



# UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

**Opening Remarks by Mr. Raffi Gregorian,  
Deputy to the Under-Secretary-General and Director  
United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

**Counter Terrorism Preparedness Network Annual Strategic Exercise**

**20 April 2023**

Distinguished representatives,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to open this *Annual Strategic Exercise*, which brings together strategic and tactical leaders from cities from all across the world.

Following the success of our three virtual exercises in 2021 and 2022 focused on biological, chemical, and radiological terrorism, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the Counter Terrorism Preparedness Network (CTPN) decided to organize this fourth joint activity.

Let me begin by thanking CTPN for working so closely with UNOCT staff on the past exercises and for ensuring that today's exercise will be equally successful.

Today you will focus on the threat of chemical terrorism – specifically the threat posed by the dispersal of chemicals in an urban environment.

The risk of non-state actors, including terrorists, acquiring chemical weapons is still as much of a concern as it was when the Security Council adopted resolution 1540 in 2004. That is why in 2021 the United Nations General Assembly again urged all Member States to take steps to strengthen national measures, as appropriate, to prevent terrorists from acquiring Weapons of Mass Destruction, their means of delivery and related materials, equipment and technologies related to their manufacture.

The UN's Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism, Vladimir Voronkov, stated last November that "*while terrorism continues to pose a threat for the whole world, chemical,*

*biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) terrorism is a particular issue of concern for Member States and the international community alike.”*

He also stressed that *“we must remain vigilant as any possibility of terrorists accessing and using CBRN weapons and materials poses a serious threat to international peace and security.”*

Indeed, the Ninth Report of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, which was published in November 2022, presented evidence that confirmed what had been previously reported elsewhere – that Da’esh, the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), manufactured and produced chemical rockets and mortars, chemical ammunition for rocket-propelled grenades, chemical warheads and improvised explosive devices.

Furthermore, the ISIL weapons programme involved the development, testing, weaponization and deployment of a range of agents, including aluminum phosphide, chlorine, clostridium botulinum, cyanide, nicotine, ricin, and thallium sulphate.

The threat is not confined to ISIL. In October 2020, the National Intelligence and Security Agency of Somalia announced that 79 tons of sulfuric acid were seized from Al-Shabaab, which is an Al-Qaida affiliate.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNOCT’s Counter-Terrorism Centre helps Member States at the global, regional, and national levels prevent and counter CBRN terrorism.

Since 2018, UNCCT has organized capacity-building and outreach activities in the field of preventing and responding to CBRN terrorism for more than 5,000 officials. Some examples of this support include a response field exercise for 2,500 Jordanian officials; a virtual reality training for countering clandestine chemical and biological terrorist laboratories; and training courses combating the threat of chemical terrorism and developing countermeasures.

Together with INTERPOL, our Counter-Terrorism Centre is also conducting a *Global Threat Study on Non-State Actors and Their Potential Use of Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives (CBRNE) materials* for the Middle East and North Africa; Sub-Saharan Africa; Southeast Asia; Western, Central, and Southern Asia and the Americas.

We have drawn on this and other work to develop with CTPN a deep-dive exercise that enlists international subject matter experts to help both strategic and tactical leaders reflect on how multi-agency preparedness and response arrangements could be enhanced, and resilience developed.

I look forward to seeing the results and lessons learned from this exercise which will be useful in our future support to Member States and cities.

I want to conclude by thanking all of you for your participation, commitment, and support to counter the threat of CBRN terrorism. UNOCT and its Counter-Terrorism Centre stand ready to assist Member States in building their capacities through effective cooperation and partnerships.

Thank you again and I wish you all a successful event.