



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM**

**Opening remarks of Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
Office of Counter Terrorism (UNOCT)**

**“International Expert Group Meeting on the Protection of
Urban Centres and Touristic Venues”**

15 June 2021, 9 a.m. (NY time)

Your Excellency, Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations,

Excellencies, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome you to this second International Expert Group Meeting on the Protection of Vulnerable Targets.

After the successful first meeting focusing on the protection of religious sites that we held in January, together with the launch of the Global Programme on the Protection of Vulnerable Targets, today we will address the threat to urban centres and touristic venues.

I welcome the opportunity to share this opening session with such distinguished colleagues as Ambassador Al-Thani. The State of Qatar is the main contributor to our Global Programme on the Protection of Vulnerable Targets, and I am very grateful for its support.

Member States are currently discussing the seventh review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and the threat against easily accessible locations filled with worshippers, diners, shoppers, tourists or students is a topic that has drawn their attention.

Protecting “soft” targets has become one of the top priorities of our global counter-terrorism agenda.

This should not come as a surprise. Unfortunately, we have seen such attacks all around the world and far too often.

From Ouagadougou to Sidney, from Manchester to Mumbai, from Paris to Kabul, terrorists have used simple methods, plans and weapons to kill and change the way in which we pray, study or entertain ourselves. To change the way we live. To limit our freedom of movement.

In the face of this threat, we have learned that the only answer is to come together and strengthen our preventive approaches, operational preparedness, and resilience and recovery plans.

And this is the objective of our meeting here today: to bring some of the best experts from around the world to help us identify good practices in the protection of urban centres and touristic venues against terrorist threats.

We are hopeful that the diversity of approaches to protection that cities around the world use will enrich our discussions, foster new ideas and develop partnerships—including among Member States and between them and the private sector, academia and civil society organizations.

Such a multi-stakeholder approach is a key component of our Global Programme on the Protection of Vulnerable Targets, which was launched in response to the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and its review resolutions; Security Council resolutions 2341 (2017) and 2396 (2017); and the 2015 Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Madrid Guiding Principles on stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters and its 2018 Addendum.

The Programme focuses on two main work streams:

- (i) Providing to requesting Member States specialized technical assistance and capacity-building to prevent, protect, mitigate, investigate, respond to and recover from terrorist attacks against vulnerable targets; and
- (ii) Identifying and sharing relevant good practices through tailored tools, such as modular guides.

This Programme is implemented in partnership with relevant United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities—namely, the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI); and in collaboration with other Counter-Terrorism Compact entities, such as the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), and other international and regional organizations.

Let me conclude by thanking you again for joining us today and wishing you a very productive meeting.

I look forward to your engagement and support, and to strengthening our cooperation.

Thank you.