



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM
UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT)**

**Opening Statement by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov,
Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism and
UNCCT Executive Director**

**22nd Meeting of the UNCCT Advisory Board
27 May 2021, 3:00pm-5:30pm**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is great to see so many colleagues on the screen. It is amazing that we are together, having this Advisory Board meeting, despite all difficulties of COVID-19 times.

I welcome you all to the 22nd Advisory Board meeting of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre.

Let me start by thanking Secretary-General Guterres for extending the UNCCT Advisory Board for another three-year term.

I am also grateful for the Secretary-General's decision to invite the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to continue its role as Chair of this Board.

Saudi Arabia's leadership of the Advisory Board, and especially the dynamic role played by my good friend, His Excellency Ambassador Abdallah Al-Mouallimi, allows us to build on our successes and grow further to meet expanding capacity-building needs and requests of Member States.

2021 is an important year for the international community and global counter-terrorism efforts.

This year, we mark the 15th anniversary of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1373 adopted after the 9/11 attacks, as well as the 10th anniversary of our United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre.

As we look around the globe, it is clear that terrorism continues to remain a threat to all of us. In several countries, recent attacks show the many ways by which terrorists have evolved their tactics and are stoking ethnic, social or religious friction to further their goals.

2020 and the beginning of 2021 saw a sharp increase in terrorist activities in Africa and in Afghanistan.

The return of foreign terrorist fighters remains a major concern for many States.

Terrorist financing techniques are becoming more difficult to track.

And far-right violent extremism leading to terrorist attacks is now a top priority for many countries.

Added to this menace is the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to profoundly affect the United Nations global operations around the world.

The Centre's work has been affected profoundly, unfortunately. As reported over the past year, most of our trainings, outreach and consultations have gone virtual, and we continue to face uncertainty on when we can resume in-person deliveries.

At the same time, we are seeing reports of terrorists capitalizing on the socio-economic and political grievances that are exacerbated by the pandemic, and spreading their propaganda to win more supporters, especially online.

In many countries, terrorists have taken advantage of the international community's struggle against the pandemic to perpetrate attacks and extend their reach. This is a matter of our common concern.

In my previous briefing to the Board, I described in detail how UNCCT has reinvented itself over the past year to ensure that the impact of the pandemic on our work is minimized.

The Centre has focused on delivering technical and capacity-building assistance through virtual means, forged new partnerships and strengthened ongoing collaborations, launched major global programmes on pressing themes, and issued a variety of guidance to help national agencies and regional bodies benefit from sustainable support.

Our success is due to the excellent counsel and financial and political support given by members of this Board. Your feedback serves as an invaluable asset in strategically guiding the Centre's work on key counter-terrorism matters. As Executive Director of UNCCT, I look forward to strengthening our dialogue and achieving more.

We are now in the last year of the Centre's Five-Year Programme of Work that started in 2016 and ends in July. I am proud to note the obvious achievements made by the Centre of the goals it had set out under the Programme – more than 91 per cent of planned activities were either completed or are being currently implemented.

We have launched new programmes and expanded major ones, and organized dozens of virtual trainings, seminars, deep-dive assessments, and consultations to equip Member States with the most pertinent and potent support and expertise. UNCCT's Director, Dr. Khan, will elaborate with key figures that would help showcase our progress and achievement.

While the Five-Year Programme laid out an ambitious plan, the Centre's work going forward will be guided by the new Strategic Programme Framework (SPF) that would help us become more strategic, responsive to Member States' needs, impact-oriented and fully integrated with the broader goals of UNOCT.

I expect the SPF to be ready by July, integrating both relevant recommendations of the KPMG evaluation and guidance emerging from the new General Assembly resolution on the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Ensuring that the Centre's work responds to Member States' capacity-building needs and CTED recommendations is of paramount importance. It underscores our relevance and the efficiency and effectiveness of our support and products.

In addition, we must also ensure that the Centre's work is implemented with as much collaboration as possible with other Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities to achieve a more synchronized and complementary United Nations counter-terrorism architecture.

The SPF will serve as a strategic tool for the Centre's work over the next four years as an integral capacity-building arm of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism: it will describe our vision and goals with clarity; list and expand on our key strategic priorities; help us plan on how we will deliver on our capacity development mandate; and help us ensure that we measure our performance along the way to help us maximize impact.

I am confident that the SPF will help build the Centre into a true Centre of Excellence.

A Centre with unique expertise on counter-terrorism and PCVE areas, and a sharp practical focus on monitoring and evaluation.

Part of our efforts aimed at achieving greater efficiency involves increasing synergies between the Centre and UNOCT's Special Projects and Innovation Branch, as also recommended by the KPMG report.

We continued to make progress on that, with a One Team approach, also consistent with my decision to have the Chief of SPIB function as Deputy Director of the Centre, to ensure alignment of efforts across all of UNOCT.

We achieved joint work in all programmes, merged programme management tools, and developed joint initiatives on certain key areas that are in high demand of support from Member States, such as unmanned aerial systems, artificial intelligence, border security, prevention of violent extremism, human rights and civil society engagement.

The Centre now runs a large number of global programmes, with frequent activities in several frontline countries and regions affected by terrorism and violent extremism.

Over the past three years, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism has been able to leverage our field presence to enable wider and more extensive consultations with beneficiaries; help customize the support we offer; increase national and regional ownership; and promote a more sustained dialogue and relationship, especially in tracking impact. It also generates cost savings in terms of reduced travel and lowering post adjustments related to duty stations.

Speaking of funding, I am pleased to note the good progress made in increasing contributions to the Office and its Centre.

I would like to specifically thank the Governments of Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Spain and the European Union through the joint project with UNDP, for their generous financial contributions made last year.

Just this year, India made its second contribution, and we finalized new pledges from the Governments of Japan, the United States, and China, through the Executive Office of the Secretary-General's Peace and Security Sub-Fund, for which I am grateful.

Additional support from donor countries comes in the form of Junior Professional Officers to UNOCT and the Centre, for which I am thankful.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia remains the main contributor to the Centre, providing more than 70 per cent of the total contributions made to the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre. As always, I would like to thank Ambassador Al-Mouallimi for the continued leadership of his country.

At the same time, I should note that as programming has expanded, the Trust Fund is depleting. The Saudi contribution made in 2014 is expected to be fully exhausted by the middle of the next year.

I would therefore like to call upon all Member States to step forward with financial support to the Office and the Centre for greater sustainability, predictability and diversification.

I would like to particularly seek your support for an increased regular budget for UNOCT and the Centre, which benefits from various services provided by other parts of United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

Going forward, with the upcoming review resolution on the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the new Strategic Framework, and a shift toward the field, the Office and the Centre will deliver more responsive and impact-oriented capacity-building grounded in national needs and leveraging fully our partnerships.

We will continue to recruit top-of-the-line expertise to support Member States.

We will continue to prioritize the visibility of our work and products in order to reinforce the Centre's image as a valuable resource for all States. During the upcoming Counter-Terrorism Week, the Centre intends to organize seven side events on a range of key topics.

With the Board's feedback and advice, I am confident that we will be able to do more and better. I look forward to an engaging discussion.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman and dear colleagues, for your attention.