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# 2021 COUNTER-TERRORISM WEEK

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21-30 JUNE

## PRESS RELEASE

### The United Nations Secretary-General convenes the Second High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States

**New York, 28 June 2021** –The three-day Second United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States on countering and preventing terrorism in the age of transformative technologies kicked off today with the overall theme of “Countering and Preventing Terrorism in the Age of Transformative Technologies: Addressing the Challenges of the New Decade,” in recognition that terrorists and the criminals who provide them material support will invariably seek to exploit new technologies to gain an edge over governments.

Organised by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), the High-Level Conference will enable joint efforts among governments, the private sector, academia, civil society and the United Nations to promote understanding of current and emerging threats, share good practices and increase the capacity to address risks and opportunities, ensuring effective, coordinated, and comprehensive efforts across countries, sectors and disciplines, anchored in human rights and the rule of law, to address terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

The High-Level Conference also provides a significant and timely opportunity to consider the practical implementation of relevant aspects of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/60/288) and its review resolutions, including Member States’ priorities on human rights, gender equality and engagement with youth and civil society.

Speaking at the Opening Session, the **Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres**, stated that “counter-terrorism needs to rise to the challenges and opportunities of transformative technologies. COVID-19 has accelerated our dependence on cyberspace. We need to nurture technological innovation -- but also to mitigate its growing risks.”

**President of the United Nations General Assembly, Volkan Bozkır**, noted that “Although initially we had hoped that the fear of contracting the COVID-19 virus would deter terrorist groups, and lockdowns would restrict the free movement of terrorists, equipment and weapons, it seems that terrorist groups, have quickly adapted to this new landscape.”

Mr. Bozkır called for global solidarity against the rise of xenophobia, racism and intolerance. “We must be vigilant, and stop hate speech, when it is first uttered – both in person, and online. That is an individual, collective, national, and international responsibility,” he stressed.

The High-Level Conference encompasses five thematic sessions on:

- The Global Scourge of Terrorism: Assessment of Current Threats and Emerging Trends for the New Decade
- Prevention in the Age of Transformative Technologies
- Upholding Human Rights and Promoting Gender Responsiveness while Countering Terrorism in the Age of Transformative Technologies
- Parallel break-out discussions: Responding to New and Evolving Counter-Terrorism Challenges in the New Decade
- The Imperative of Strengthening International and Regional Cooperation to Counter Terrorism in the New Decade

The **United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism, Vladimir Voronkov**, stressed in his opening statement that “Digitally-enabled technologies are transforming our societies and economies, with profound effects on how various sectors function. The transition has accelerated during the pandemic and presents both opportunities and risks, including for counter-terrorism. But the impact of technology is what we make of it: we have the means and we have the responsibility to work together to ensure safe and effective use of technology and prevent its use for terrorist purposes.”

Mr. Voronkov noted that “Countering terrorism is truly an agenda that both unites us and saves lives. While the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism is still young, we have made a real difference in international counter-terrorism efforts over the past four years.”

The Opening Session also featured remarks by Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar; Josep Borrell Fontelles, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President for the European Commission; Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations; Cristina Duarte, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa; and Judith Lichtenberg, Executive Director, Global Network Initiative. ([Quotes from their statements are available in the list below](#))

Co-facilitators of the Seventh Review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, Mohamed Al-Hassan, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations, and Agustín Santos Maraver, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations, briefed Conference participants on the Outcome of the Seventh Review. The resolution of the Seventh Review is set to be adopted on Wednesday, 30 June.

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**ADDITIONAL QUOTES****H.E. Mr. Volkan Bozkır, President, United Nations General Assembly**

“Although initially we had hoped that, the fear of contracting the COVID-19 virus would deter terrorist groups, and lockdowns would restrict the free movement of terrorists, equipment and weapons, it seems that terrorist groups, have quickly adapted to this new landscape.

Now is the time, to continue to champion global solidarity. There is no place for hatred in society. The rise of xenophobia, racism and intolerance, towards any community, over the past eighteen months, has led to heartless attacks, and tragic loss, of civilian lives around the world. We cannot allow this to continue. We must be vigilant, and stop hate speech, when it is first uttered – both in person, and online. That is an individual, collective, national, and international responsibility.”

**H.E. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar**

"To ensure the effectiveness of our joint efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism, we must work on addressing the root causes of terrorism and to support programs and activities in integrated areas such as education, youth employment and countering extremist discourse."

"We affirm the State of Qatar's commitment to its partnership with the UNOCT, as a major contributor and a partner in implementing pioneering projects that would achieve tangible results."

**H.E. Mr. Josep Borrell Fontelles, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President for the European Commission**

“An integrated approach to countering terrorism, that draws on different strengths and assets and that has prevention as its core objective, is the most effective approach to address the multifaceted threat of terrorism today.”

**H.H. Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

“This year is of significant importance as it marks a milestone for the United Nations Counter Terrorism Center. Since its establishment ten years ago, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been committed to the work of the center, and will continue to be a vital partner and supporter of the United Nation’s system in the fight against terrorism and extremism.”

**H.E. Ms. Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations**

“The terrorism landscape has evolved with technology, and so too must our approach. Today, we have new opportunities to harness technology to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism from taking root in our communities. While our approaches must evolve, we cannot waiver on

human rights and free expression. Our steadfast commitment to those rights and freedoms are our most powerful counter-terrorism tool of all.”

**Ms. Cristina Duarte, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa**

“It is important to realize that technology is not the problem.”

“Digital technologies provide the means of spreading these communications, but more important than the means of communicating is the power of the narrative being communicated. Fighting back should be centered not on fighting the technologies, but on fighting against the narrative”

**H.E. Mr. Mohamed Al-Hassan, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations**

“The terrorist acts to which different regions of the world have been exposed to, have shown that terrorism is a global phenomenon, not associated with any religion, belief, country, or peoples. Terrorism is a global scourge that threatens the security and stability of all of us, and confronting it requires international cooperation and global solutions.”

“I, therefore, call on the international community to act in a spirit of collective responsibility, with one standard and one voice against terrorism, and to avoid double standards and false stereotypes which run counter to our efforts in combating terrorism and extremist ideologies, in this fight we have to be united with a focus on the high interests of the international community. ”

**H.E. Mr. Agustín Santos Maraver, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations**

"The President of the General Assembly, HE Volkan Bozkir, entrusted both the Ambassador Permanent Representative of Oman and myself as Ambassador Permanent Representative of Spain, the honor and the responsibility to co-facilitate the Seventh review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which will be adopted by consensus on June 30th."

"The accumulated experience and the lessons learned required a shift in the Counter-Terrorism Strategy paradigm, to make it global, with no geographical or ideological prejudices, to raise the issue of the sustainability of its financing and to root it in the upholding of international law, especially humanitarian international law and human rights international law."

"The seventh review has been negotiated for four months until consensus has been reached for its adoption by the United Nations General Assembly. This conveys a clear political message: we are united against terrorism".

**Ms. Judith Lichtenberg, Executive Director, Global Network Initiative**

"We hope that GNI's own experience in multistakeholder engagement and collaboration can help serve as a model for the work of UNOCT, member states, and the important partners joining this week's event to address legitimate concerns in creative, collaborative, and rights-respecting ways."

"The foundation of our members' participation is a shared commitment to the GNI Principles on Freedom of Expression and Privacy. These are rooted in international human rights standards and provide a framework for responsible company decision making in response to government pressures and restrictions that could impact users' rights."

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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