



**Video Statement by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov**  
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**International Digital Security Forum**

Vienna and Online, 2 December 2020

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by thanking the Austrian Institute of Technology (AIT) for inviting me to address you at the opening of the 2020 International Digital Security Forum.

I would like to express to our Austrian hosts and friends my sincere condolences for the recent terrorist attack in Vienna, a city that means so much to me, and my heartfelt solidarity with the victims and their loved ones.

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to commend the Institute for convening this important event bringing together experts from across the globe to discuss the most pressing issues regarding security and the use of technologies.

All of you attending today are doing important work in this field. And all of you, I am sure, had to adjust your work to the limitations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We were all already heavily dependent on information technology in our work, but now our use of it is constant and the need for digital security has multiplied.

Our own UN-way of working has had to adapt to this new reality.

In July, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism successfully organized the first ever Virtual Counter-Terrorism Week. Over 1,000 people from 134 countries participated in its interactive discussions.

The event underlined the importance of maintaining our collective vigilance against terrorists and violent extremists in a pandemic context, as well as the need to reinvigorate multilateralism in the fight against this global scourge.

During the Virtual Counter-Terrorism Week, we together with Saudi Arabia also launched an online exhibition about the work of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre in the UN Office of Counter Terrorism. I encourage you all to visit the UNCCT Expo, which remains available on our website, and represents a significant example of our new way of working online.

Over the past two years, UNCCT and the Austrian Institute of Technology have closely worked together on issues such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and the responsible use of biometric systems in the context of border security and management.

This included the joint organization of the Global Innovation Challenge—or hackathon—on Countering Digital Terrorism, which the Institute hosted in Vienna in December 2019.

During the hackathon, we brought 13 teams of young innovators from across the world to Vienna to present their creative solutions.

I hope we can continue this wonderful engagement with youth as we jointly address digital security. Young people have an inherent understanding of some of the key counter-terrorism issues, and great ideas how to solve them.

During 2020 the Austrian Institute of Technology and UNCCT strengthened their cooperation on the use of contactless biometric technologies and advanced biometric systems for identity documents verification in the context of border security.

Both the United Nations and the Institute recognise that biometric identification is an effective and a powerful tool for Member States to responsibly and properly identify terrorists, in compliance with the requirements established by UN Security Council resolution 2396 and human rights.

While my Office works with Member States to promote the use of innovative technologies to counter terrorism, we are aware of the serious risks that come along with many of these tools.

Technologies such as biometrics, cryptocurrencies, social media and AI systems, can create significant legal, security and public health challenges.

To address them, it is critical that we develop comprehensive and human rights-sensitive approaches, share good practices, and foster public-private partnerships.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

COVID-19 is testing national and international resilience as well as global solidarity. This pandemic has the potential to exacerbate grievances, undermine social cohesion and fuel conflict, creating conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.

Terrorists are exploiting the disruption, uncertainty and economic hardships caused by COVID-19 to spread fear, hate and division and radicalize and recruit new followers.

They are particularly targeting young people, who have been hardest hit by the wide-ranging social and economic impacts of the virus and can be easily targeted by terrorist groups through the use of new technologies.

Deadly global threats such as terrorism and COVID-19 require us to act together, with a renewed sense of solidarity. As Secretary-General António Guterres noted when marking the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations in September: “Today, we have a surplus of multilateral challenges and a deficit of multilateral solutions.”

This is why your discussions over these two days are so important: only through cooperation and common understanding of our challenges and priorities we will be able to leverage technology to better face global threats and security risks.

I wish you fruitful discussions during the Forum, with the hope that next year we will all meet face-to-face.

*Vielen Dank !*