



# UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

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

**Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee open meeting on “Countering terrorist  
narratives and preventing the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes”**

**United Nations Headquarters, New York  
19 October 2023, ECOSOC Chamber**

Thank you, Mr. Chair,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

We live in an era marked by rapid technological advancement and unprecedented interconnectedness. An era of new opportunities to build a better future for all, but also of challenges to prevent these same advancements from being used for terrorist and other criminal purposes.

Terrorism has become geographically more diffuse and ideologically more diverse than it was 20 years ago. But it is now also coupled with the ability to proliferate disinformation and misinformation at such speeds and volumes that it pollutes our digital spaces.

Terrorists capitalize on this phenomenon to instill fear, dehumanize, polarize – and shroud their agendas in a veneer of legitimacy. Their corrosive propaganda contributes to the breakdown in trust, truth and values that undermines cohesion within and between communities and the social contract between people and their governments.

Terrorist groups are exploiting artificial intelligence, automation, and engagement-maximizing algorithms to flood social media with violent extremist narratives. Alarming, they have now penetrated the growing, online gaming ecosystem.

The increased sophistication of terrorist narratives, both in their formulation and in their dissemination, is a threat that affects us all and requires calibrated and coordinated responses. Security Council resolution 2354 (2017) has provided the international community with important guidance in this regard and we welcome the continued attention of the Counter-Terrorism Committee to this challenge.

To be effective, we need robust policy and programmatic synergies across countries and regions, particularly in relation to crisis preparedness and response, fostered through capacity-building and the exchange of experience.

Mr. Chair,

Countering terrorist narratives demands comprehensive, whole-of-society approaches that are tailored to the local context, are gender-sensitive and firmly adhere to international law, including international human rights norms and standards.

This should go beyond regulatory and law enforcement measures to foster a public discourse that not only call out terrorist falsehoods but also offer credible alternatives.

These efforts may benefit from empirical research and behavioral insights to enhance our understanding of risks but also resilience factors towards violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism recognizes this, and we pride ourselves on leading emerging practices and innovative, evidence-based capacity-building solutions in this space, constantly evolving to address the dynamic nature of the threat and Member States' concerns.

UNOCT's International Hub in Doha on Behavioural Insights to Counter Terrorism has convened cross-regional workshops and developed several knowledge products, including a guidance paper, knowledge bank and a podcast series, to facilitate the application of BI to prevent violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

In today's digital age, where mis- and disinformation can spread like wildfire, effective strategic and crisis communication is a vital instrument to counter terrorists' narratives and their attempts at sowing division.

The Global Programme on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism led by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre in UNOCT has been at the forefront of capacity-building efforts in this regard. The Centre has created practical measures, such as a Crisis Communications Toolkit; used crisis simulation software to pressure-test learning; and developed an online communities of practice in the field.

We are applying this expertise to our broader capacity-building portfolio, such as supporting governments, civil society, and communities with the reintegration of returnees and their accompanying family members, through trauma-informed, strategic communications training.

UNOCT has also been actively encouraging public-private partnerships, including through our engagement with the Christchurch Call to Action and the Global Internet Forum for Counter-Terrorism.

Mr. Chair,

Even video games and gaming adjacent platforms are vulnerable to exploitation by groups and individuals espousing violent extremist views to spread their narratives, recruit, radicalize and incite to violence.

Gaming, as an industry, culture, and a community, encompasses nearly three billion people globally - people of all ages and backgrounds, men, and women, connecting online to play. Yet, the regulation, oversight, and reporting mechanisms for managing content within these spaces remain limited.

We know that terrorist groups understand this and are actively seizing these opportunities to reach different audiences, to spread for disinformation and even to target vulnerable individuals for recruitment.

This alarming trend highlights the pressing need for further collaborative research to understand the extent to which platforms are being leveraged for terrorist purposes.

However, amidst these clear risks, we should not lose sight of the significant pro-social benefits that online gaming provides, and the potential for prevention and resilience-building within these online spaces, as highlighted by UNOCT's Research Report on the Intersection Between Gaming and Violent Extremism.

Moreover, as you will hear from Priyank Mathur of Mythos Labs, there is good reason to think that artificial intelligence can be harnessed in innovative ways to provide off-ramps away from radicalization to violence and enhance critical thinking skills of individuals at previously unthinkable scales.

Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Unified in purpose and armed with the right research, capacity-building tools and strategies, the international community can strike the right balance and overcome these challenges.

Thank you.