



**Opening Statement by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General for
Counter-Terrorism,
First 2021 Ambassadorial-level Quarterly Briefing to Member States**

28 January 2021

Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,

I would like to welcome you all to our first Quarterly Briefing to Member States this year.

I am pleased to be joined here today by my colleagues and other senior United Nations officials.

This year, we mark the 15th anniversary of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the 20th anniversary of United Nations Security Council resolution 1373 establishing the Counter-Terrorism Committee, as well as the 10th anniversary of our United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre.

Tragically, this year also marks the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks and the 10th anniversary of the Norway attacks, among many others across the globe, including against the United Nations.

Let us express our support and solidarity to the victims of attacks these horrific and continue to remember and honour all victims and survivors of terrorism around the world.

The terrorism threat persists and continues to evolve, reminding us every day of the relevance of our mandate and the importance of our work.

Though counter-terrorism operations have significantly reduced ISIL's and Al-Qaida's capabilities, they continue to exploit local grievances to expand their influence and carry out attacks through their regional franchises and affiliates.

At the same time, other threats have emerged.

Racially and ethnically motivated terrorism is rising and transcending borders.

Misogyny and sexual violence continue to be common features across the ideological spectrum among terrorist and violent extremist groups.

Cyber- and bio-security are now more relevant than ever.

Socioeconomic and political grievances exacerbated by the pandemic are being used by terrorists to spread propaganda and win supporters both online and offline.

We must therefore stay vigilant and united against terrorism.

Dear Colleagues,

In my remarks today, I will first highlight our important counter-terrorism efforts in 2020, and then share our key priorities for this year.

First, over the past year, we strengthened our cooperation with Member States, regional organizations, civil society organizations and UN partners.

With your support and contributions, my Office successfully organized a series of high-profile events, such as the Virtual Counter-Terrorism Week in July, which also featured the UNCCT Expo, and the third commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism in August.

Second, we continued to strengthen information exchange, coherence and joint planning under the umbrella of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact.

The Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Platform, which I launched ahead of schedule in March, now connects over 800 focal points from 126 Member States, the European Union and 43 UN and non UN entities.

Third, we have successfully adapted projects to overcome the conditions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and continued to implement flagship capacity-building programmes such as the UN Countering Terrorist Travel Programme.

Furthermore, in 2020 we launched global programmes on preventing and countering violent extremism; security of major sporting events and the promotion of sport and its values as a tool to prevent violent extremism; addressing terrorist use of small arms and light weapons; national-level inter-agency coordination mechanisms or 'fusion cells'; and use of unmanned aerial systems.

Fourth, along with UNICEF, we have continued our efforts to support concerned Member States on the protection, repatriation, prosecution,

rehabilitation and reintegration of their nationals from camps in Syria and Iraq through the UN Global Framework, given the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in these camps.

Fifth, 2020 was the first year when UNOCT fully implemented the gender mainstreaming guidance and the gender marker. 21 out of 23 programmes/projects adopted in 2020 include different levels of gender considerations.

And lastly, UNOCT has made important progress in transitioning to field presences that ensure impactful and cost-effective programme delivery in closer proximity to beneficiaries.

Together with the State of Qatar, we launched in December the International Hub on Behavioural Insights to Counter Terrorism as a UNOCT Programme Office in Doha.

We also signed an agreement with the Shura Council of the State of Qatar in November, establishing the UNOCT Programme Office in Doha on parliamentary engagement in preventing and countering terrorism.

In September, we signed the agreements to establish a Programme Office in Rabat as a state-of-the-art training hub for the development and delivery of tailored counter-terrorism policing and border security management training first of all for the Sahel region.

We are also progressing well in establishing our Programme Office in Kenya. Last but not least, I would like to report to you that UNOCT Programme Office in Budapest designed for implementation of the Countering Terrorist Travel program is now fully operational.

Let me thank governments of the State of Qatar, Morocco, Kenya and Hungary for their generous support and hospitality.

Excellencies, dear Colleagues,

I will now share key UNOCT priorities for 2021.

First, we will hold the Second Counter-Terrorism Week from 28 June to 2 July.

As you know, the Week will comprise three high-level events including the Seventh Biennial Review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy; the First Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism; and the Second United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States.

We look forward to supporting the Permanent Representatives of Oman and Spain in their capacity as co-facilitators of the review process in their efforts to ensure a consensus outcome and a clear roadmap for the next two years.

Second, we are planning to organize four high-level regional conferences to maintain the momentum on multilateral counter-terrorism cooperation.

We are planning to hold our first Regional Conference on Human Rights and Civil Society Engagement in Spain in May, followed by a CARICOM Conference in Trinidad and Tobago, and an International Conference on Regional Cooperation between Central Asian States in Uzbekistan.

We are also considering a regional conference in Riyadh pending further consultations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In October, we plan to convene with the State of Qatar the Annual Forum of Beneficiaries of Technical Assistance in Doha.

Third, we will continue to develop the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Platform, making it more useful and user friendly for a growing number of Member States.

Fourth, UNOCT will issue a number of strategic documents, including Counter Terrorism Centre's new Strategic Programme Framework, which will guide its work for the next few years as a Center of Excellence.

Fifth, we will continue our capacity-building work, investing in monitoring and evaluation to ensure, that it is results-focused, as well as human rights compliant and gender responsive.

We will start implementing our global programme on countering terrorist threats against vulnerable targets, which we successfully launched last week, while scaling up the implementation of other multi-year programmes, both those launched last year as well as longer running programmes.

I also expect to report significant progress to Member States on the implementation of the UN Countering Terrorist Travel Programme, as we mark the second anniversary of its launch in May.

Sixth, I will continue my outreach to the United Nations Resident Coordinators and Country Teams to coordinate and support joint policy and programmatic efforts, leverage their insights and networks, and integrate on-the-ground assessments in our work.

And last but not least, we will continue to systemically engage with civil society organizations, international and regional organizations, the private sector and academia.

In closing, I would like to sincerely thank our donors, in particular, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Qatar, whose generous contributions funded 77 per cent of the Office's budget last year; as well as the European Union and the Netherlands, as major contributors of flagship UNOCT project activities.

We are also grateful to our two new donors, Hungary and Portugal, as well as our donors that strengthened their commitment to our Office through new pledges in 2020, namely Australia, Canada, China, Germany, Japan, Morocco, the Netherlands, Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Spain, the United States, the European Union.

My Office remains fully committed to working closely with all of you as we embark on another important year for global counter-terrorism efforts.

Before proceeding with our discussion, I would like to show you a short video with key highlights of our work in 2020.

Thank you.