



**Opening Remarks for
Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General, UNOCT**

**Soft Launch of the International Hub on Behavioural Insights to Counter
Terrorism, established as a UNOCT Programme Office in the State of Qatar**

7 December 2020 – 09:00AM

Good morning, Good afternoon and good evening to all who joined us today,

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear colleagues and friends,

Welcome to the soft launch of the 'International Hub on Behavioural Insights to Counter Terrorism', which we are inaugurating today as a UNOCT Programme Office in Doha.

I am honoured that His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar, is with us today.

I am also pleased to be joined by His Excellency Major General Abdul Aziz Abdullah Al-Ansari, Director of the Department of International Cooperation and Chairman of the National Counter-Terrorism Committee, at the Ministry of Interior of Qatar, with whom I had the pleasure to sign the Agreement to establish this International Hub in December last year.

I am deeply thankful to Her Excellency Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani, Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations in New York, for her strong support and leadership throughout the process to establish the Hub.

I had hoped to be in Doha in person for this historic event, but, unfortunately, COVID-19 restrictions prevented my travel.

Nevertheless, today marks a major milestone in the strategic partnership between the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and the State of Qatar.

Thanks to the strong political and financial support of Qatar, UNOCT is able to provide significant assistance to Member States and other actors that are tackling the scourge of terrorism.

Qatar's support has made possible the establishment of a reliable coordination mechanism for 43 UN and other entities through the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, that includes INTERPOL and the World Customs Organisation.

In less than nine months, 127 Member States and regional organisations, including the European Union, have appointed focal points to coordinate their counter-terrorism work with the UN through the Compact Coordination Platform. It is the biggest counter-terrorism coordination mechanism in the world.

We have also made important progress in establishing the UNOCT Programme Office on Parliamentary Engagement in Doha.

Just a few days ago, I signed an Exchange of Letters and a Contribution Agreement with His Excellency Ahmad Bin Abdulla Bin Zaid Al Mahmoud, the Speaker of the Shura Council, to establish this programme office, which will help legislative bodies develop and adopt counter-terrorism laws in conformity with international obligations.

Other programmes that Qatar supports include:

- Our flagship global Countering Terrorist Travel Programme that helps Member States establish and use passenger data systems to detect the travel of known and suspected terrorists. Thirty-eight countries have already officially joined the programme and a similar number have expressed serious interest.
- Our advanced Victims of Terrorism Support Programme, which is expanding its activities to uphold the rights and meet the needs of victims around the world.

We look forward to holding the first ever Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism, as part of the United Nations High-Level Counter-Terrorism Week in June next year.

- And our global sports programme, which in September launched its

workstream on the 'Promotion of Sport and its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism', in partnership with the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, and the International Centre for Sport Security.

Last month, we also launched a call for proposals - through our partner UNICRI - to support grassroots civil society organizations that are using sports-based projects to tackle violent extremism in their communities.

And next year, we will launch a global campaign on sports values to prevent violent extremism, which will build momentum in the run-up to the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

So our wide-ranging partnership with Qatar is already delivering tangible results and lasting impact.

But I strongly believe that the International Hub on Behavioural Insights to Counter Terrorism will take our collaboration to the next level.

The Doha Hub will focus on cutting-edge, innovative and evidence-based solutions. Excellence and international recognition are our objectives.

Through insights from cognitive psychology, behavioural economics and social sciences, the Hub will study how humans think, decide and take action.

It will help us understand why and how people become radicalized to violence and where we can intervene most effectively to halt the radicalization process.

Applying a behavioural lens to counter-terrorism, the Hub will enable us to identify risk and resilience factors and develop empirically validated interventions for policymakers and practitioners.

And it will support the efforts of governments, international and regional organizations, as well as civil society through world-class research, capacity-building, and the promotion of information sharing and good practices on behavioural approaches to counter terrorism.

It will also support the United Nations' collective work in the behavioural insights domain.

The Hub is also the first UNOCT Programme Office in the Gulf region.

It will enable us to work more closely with our beneficiaries in the field, to have a better understanding of national and regional needs, and to strengthen the sustainability of our technical and capacity-building assistance.

We will achieve all of this through continued close collaboration and coordination with the United Nations family on the ground.

My colleague, Rafi Shah, will provide more detail on the Hub and its programme of work later today.

This event offers an opportunity to discuss how behavioural interventions can help support the development and delivery of effective counter-terrorism policy and programming.

I look forward to hearing from our UN colleagues and Counter-Terrorism Compact partners on their perspectives, experiences and good practices in applying behavioural insights to prevent and counter terrorism. Thank you for joining us Achim, Ghada, Michele and Miguel.

We will also hear from Mr. Paul Daniell, who has led behavioural insights and countering violent extremism programming at the New South Wales Government in Australia.

Let me close by expressing my sincere appreciation to the Government of the State of Qatar for its generous financial contribution, through which my Office continues to carry out its core policy, coordination and capacity-building mandates in an effective and sustainable manner.

I now have the honour of inviting His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar, to make his remarks as our Guest of Honour in today's launch.

Excellency, you have the floor.

Thank you.