



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM
UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT)**

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

**Naif Arab University for Security Sciences,
Riyadh, 11 September 2019**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Dear Students,

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to His Excellency Dr. Abdulmajid bin Abdullah Albanyan, for his kind invitation to your prestigious university, and His Excellency Ambassador Al-Mouallimi, Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations in New York, for his outstanding support to the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre in his capacity as the Chairman of its Advisory Board.

I have just had a meeting with the President of your university, and I am deeply impressed by the outstanding training, education, and research on security matters that you are involved in. I appreciate the opportunity to talk to you and exchange our views.

Today commemorates the 18th anniversary of the horrendous attacks of September 11, 2001. Since then, we have witnessed countless terrorist attacks all over the world, which remain a major threat to international peace and security. Terrorism exacerbates conflicts, destabilizes entire regions and hinders economic development. It is a complex global challenge that affects or can affect every country around the world.

The nature of the threat is constantly changing as terrorist groups adapt their tactics in response to strengthened counter-terrorism capacities at global, regional and national levels. New technologies, social media and the flow of information, people and money across borders – all these are new dimensions to the terrorist threat.

At the core of the terrorist threat, ISIL/Da'esh remains a critical concern. Despite its territorial defeat last year, the group still aspires to global relevance, in particular through its affiliates and inspired attacks.

Al-Qaeda also remains resilient and its affiliates are in fact stronger than Da'esh counterparts in Syria's Idlib province, Yemen, Somalia and much of West Africa.

Moreover, as we saw in Christchurch in March and elsewhere, the growing threat from far-right and supremacist terrorist groups and individuals also poses severe risks to many countries.

The transnational nature of terrorism means there is a continuous need for strengthened multilateral cooperation to address this threat.

States have the primary responsibility for tackling terrorism and protecting their citizens, but the United Nations has a key role to play to support these efforts.

There is a strong international framework that guides the counter-terrorism work of the United Nations, always at the request of its Member States.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has always been a staunch supporter of international cooperation to countering terrorism and has taken a leadership role in promoting the United Nations as a natural place for the countries of the world to come together to address the scourge of terrorism.

This is best reflected in the leadership role of Saudi Arabia in the establishment in September 2011 of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, known as UNCCT, based on a vision of the late Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and through an initial contribution of 10 million dollars and a subsequent contribution of 100 million dollars in 2014 from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to promote international counter-terrorism cooperation and support Member States in the implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

This very generous contribution enables much needed international counter-terrorism capacity-building assistance by UNCCT.

The Centre is now strategically placed within the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, which was established by the General Assembly in 2017 to provide leadership on counter-terrorism and to enhance coordination and coherence across the UN system to ensure the balanced implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

In other terms, one can say that the establishment of UNCCT was the beginning of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, which I am leading today. So Saudi Arabia can be considered as the founder of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism.

When establishing the Office, the General Assembly recognized “the important work carried out by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre.”

I was honoured to be appointed the Executive Director of UNCCT when I assumed my function as the UN Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism.

Thanks to these generous Saudi contributions, which served as a great catalyst and helped the UN to mobilize 30 more donors, and thanks to its strong mandate, the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre has been able to support the Member States that are most affected by terrorism, in their efforts to enhance their abilities to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism.

In our work, we are guided by the UNCCT Advisory Board, which consists of 21 Member States and the European Union as observer. We are fortunate that His Excellency Ambassador Al-Mouallimi is chairman of the Advisory Board, which provides strategic guidance to the Centre, including in term of the development and implementation of our current five-year programme of work.

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Last year, we held a high-level meeting of the Advisory Board in Riyadh with the UN Secretary-General and the Saudi Minister for Foreign Affairs.

In line with the strategic guidance of the Advisory Board, we have implemented numerous projects that have had strong impact at the global, regional, and national level.

We are now consolidating projects into global programmes that allow UNCCT to offer practical technical assistance to more than 70 countries.

Allow me to mention a few good examples in this regard.

The Centre is currently implementing 38 projects at global, regional and national levels. They cover a broad range of priority areas, including preventing violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism, addressing the foreign terrorist fighters phenomenon, developing regional counter-terrorism strategies, countering the financing of terrorism, border security and management, cyber and new technologies, CBRN, south-south cooperation, human rights and support for victims of terrorism.

One of our flagship global initiatives focuses on supporting victims of terrorism. The Counter-Terrorism Centre is the lead organizer of the of International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, which we observe on 21 August. We organized a commemoration ceremony and photo exhibition last month, opened by the Secretary-General.

At the regional level, we have supported Central Asia, Central Africa, South and South-East Asia, the Caribbean, and Southern Africa in their efforts to develop and implement regional strategies to counter-terrorism. We are currently working with the Arab Interior Ministers Council to develop a strategy for the Arab region to counter terrorism.

NAUSS is a member of the working group of the Arab Interior Ministers Council and will be a key partner in our endeavour to support countries in the region to develop their national and regional strategies.

Last but not least, we have extended our practical support to numerous Member States at the national level. For example, in Nigeria UNCCT worked to enhance airport security. In Pakistan trained managers of Technical and Vocational Education and Training schools on prevention of violent extremism. In Jordan we are working with NATO and the Jordanian Armed Forces to develop CBRN response plans. And in Tunisia and other countries we have trained law enforcement officials on human rights. In the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia we are assisting Governments with their strategic communications.

The Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, the UN's coordination framework on counter-terrorism that is implemented through my Office, is also developing important inter-agency projects in areas such as countering terrorist narratives, biometric information, protection of critical infrastructure and financial intelligence and information.

In all of this work it is critical for us to ensure that we respond to the needs of Member States, as defined by them, and that we deliver real impact on the ground. We have therefore put in place rigorous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Member States appreciate the pragmatic and

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results-oriented approach of UNCCT and have repeatedly stressed this in General Assembly resolution and when I travel and meet the beneficiaries.

We are currently reviewing our accomplishments and developing a vision for the future work of UNCCT.

Under the able guidance of the UNCCT Advisory Board, we will continue to utilize the generous contributions from Saudi Arabia to further enhance our efforts to transform the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre into a *Centre of Excellence* that will be the go-to international counter-terrorism centre with the necessary experts to conduct research, provide training, and connect other centres of excellence around the world, such as your university and ETIDAL.

In my visits to Saudi Arabia I have always been impressed by the significant expertise and good practices you have developed in various institutions. As Executive Director of UNCCT I want to do more to leverage this expertise, and provide a platform to share it with the broader international community.

Facilitating South-South cooperation is one of our key endeavours at UNCCT. NAUSS has useful experience to share in this regard in light of your pan-Arabic mission. I would like to explore if we could strengthen our collaboration in this critical area.

Experts say: “To defeat a network, you need a network.” So to defeat terrorist networks, we will require a counter-terrorism network. With this idea in mind, we are currently identifying strategic partners to collaborate.

Given the outstanding work that you are doing at NAUSS, I want to explore how we leverage and share your experience and expertise through UNCCT.

You come from positions in your national authorities where you are addressing the threat of terrorism on a daily basis. I therefore look forward to our discussion today on how we can ensure that UNCCT continues to respond to your needs. What do you see as the role of the United Nations in countering terrorism and where do you see the global needs that UNCCT can respond to?

I want to make sure that when you graduate and return to your position you can look to UNCCT as a Centre of Excellence you can engage with. We need to unite to counter terrorism, to achieve our ultimate goal: a future without terrorism.

Thank you Dr. Albanyan for hosting me and thank you all for your engagement in our discussion.