



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

Message by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism on the occasion of the 2024 International Women's Day

08 March 2024

Today, we commemorate International Women's Day under the theme "Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress".

Current global challenges, including the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, escalating poverty and climate disasters continue to disproportionately affect women and girls.

Prolonged conflicts, poor governance, and human rights violations contribute to conditions conducive to violent extremism which have devastating effects for women and girls and can intensify pre-existing gender inequalities and discrimination.

It is therefore crucial to center women in counter-terrorism efforts, as well as other peace and security processes. The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism is committed to investing in women and their full, equal, and meaningful participation in counter-terrorism efforts through our gender-responsive programmes and policies.

Terrorist groups exploit and manipulate gender inequalities, norms, and roles to recruit, radicalise and mobilize new members.

The 8th review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, adopted by consensus in June 2023, calls for gender-responsive approaches to counter-terrorism. In practice, this means developing counter-terrorism initiatives based on context-specific gender analysis and assessing the impact of counter-terrorism activities on women and women's organisations.

International human rights law and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda also remind us of the importance to build the capacities of women professionals to be meaningfully engaged in peacebuilding and counter-terrorism efforts. We also must ensure full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation of women, civil society organisations, and especially women-led civil society organisations, in developing counter-terrorism strategies. These activities are not cost-neutral and require adequate financial and human resources.

In line with our Strategic Plan for 2022-2025, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism remains committed to mainstreaming gender across our policies and programmes, from design to implementation and evaluation as we have established Gender Responsive Counter-Terrorism as one of our strategic goals.

We are proud that the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism meets or exceeds 88% of the indicators under the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

These indicators measure, monitor, and drive progress towards gender equality and recognizes the importance of financial allocations in this endeavour.

Investing in women also means amplifying women's voices. In line with the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, UNOCT strives to ensure the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in events organized by the Office. For example, during the Third United Nations Counter Terrorism Week held in June 2023, and comprised of the High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States, Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly and 40 side events, 40% of participants were women.

Though women have historically been excluded from counter-terrorism efforts and other security spaces, our Global Programme teams promote women's engagement across all capacity-building activities. UNOCT is proud to highlight that women comprise approximately 30-50% of participants in all activities.

In 2023, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism launched the Gender and Identity Factors Platform, which supports Member States in developing gender-responsive approaches to countering terrorism and preventing and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

The platform include a publicly accessible library of resources, communities of practice, and opportunities to directly engage with experts and specialists.

It is hosted on *UNOCT's* gold award-winning e-learning platform "Connect & Learn", which has just won the gold medal and world first place at the Learning Awards 2024

We also continue to integrate gender sensitive approaches in our programmes and activities.

For example, our Global Sports Programme disbursed micro-grants to civil society organisations, including women-led organisations, to equip young women with the skills they need as changemakers within their communities to promote gender equality and prevent violent extremism.

Similarly, through our Global Programme on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, young women have developed core policy, data analysis and strategic communications skills to create their own initiatives which address the drivers of radicalisation. This has included the development of initiatives focused on addressing more targeted issues such as countering terrorist exploitation of donation schemes at a local level.

As an International Gender Champion, I have emphasized that “gender equality and the empowerment of women are essential to a more peaceful, inclusive, and egalitarian world”.

The effectiveness of counter-terrorism efforts around the world are linked to our collective ability to adopt and implement gender-responsive and human rights-based approaches.

On this International Women’s Day, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism reiterates its commitment to gender equality and investing in women, through capacity-building and supporting their full, equal, and meaningful participation in efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism conducive to terrorism.