

**Opening ceremony  
of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)  
Programme Office on Parliamentary Engagement in Preventing and Countering  
Terrorism  
Doha, Qatar - 16 June 2021**

**Statement by Mr Rik Daems,  
President of the Parliamentary Assembly  
of the Council of Europe**

Dear Speaker of the Shura Council of Qatar,  
Dear Under-Secretary General of the United Nations,  
Dear President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,  
Excellencies,  
Dear colleagues and friends,

It is an honour for me to participate in **the opening ceremony of the UNOCT Programme Office on Parliamentary Engagement in Preventing and Countering Terrorism.**

On behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the oldest and largest Pan-European organisation representing the interests and protecting the rights of over 830 million European citizens, I welcome the establishment of this **new institution** which aims to serve as a **global hub** to support and build the capacity of **parliamentarians worldwide in their efforts to counter terrorism** through the United Nations Global Programme on Parliamentary Engagement in Preventing and Countering Terrorism.

Dear colleagues,

Terrorism, together with violent extremism and radicalisation, is a major threat to the security of our citizens.

Despite relentless efforts of the international community, it is out there, still killing and murdering innocent people to create fear and frustration and to destroy the very foundations of our societies.

We know it jeopardises human rights, threatens democracy, undermines the rule of law and aims at destabilising our governments. Terrorism, and the threat of terrorism, can sharpen social and political divisions, weakening a pluralist civil society through intimidation and, specifically, increased polarisation.

To answer this global threat, we must all unite our forces. We have to build on our synergies.

Parliaments, and international parliamentary fora, shall remain at the forefront of this fight. That is why stepping up international and inter-parliamentary co-operation is today more necessary than ever.

Over the last twenty years, Europe has been one of the main targets of terrorist attacks. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has therefore played an essential role in shaping a **common democratic response to terrorism**.

Our main role here has been, - and will remain -, to facilitate **international co-operation in the legal field**. It has also been to put in place **measures**, both domestically and internationally, to prevent terrorism and the violent extremism that causes it, while **fully respecting the human rights principles and fundamental freedoms**, and to **protect and provide care to the victims**.

Our Assembly at the Council of Europe has been a **driving force** to promote the establishment of an **international legal framework to prevent terrorism**, including some relevant Council of Europe Conventions, Strategies and Guidelines.

In doing so, we constantly argued that combating terrorism should not contradict but complement European values and standards. To combat terrorism while upholding our values and standards might seem to be a difficult task but surely will be the most effective way to **sustainable long term success**.

Dear colleagues,  
setting up the necessary legal framework is just a beginning, not the end of our combat.

As parliamentarians, we have a duty to see to it that legal decisions are duly implemented on the ground, to hold governments to account that counter-terrorist policies are compliant with our fundamental values, and to remain in close contact with our constituents.

I trust that the newly established Programme Office will cope successfully with its statutory goals to support parliamentarians in fulfilling their duties, to help build their capacities, and to facilitate inter-parliamentary dialogue and the sharing of experience and best practices on countering and preventing terrorism.

Our Assembly looks forward to fully **participating in these activities** and to continue **our excellent co-operation with UNOCT** and with our parliamentary partners.

Dear colleagues,

I wish us well in doing so, and I wish full success to the Programme Office!