



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

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**Remarks by Major General Abdul Aziz Abdullah Al-Ansari, Chairman, National Counter-terrorism Committee of Qatar**

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

**Plenary Wrap-up of SESSION II: Preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism in the age of transformative technologies**

**30 June 2021, 11 a.m.**

Thank you,

Our panel session was very interesting and productive and I will highlight some key speaker points under each of the 5 questions I posed for the panellists' consideration. I will not endeavour to summarise all points now but will collate the speaker's remarks and submit them in my final report so even if not mentioned now, nothing will be lost.

Question 1

How can behavioural insights improve understanding of the drivers of violent extremism, identifying risk and resilience factors, and develop effective counter-terrorism responses.

- Mr Stefano Manservisi suggested programmes providing individual trauma and violence informed services to children through activities such as group/team exercise, storytelling and mindfulness.
- The work of the UN Behavioural Insights Hub in Qatar is intending to build a menu of proven techniques; it intends to build on existing knowledge and success to identify specific intervention requirements for differing forms of terrorism. It also intends to

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‘focus upstream’ on identifying ‘nudges’ which encourage united communities and build resilience.

This approach was particularly welcomed by Mr Miguel Moratinos who highlighted ‘human centred approaches’ and ‘experimentation and vigorous analysis’ as a positive way forward whilst not replacing interventions at the individual level such as education programmes.

#### Question 2

What risks does a behavioural insights approach to preventing and countering terrorism present? How can these be overcome?

- Dr Silva informed us that prevention of violent extremism and CT programs are rarely robustly evaluated and this is a weakness. When programmes are evaluated, the vast majority are found to be ineffective – of 33 evaluated, only 2 were found to be effective. The solution is to use the counterfactual and evaluate ‘real-life’ outcomes. Dr Silva concluded that carefully designed programmes, properly monitored and evaluated can increase cohesion and reduce conflict and this was particularly true for locally based sports programmes.
- The Behavioural Insights Hub, with its carefully crafted work plan and UN oversight will ensure that Human Rights monitoring will be built into our work from the outset.

#### Question 3

What good practices exist to prevent counter threats against major sporting events?

- Mr Stefano Manservigi emphasised the need to focus on the crucial human element, he stated that “Investing in people is as important as investing in security and provides a higher return.”
- H.E. Hassan Al Thawadi highlighted the work of Qatar’s ‘Generation Amazing’ This initiative has been developed in Qatar to harness the power of football to inspire social change in less developed communities around the world. It now operates in over 30 countries, in communities that are often impoverished and vulnerable to the threat of extremism. Sport can provide structure, purpose and joy for those involved. By focussing on grass roots, using sport as a tool, we can support local cohesion and the counter-terrorism efforts of those communities. Generation Amazing uses behavioural

analysis to provide evidence-based monitoring, measuring and tailoring mechanisms to achieve their ambitions for the benefit of all.

#### Question 4

What are the Major Challenges for preventing and countering threats against major sporting events?

- Ms Cholpon Orozobekova spoke of the pandemic and its negative impact on the economic opportunities of citizens which increases their sense of isolation. The pandemic has also hampered and slowed-down counter-terrorism efforts across the world. This is dangerous environment which terrorists could seek to exploit. Terrorist organisations could exploit and inflame frustrations and grievances. They actively seek to 'recruit hearts and minds' and, logically, a major sporting event presents a prime target for their focus.
- Ms Clark advised us that the most successful engagements are tailor-made and local; they are also long-term. Squaring this with tightly calendared international events is difficult but not impossible; it needs long term commitment. Hassan Al Thawadi and others also focussed on the necessity of long-term commitment. There was a general consensus that there are no 'quick fixes' in prevention.

#### Question 5

What good practices exist to promote sports and their values to unite communities, build resilience, especially among youth and prevent violent extremism? What challenges and capacity-building needs does this present?

- Ms Clark referred to the list of essential, cohesive qualities all sports programmes require for success. The panellist from Jordan had previously given us a comprehensive list of those qualities. That list had been compiled following years of experience in the field. The key point here is that this is long-term, localised work, delivered locally by local people. It is not therefore, easily scalable. The key elements to success were that sports interventions need to be regular and sustained. They should be designed to create safe spaces and opportunities to assess - identifying negative behaviours; while recognising and celebrating the positive. A locally developed and adapted curriculum was required, developed by community leaders and peer-group focussed. Only then will we be able to change the narrative of "us and them."

- Ms Cholpon Orozobekova highlighted the use of sports activities in rehabilitation programmes, particularly for the children of fighters returning from Syria and Iraq. She also emphasised the need to identify role models from sport to encourage young people to ‘join the fight against terrorism.’ Ms Clark agreed the point on role models but counselled that such role models worked based when locally engaged.

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