



VIRTUAL DIALOGUE WITH
**HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERS ON BUILDING
A BETTER PARADIGM TO PREVENT AND COUNTER TERRORISM**

..... 25-26 MAY 2021

**Closing Remarks of Mr. Vladimir Voronkov
United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism**

Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,

I am delighted to conclude this Virtual Dialogue with human rights and civil society partners after two interesting and thought-provoking days.

I would like to reiterate my deep gratitude to the Government of Spain for having co-organized this important event and particularly to Her Excellency Ms. Arancha González Laya, Foreign Minister of Spain for her participation.

I look forward to continuing our close cooperation with Spain in advancing this important topic further, including through a joint Conference on *Human Rights, Civil Society and Counter-Terrorism* that we will convene in person in Málaga early next year.

And I would like to say my words of gratitude to the Mayor of Málaga for the very warm invitation to all of us to participate in this event in this beautiful city.

I would like to thank all distinguished speakers from Member States, United Nations and regional partners, and civil society representatives for their insightful and inspiring contributions throughout this dialogue.



My heartfelt thanks also to the women who shared their stories and experiences in the 'VictimA' video-documentary. Especially I would like to salute Ms. Irene Villa for her resilience and optimism expressed today during the discussion. I am really impressed and admired by her very strong message.

This film is a moving and powerful reminder about the need to ensure that the voices of victims are always heard and never forgotten.

Dear Colleagues,

While we will meet in Málaga next year to continue and deepen this productive exchange of views, I would like to draw some preliminary conclusions from our discussion.

First, respect for human rights and the rule of law is a central and vital component of our united front against terrorism.

Nothing can justify terrorism. Terrorism is, fundamentally, an attack on human rights and the principles upon which the United Nations was established 75 years ago and remains firmly based.

Our collective efforts against terrorism can simply not succeed if they undermine human rights and the rule of law. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy stresses that counter-terrorism efforts that neglect the rule of law and violate international law risk further fueling violent extremism that can be conducive to terrorism.

This message has been repeatedly affirmed by the Security Council and the General Assembly: counter-terrorism measures and protection of human rights are not conflicting goals but complementary and mutually reinforcing objectives.

This resonates even more in the context of the current COVID-19 crisis, which terrorists have been exploiting to propagate hatred and incite violence.

They are taking advantage of the anxieties, grievances, stresses on social cohesion and setbacks in our development, human rights and gender equality agendas caused by the pandemic, including in terms of access to education and economic empowerment.



The situation of thousands of individuals with family links to terrorist fighters stranded in camps in Syria and Iraq, especially children, is another complex challenge illustrating the interdependence of human rights and security concerns that requires our urgent attention.

My Office, together with UNICEF, leads a Global Framework coordinating support from 15 United Nations entities to requesting Member States regarding individuals returned from or remaining in Syria and Iraq.

Our ability to protect and promote the rule of law and all human rights – civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights – while countering terrorism is put at test and we need to rise to this challenge.

Participants stressed the need to move from declarations to actions through evidence-based approaches. I fully agree with this approach.

This is not only a matter of moral commitment and international obligation. It is the only long-term strategy to prevent and address terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, in an effective and sustained manner.

In practical terms, participants underscored the need to ensure that counter-terrorism measures are based in law, justified and proportionate, to prevent misuse and violation of the rights of those suspected or accused of terrorism.

Second, civil society actors have played a critical role in the complex efforts to prevent and counter terrorism. This role can and needs to be further encouraged and supported as part of a whole-of-society approach.

Again, civil society have a critical role to play in the complex efforts to prevent and counter terrorism.

Participants stressed that being inclusive is paramount to ensure effectiveness through transparency and accountability.



Civil society actors are interlocutors and partners for State authorities, helping connect policymaking and implementation with the local realities on the ground. They have specific insights, expertise and access to local communities, critical to understand to help strengthen social cohesion and build resilience to terrorism. They can provide credible counter-narratives and support rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. And they offer crucial support systems to victims.

Today we heard the call for a safe and enabling environment, including in fragile and conflict settings, to allow for the meaningful and transparent engagement of civil society actors, including human rights defenders, youth and women led organizations.

In all its diversity, a strong, vibrant and empowered civil society is a key partner towards the balanced implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

My Office has taken concrete steps to strengthen its engagement with civil society, across all areas of its work, including through a dedicated strategy to hear and benefit from diverse voices, including youth, women, sports and religious actors.

We are currently developing an e-Learning platform, that will provide civil society further opportunities to connect, share and coordinate with us.

Through UN STRIVE Asia, together with the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Development Programme, my Office is: working with civil society on developing and implementing Prevention of Violent Extremism National Action Plans; enhancing the role of law enforcement actors in preventing violent extremism in close collaboration with non-government actors; and strengthening local resilience of at-risk communities through the support of community-led initiatives.

I greatly look forward to the active participation of civil society in the Second High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies organized by my Office next month, to which 300 civil society organizations have been invited.



Dear Colleagues,

My third conclusion is that we need not only to sustain but transform into action the strong international commitment and momentum to enhance international cooperation on and support to victims and survivors of terrorism.

I am always humbled when I hear their testimonies. The VictimA documentary is yet another powerful example of their resilience and incredible courage in the face of adversity. It sheds light on the gendered dimensions of the experience of victims – too often overlooked – and the need to empower women victims as agents of change.

And it reminds us that the voices of victims are powerful counter narratives.

The pandemic has placed additional burdens on victims by triggering or adding to their trauma, isolating them, and limiting their access to vital services. The pandemic should not put a halt to the progress made in amplifying victims' voices, addressing their specific needs and protecting their rights.

Victims are the face of our common humanity. They remind us why we need to act with resolve, unity and solidarity to break free from terrorist violence, and address the conditions conducive to its spread, as underscored by the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

I am hopeful that the upcoming resolution for the review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy will further advance this priority and chart a path forward. The Secretary-General has recommended the establishment of a voluntarily funded programme to support States in providing durable and comprehensive assistance to victims.

You can count on the continued, full support of my Office, which has long placed the rights of victims at the centre of its work, and will continue to prioritize this agenda, in line with the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights.

We will continue to work with victims' associations, Member States and our United Nations partners to honour, advocate for and support victims. Besides the annual commemoration in August of the International Day of Tribute to, and Remembrance of Victims of Terrorism, my



Office will organize later this year the first-ever United Nations Global Congress for Victims of Terrorism which offers a critical opportunity to translate our solidarity with victims into concrete actions.

Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,

More than just a one-off event, this dialogue is part of an ongoing process that has included the active participation and contribution of civil society from the onset of the series of high-level and regional conferences organized by UNOCT.

I look forward to future opportunities to continue this productive exchange of views, in particular during the Second Counter-Terrorism Week, the first Global Congress for Victims, and the Málaga Conference. I strongly encourage you to join us and to participate actively in these important events.

In the meantime, I hope that our discussions during the past two days have helped inform the ongoing negotiations among Member States for the review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, ably facilitated by the Permanent Representatives of Oman and Spain to the United Nations, Ambassador Al-Hassan and Ambassador Santos-Maraver.

We look forward to a strong and consensus-based outcome, to provide a clear and action-oriented roadmap for an inclusive and reinvigorated multilateral approach to preventing and countering terrorism.

I thank you.

