



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

**Remarks by Dr. Raffi Gregorian
Deputy to Under-Secretary General, UNOCT**

**Third CSOs Roundtable
29 November 2021, 9:30AM-11.00AM**

Welcome Remarks and Session 1

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to welcome you today to the third UNOCT Roundtable with Civil Society Organizations. Thank you for joining us this morning. My name is Raffi Gregorian, I am the Director of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Deputy to the Under-Secretary General for Counter Terrorism.

As many of you know, after UNOCT adopted its Civil Society Engagement Strategy last year, we launched a roundtable series aimed at promoting a principled approach to CT and P/CVE efforts through increased senior level engagement with CSOs. These roundtables seek to learn from the diverse expertise, experience, and knowledge of CSOs at the local, national, regional, and global levels and to deliver a stronger, more cohesive, age and gender-sensitive response to the ever-evolving terrorist threat.

The first two roundtables held in September and November 2020 last year, were attended by over 30 participants from more than 19 different CSOs, and included participants from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the MENA region, and North America. Our engagement continued through CSO contributions to the Secretary-General's updated report on the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the virtual conference on human rights and civil society, throughout the Second Counter-Terrorism Week, and a variety of various programme activities.

During today's session, I will first give you an update of the Office's recent activities, including highlights of CSO participation and engagement during the 2021 Counter-Terrorism week, an overview of the 7th review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and its review resolution, an update on UNOCT's activities with a focus on CSO engagement – including the upcoming 2022 Malaga Conference, and will say a few words on the first UNOCT Strategic Plan and Programme Framework, to be launched early 2022.

Second, I will brief you on our proposed new format for the 2022 CSO Roundtable Series. In light of various comments about wanting more focused discussions, we have adapted the format to maximize CSOs' inputs and perspectives on the Office's programmatic and policy work for increased civil society engagement.

Each of today's sessions will be followed by an interactive discussion engaging your thoughts, feedback and insights.

Now, let's first turn to the update the Second Counter-Terrorism week and an overview of the seventh review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

First, I am proud to highlight that this year, UNOCT welcomed a record number of participants from civil society organizations during the Second Counter-Terrorism Week held virtually from 24th to 30th of June, under the theme of "Countering and Preventing Terrorism in the Age of Transformative Technologies: Addressing the Challenges of a New Decade." On the margins of the High-level Conference, this year saw a record number of over 25,000 participants and viewers involved in 36 side events held and organized by a wide range of Member States, UN, international and regional partners, but also at our insistence, CSOs. This is quite an increase when compared to the first Counter-Terrorism Week in 2018, which some 1,000 participants attended what were entirely in-person events.

The 36 side events featured 280 speakers representing 19 United Nations entities, 48 Member States, 13 international organizations, 44 Civil Society Organizations, 10 private sector entities and 21 academic institutions. The side events organized by CSOs covered a wide range of topics, including, the engagement of CSOs in preventing radicalization to violence in prisons, enhancing civil society engagement in UN CT and P/CVE efforts, and training on human rights-based approaches to P/CVE, to name only a few. Voices of civil society and human rights partners were crucial in shaping the debate and discussions and widening the aperture of Member States' understanding on some acute issues.

Within the discussions and presentations, a common thread to many of the sessions is the UN and all CT actors' critical need to educate ourselves with regards not only to the potential use by terrorists of new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Unmanned Aerial Systems, synthetic biology, 3D printing, cryptocurrencies and Big Data, but also how these same technologies can help in the fight against terrorism if they are used in accordance with human rights and the rule of law. In addition, it was commonly noted that we must not forget to accord utmost priority and importance to the inclusion of gender and diversity dimensions in AI and new technologies.

Additionally, the side events demonstrated that the UN is taking a central role in the global fight against terrorism by showcasing key initiatives during CT week. For example, with victims of terrorism being placed at the forefront of UN programmatic frameworks, the rights of victims, most notably those of women and children as the most vulnerable populations, were strongly emphasized as being upheld in both the short and long terms, via cross-national and regional collaboration. Furthermore, UNOCT/UNCCT partners noted that capacity building and victim-support is a key intersectional area, as countries with the most victims of terrorism also possess the weakest infrastructures to support them.

Side Events further raised awareness on the need for Member States, relief agencies and private sector entities to safeguard humanitarian action in the long term was delivered by academia and civil society, which will directly shape future policy and leadership decisions.

Further along the line of a ‘whole-of-society’ approach, this year’s side events emphasized that effectively preventing terrorists’ use of online spaces to promote their agenda, recruit followers and direct followers also demands a commitment to partnering and consulting with civil society actors, young leaders, academia, and private sector entities. Some of the key outcomes of this year’s side events reaffirmed the need to strengthen partnerships between governments, civil society, academia, and the private sector.

