



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM**

**Opening Remarks by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-
General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

**Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact Working Group on
Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Conducive to
Terrorism**

**Expert Retreat on “Strengthening the UN System Response to Far-
right Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism”**

22 October 2020, Remote

Dear Colleagues,

Good morning to those of you in New York and good afternoon to
colleagues in Europe.

Thank you for joining us for this retreat of the Counter-Terrorism
Compact Working Group on Preventing and Countering Violent
Extremism conducive to terrorism.

Unfortunately the chair of the Working Group, Mr. Khan, cannot be
with us today, but I would like to thank him and all of you for this
initiative, and the Secretariat of the Counter-Terrorism Compact for
their substantive preparatory work, in consultation with Working
Group members.

The Secretary-General stressed at the meeting of his High-level Action
Group on PVE last year that we must keep abreast of evolving violent
extremist trends.

Therefore, I am pleased that UNOCT was able to provide seed-funding for the project that the Working Group has undertaken to explore the issue of 'far-right violent extremism conducive to terrorism'.

Member States' are increasingly conscious of the threat that this manifestation of violent extremism poses to international peace and security but there is a long way to go to properly understand this phenomenon--or to even agree on how to refer to it.

Our discussions today will seek precisely to better understand the phenomenon and how Member States have been approaching it.

And tomorrow we will consider the ways in which the UN could support Member States in tackling this rapidly growing threat.

This issue is complex and fraught with political and legal sensitivities and implications.

But a problem does not go away by ignoring it. And responses should not make things worse.

Addressing terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is a core tenet of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Upholding this tenet is a matter of credibility for Member States and for the efforts of the United Nations.

It does not mean overreacting. It does not mean applying quick fixes and one-size-fits-all solutions.

The challenge for Member States is to formulate evidence-based, proportionate responses, that save lives, foster social cohesion, and uphold human rights and the rule of law.

And the challenge for the United Nations System is to set out a collective and principled way forward to encourage Member States to address the issue, and, where requested to do so, to support them, in line with international law.

Dear Colleagues,

We have heard over the past two years a growing number of Member States, including within the Security Council, express grave concern over the threat from so-called far-right violent extremism.

But it is not a new phenomenon.

We all remember the terrorist attack in Oslo in 2011, or the Oklahoma City bombing 25 years ago.

The threat has more recently grown and become increasingly transnational.

The Secretary-General has highlighted the resurgence of anti-Semitism, neo-Nazism, white supremacy, hate speech and violence against religious, ethnic and other minorities.

And he has warned about hate groups resorting to terrorist tactics.

There has been more than 300 per cent increase in attacks attributed to far-right violent extremists over the past five years in North

America, Western Europe and Oceania – several of which the national authorities regarded as acts of terrorism.

Christchurch, El Paso, Halle, Hanau, Pittsburgh and Poway were heinous attacks against minorities that often drew inspiration from each other.

Times of crisis and stress – such as this pandemic-- are times of great vulnerability to scapegoating, xenophobia, and hate speech.

In recent months, there has been a tsunami of disinformation and online conspiracy theories, some of which pose a serious risk of translating into real-life violence.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided a boost to far-right and other violent extremists across the ideological spectrum, particularly online.

This was highlighted by several Member States during the Virtual Counter-Terrorism Week in July.

So, this retreat comes at a critical moment.

Based on our discussions today and tomorrow, the Working Group will propose recommendations to guide a coherent and principled engagement and support to Member States in addressing the threat of far-right violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

These recommendations will be considered at the next meeting of the Secretary-General's High-Level Action Group on PVE later this year.

I therefore expect that this Working Group will remain seized of this matter to continue ensuring a 'One-UN' approach:

To leverage existing good practices, tools, and projects developed under the priority areas identified in the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism;

To build on synergies and avoid duplication of efforts with the important work done in related areas, such as the Secretary-General's Strategy and Plan of Action to Address Hate Speech and his Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites;

And to continue aligning our work with the mandate received from Member States and their priorities.

The Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee held a first open briefing two weeks ago on this topic, about which we will hear from CTED this morning.

And Member States will undertake the seventh biennial review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which is an opportunity to encourage specific guidance.

Dear Colleagues,

I will now hand over the floor to my Deputy, Mr. Raffi Gregorian, who will chair this session.

I will be leaving you shortly to join the Secretary-General's Executive Committee.

So, I wish you productive discussions, and I look forward to reading the recommendations for the Secretary-General's High-level Action Group on PVE.

Thank you.