



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

**Remarks by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov,
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

**UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (OSAPG) - UNESCO
Multi-stakeholder Online Forum “Addressing Hate Speech through Education”**

**Exploring Intersectionality: the nexus between hate speech and violent extremism and
the role of education**

30 September 2021, 7:30am

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

I would like to thank UNESCO and the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect for convening this timely Multi-Stakeholder forum on “Addressing Hate Speech through Education”. My Office is honoured to organize today’s parallel session.

I am also grateful to our panellists for coming together for this important dialogue:

- Professor Ms. Cynthia Miller-Idriss, Director of the Polarisation and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab at the American University;
- Mr. Moustafa Ayad, Executive Director for Africa, the Middle East and Asia at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue;
- Mr. Galen Lamphere-Englund, Research and Insights Director at Love Frankie;
- Ms. Eynas Latef, representative of Sudan’s Teeba Press;
- and our two young leaders from universities in Khartoum.

The surge in hate speech and violence against religious, ethnic and other minorities across the world over the past three years, and even more so this past year during the COVID-19 ‘infodemic’, is alarming.

The online spread of conspiracy theories and hate speech is increasingly sophisticated and accelerated by algorithms and online echo chambers.

We have seen terrorists and violent extremists use social media, messaging and online gaming platforms to influence and recruit young people and other vulnerable audiences.

And it is having offline consequences. This includes social polarization, erosion of trust in government, violence against children, hate crimes and terrorism, across the ideological spectrum.

The COVID-19 'infodemic' of hate and conspiracy theories has fuelled a growing threat from xenophobic, racist and other forms of intolerant movements.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

Terrorism, violent extremism and hate speech are distinct but closely linked challenges, and we need strong policy and programmatic synergies in efforts to prevent these phenomena.

To the extent there is an overlap between hate speech and terrorist narratives, there is potential to identify common norms, good practices and tools for responses that comply with human rights and the rule of law.

Curbing the online spread of hate speech and terrorist content, while upholding freedom of expression, was a major focus during the seventh review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy that the General Assembly concluded last June.

The outcome resolution recalls the prohibition of incitement to hatred, hostility and violence, and of incitement to terrorism, condemns the "glorification of terrorism," and acknowledges the Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech of United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres.

My Office will continue to invest in innovative, evidence-based practices to counter terrorist narratives through our Global Programme on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism.

We are engaging with Member States, civil society and the tech sector to address the spread of violent extremist ideologies offline and online, including in frontier areas like online gaming networks.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

The Forum and our session today put the focus on the role of education, which is also one of the seven priority areas in the United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

More than ever, education is critical for building resilience to hate speech and the appeal of terrorism by shaping knowledge and attitudes towards peaceful and tolerant behaviour.

But education in and of itself will not be enough if societies are not able to meet the needs and aspirations of its children and youth.

We need to reshape responses to all forms of hate and violence, and boost the partnerships with the private sector, civil society and regional organizations that Secretary-General Guterres called for earlier this month as part of a Common Agenda for people, the planet, prosperity and peace.

I look forward to learning from your views on the connections between violent extremism and hate speech, and in exploring education-based solutions to address these.

And I am particularly interested in hearing the views of the university students from Khartoum that have recently participated in our training, conducted in partnership with UNITAMS, UNESCO and the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect.

You can count on the engagement and support of my Office.

Thank you.