During CT week, CSO engagement was discussed in relation to all priorities, and it was highlighted that it is critical that the UN and Member States work to benchmark their CSO engagement to ensure that all CT/PCVE measures are implemented in a way that promotes local ownership, allowing for more sustainable, human rights compliant, and effective responses. Emphasis was placed on building partnerships for sustainable peace based on listening to civil society perspectives and, more importantly, acting on their inputs. Member States noted the need to move beyond simply including CSOs in events to work *with* civil society in innovative ways to leverage local knowledge, community trust and engagement, and new avenues of access to make interventions locally meaningful, impactful, and long-lasting.

CT Week concluded with the General Assembly’s consensus adoption of a comprehensive and forward-looking review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy – reconfirming Member States commitment to a united, comprehensive and multilateral response to terrorism and violent extremism.

The resolution comprises 53 entirely new paragraphs and other substantive updates, including, sensitive yet critical areas requiring urgent action. These include the need to repatriate

and reintegrate children and other family members of Da'esh, support the CT efforts of African countries and regional partners as a matter of global priority, address the rise in terrorist attacks “based on xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance, and the need to rise to the challenges of rapidly evolving new and transformative technologies.

The starting point for both the resolution and the debate was the report of the Secretary-General for the review of the Global CT Strategy prepared by UNOCT with inputs from civil society urged Member States to anchor human rights compliance in all CT and PCVE initiatives enabling principled humanitarian action.

During the actual review process and negotiations on the resolution, UNOCT supported the initiative of the review's co-facilitators – Spain and Oman – to organize consultations with civil society and academia in advance of intergovernmental negotiations. These efforts concluded on a high note with the Secretary-General calling for a “human rights reset for counter-terrorism” at the end of CT Week, and unprecedented new and stronger language on human rights in the review resolution, across all four pillars of the GCTS.

The review of the Global CT strategy highlighted that CT efforts need to comply with human rights and the rule of law through legal frameworks that maintain an enabling environment for civil society. This includes efforts to ensure accountability for alleged human rights violations while countering terrorism. The review also strengthened language on the rights of the child especially in the context of their repatriation, rehabilitation, and reintegration as well as placed emphasis on the need for a gender analysis of the drivers of radicalization of women and men to terrorism, the development of comprehensive and gender-sensitive assistance plans for victims of terrorism, and the role of civil society actors in this regard. Finally, the review addressed the need for stronger language on the protection of humanitarian activities, including providing medical assistance, and developing concrete measures to mitigate the potential negative impact of CT measures, and called for the further mainstreaming of human rights in the design and delivery of CT capacity-building support.

The High-Level General Debate for the opening of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly in September further underlined that counterterrorism is of paramount importance to Member States. Heads of state and governments from 110 Member States highlighted counterterrorism as a priority; over 70 underscored the need for a multilateral response under the auspices of the UN; and twice as many States as last year emphasized the need to uphold human rights and the rule of law as the bedrock of counter-terrorism.

We intend to follow-up with you on these pivotal areas of action through this Roundtable, the upcoming Human Rights, Civil Society and Counter-Terrorism Conference that is planned early next year in Málaga, the first Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism, and our 2022 CSO Roundtable Series.

In addition to the increased inclusion of CSOs at high-level events and meetings, UNOCT aims to promote regular engagement with CSOs across the Office's programmatic work. UNOCT has been developing the main outputs of its Civil Society Engagement strategy, including through its new Online CSOs Community, embedded within the UNOCT Connect and Learn platform, which we launched, on the margins of the 76th General Assembly. The Connect & Learn platform is the Office's innovative new training tool for enhanced delivery of CT and P/CVE capacity-building for Member States. The platform's impacts are two-fold. First, through eLearning, Connect & Learn offers foundational and specialized courses which overcome barriers such as cost, remote locations, and pandemic-related movement restrictions. Second, through the development of Communities of Practice, dedicated forums provide a platform for diverse groups of CT and P/CVE practitioners to collaborate and share knowledge, best practices, and lessons learned on various thematic programmatic activities. The Online CSOs Community, housed in the Communities of Practice portion of the site, is intended to allow diverse civil society actors and organizations across the globe to connect with each other and collaborate on CT and P/CVE efforts.

Additionally, an expanded CSOs Network has been developed to facilitate UNOCT's future engagement with CSOs by providing a list of organizations categorized by theme, size, and region, for UN entities and Member States.

I will now turn towards the Office's global programmes and their respective engagement with civil society organizations.

