



Second United Nations
**HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE
ON COUNTER-TERRORISM**

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Remarks by Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield at the Second UN Counterterrorism High-Level Conference

Second United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States

Opening Session 28 June 2021, 9.00 a.m.

Thank you, Secretary-General Guterres, for your invitation to speak at this opening session of the Second UN Counterterrorism High-Level Conference. This year's conference theme, "Countering and Preventing Terrorism in the Age of Transformative Technologies," captures both the threat and the opportunity. The threat of terrorism has evolved with technology. But so has the opportunity to harness technology to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism from taking root in our communities.

The timing is also apt. In a few months, we'll mark the 20th anniversary of the most lethal terrorist attack in history. We will pay tribute to the nearly 3,000 people who were killed in Washington D.C., Pennsylvania, and here in New York, on that Tuesday morning. The memory of September 11, and so many other tragedies caused by terrorism around the world – before and since – are eternal reminders of our collective responsibility to prevent acts of terror.

Over the past 20 years, the United Nations has played a pivotal role in those efforts. From the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1373 after the 9/11 attack to the capacity-building efforts of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, our collective efforts have shown that when we work together, we can protect our citizens from terrorism and violent extremism. And as the UN has organized itself over the last two decades to support the fight

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against terrorism, the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism has played an important coordinating role in those efforts.

Together, we've made real progress on counterterrorism since 9/11, but the terrorist landscape continues to evolve. Terrorists and racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists have adapted: they use communication technology to enhance their networks, recruit and inspire supporters, disseminate propaganda, and challenge our ability to prevent acts of terrorism. And increasingly, they're using advanced technology to actually perpetrate criminal acts. For example, terrorists are taking advantage of commercially available unmanned aerial systems, using them as surveillance platforms, and weaponizing them for both on and off the battlefield.

Just as the terrorism landscape is evolving, so too should our approach. On June 15, President Biden released our first-ever National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism. That strategy recognizes the importance of international cooperation to counter domestic terrorism. That means sharing more information, so law enforcement and intelligence services can fully understand the international dimensions of the threat. That's part of our broader approach.

We need to fight terrorists where they are; and increasingly, that's online. Through our partnerships, the United States is countering the narratives of terrorists across the platforms on which they communicate. We are also looking for innovative ways to foster digital literacy and build resilience to terrorist recruitment and mobilization. To that end, the United States recently joined the Christchurch Call to Action to Eliminate Terrorist and Violent Extremist Content Online. The goal is to develop new approaches to prevent terrorists and violent extremists from exploiting the Internet while safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms.

As our counterterrorism approaches evolve, we cannot waiver on human rights and free expression. Because ultimately, our steadfast commitment to those rights and freedoms are our most powerful counterterrorism tool of all. The more we elevate people's lives – the more we treat people with dignity and respect and honor their rights and freedoms – the more we discourage and even prevent terrorism.

So together, let's promote peace. Let's harness technology to adapt to the evolving threat of terrorism. And let's work as partners, share our ideas and information, and ensure a more secure future for us all.

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Thank you.