and supported in their needs

This panel will focus on the crucial role of institutional action in guaranteeing that victims and survivors of terrorism receive the necessary support and have their rights upheld. It will explore how governments can effectively employ various strategies, including education, awareness campaigns, and remembrance policies, to empower and assist those affected by terrorism and ensure that they are recognized, respected, and not forgotten. Moreover, the discussion will explore the state's specific responsibilities in educating society about the needs and rights of victims, as well as in providing accessible support services. By establishing robust frameworks and partnerships between governmental bodies, civil society organizations, and affected communities, institutions can ensure a coordinated response to meet the diverse needs of victims and survivors. This collaborative approach not only acknowledges the challenges faced by those impacted by terrorism but also works towards fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment where their voices are heard, and their rights are respected.

### Panel 3: Nurturing resilience and social cohesion in the aftermath of terrorism: the role of civil society and grassroots initiatives

This panel will explore the vital role of civil society organizations, including victims' associations, in fostering peace and resilience in societies affected by terrorism. It will explore how these organizations serve as advocates and educators, empowering communities to overcome adversity and build a future defined by peace, solidarity, and collective awareness. Civil society, grassroots initiatives and victims' associations play a pivotal role in raising awareness, promoting dialogue, and building harmonious social contracts among diverse communities. The panel will highlight innovative approaches and best practices employed by these organizations to address the root causes of violence, nurture a culture of peace and foster societal healing and recovery, particularly through their support for victims of terrorism. Speakers will share insights into the transformative impact of community-led advocacy and educational efforts, emphasizing the importance of collaboration, inclusivity, and empowerment in building resilient societies. By amplifying the voices of civil society and victims' associations, the panel aims to inspire collective action and advocacy for sustainable peace and social change.

#### Panel 4: Empowering youth as peace advocates in the struggle against terrorism

This panel will explore the pivotal role of youth and youth victims as advocates for peace and agents of change in communities affected by terrorism. It will explore how empowering young people through education, access to social media, and other technologies and forms of creative expression can enable them to become leaders and powerful voices for peace, resilience, and social justice. By harnessing their own energy, creativity, and idealism, youth victims and survivors of terrorism can be empowered through education to challenge extremist ideologies, promote intercultural dialogue, and foster mutual understanding, while also raising awareness about the detrimental impact of terrorism. The panel will highlight the transformative role of youth victims of terrorism, who, despite their trauma, often emerge as strong advocates for peace and reconciliation. Through their courage and activism, youth victims inspire others to reject violence and embrace dialogue and cooperation. The discussion will showcase innovative approaches that engage youth victims in peacebuilding efforts, leveraging their potential to drive positive change and build more inclusive and resilient societies. By amplifying the voices and experiences of youth, particularly youth victims, the panel aims to inspire collaborative action and solidarity in the pursuit of lasting peace and justice.

#### Outcomes from the Global Congress

The International Conference is a direct outcome of the Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism, which was held in New York on 8 and 9 September 2022, under the overarching theme of “Advancing the Rights and Needs of Victims of Terrorism.” The Global Congress marked a critical milestone towards strengthened global solidarity and unity in support of victims of terrorism. One of the seven recommendations of the [Chair’s Summary](#) was to hold a follow-up conference in two years to galvanize continued political will from across the international community to advance the victims of terrorism agenda.

Additional progress on the recommendations from the Global Congress that will be showcased throughout the International Conference include the implementation of the Model Legislative Provisions project, which seeks to strengthen national frameworks on victims of terrorism and is currently being piloted by UNOCT and UNODC in two Member States and the development of the Victims of Terrorism Associations Network (VoTAN), advanced by UNOCT and financed by the Kingdom of Spain, as a means to establish a formal network of victims and survivors of terrorism that will to inform programming on victims and to serve as a platform for peer-to-peer exchanges, learning, and support.

#### Side events

Side events will be organized by Member States and civil society organizations, including associations of victims and survivors of terrorism and/or victims and survivors, that either demonstrate good practice, strong expertise and relevance to the technical subjects of focus.

Complementary activities, such as display of exhibitions on victims of terrorism, might be also included as part of the programme.