Let me start with the Global Sports Programme's project to benefit CSOs with direct grants for the implementation of community-level projects on the Prevention of Violent Extremism through sports, with a particular focus on youth-led organizations. There was great interest in the programme, which received 441 applications from across 74 countries. Fifty-one CSOs were shortlisted to submit final project proposals and 20 CSOs were selected in July 2021 to receive the grants. The civil society-led projects will commence between November and December 2021 following grant-transfers managed by UNICRI.

Moving to The Global Victims of Terrorism Support Programme, which works to promote the rights and needs of victims of terrorism and to increase the capacity of Member States and

CSOs, the programme has been developing its civil society network since 2018, to give direct access not only to those working on victims' issues, but also victims themselves. Additionally, UNOCT, together with UNODC and IPU, drafted Model Legislative Provisions to help strengthen the capacity of national parliaments to amend existing or develop new national legislation to support victims of terrorism. Civil society has been an integral part of the process.

In addition, in 2022, UNOCT will organize the first Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism, which will not only allow victims of terror to share their stories of resilience and discuss how to strengthen their rights and needs but will also offer Member States and CSOs an opportunity to take part in a victim-centric exchange of information on how to uphold and meet these rights and needs in their own regions and countries.

Turning next to gender, the Office is building, in partnership with Canada and the Global Counterterrorism Forum, an online platform that will address gender and identity factors in countering and preventing violent extremism and terrorism. This platform will include a library of resources and serve as a central hub, where civil society will be invited to contribute through participation in communities of practice and discussion forums on diverse thematic areas.

Further updates on how to help us build our Global Gender Programme will soon be shared through our networks and social media.

Looking now at our Vulnerable Targets Programme, before the end of this year a new Global Network of Vulnerable Targets Experts, will be added to UNOCT's Connect and Learn Platform. In addition to Member States, the Programme will invite other stakeholders to become part of the Network, including CSOs such as the "Strong Cities Network", "Civilians in Conflict" and "Peace Research Institute Oslo" to ensure that their perspectives are fully integrated in relevant policies and operational frameworks.

Let me now move on to UNOCT's Global P/CVE Programme, which aims at building the capacity of Member States, regional organizations, UN entities, and CSOs, to prevent and counter violent extremism and terrorism. CSOs from around the globe have been involved in several recent PCVE initiatives including the "Digital Games for Peace" program, focused on developing innovative gaming ideas for PCVE, as well as a thematic webinar to advance the Youth Peace and Security Agenda in Southeast Asia, which aims at building youth-led inclusive spaces for the sharing of experiences related to PCVE. The Programme also partnered with CSOs extensively in its work in Sudan working with media leaders and Sudanese journalists to enhance their capacity to combat hate speech and violent extremist narratives resulting in person trainings and coaching

of 12 young Sudanese leaders in policy development and dialogue as part of the Youth Empowerment and Engagement Programme.

Lastly, and most importantly, we have renewed our engagement with Member States on establishing an NGO unit within the Office, to spearhead the implementation of the UNOCT CSO Engagement Strategy, and work to ensure mainstreaming of CSO engagement across the Office. While this is at the development stage, I look forward to updating you – and seeking your feedback – as we progress with this initiative.

Finally, I wish to provide you with an update on what will be the first UNOCT Strategic Plan and Programme Framework, that we intend to finalize next month, and launch in early 2022. This Plan will be the first iteration of the Office's internal strategy, since its establishment in 2017. It is conceived as the *operationalization* of the mandate afforded to this Office by the Member States through General Assembly resolutions including the review resolutions of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The Strategic Plan and Programme Framework consists of three parts: an overarching chapeau which details the Office's vision, mission and five strategic goals; an internal 'strategic orientation' detailing the steps UNOCT will undertake in the next four years to orient itself towards achieving these goals; and a Results Framework, which will outline the intended outcomes and indicators under each of the strategic goals. These goals, which are aspirational, include engagement with CSOs both as a standalone outcome and mainstreamed across a number of other outcomes, in reflection of both UN and UNOCT priorities.

While there is nothing 'new' in this internal plan, its development does reflect the evolution of this Office from its initial 'establishment' phase, through to its current consolidation stage, with the Office as a firmly established UN entity fully integrated into UN working mechanisms and external partners, including CSOs. The Plan also orients the Office towards greater sustainability, foreseeing a deepened coordination and partnership role, improved support in its locations outside of New York, and strengthened programme management processes including greater emphasis on human rights and gender mainstreaming, including a section dedicated to those issues.

Now, having provided you with that briefing and overview, I open the floor to you for questions, comments and feedback. I am especially eager to hear from you. After the discussion session, I will introduce you to the new 2022 CSO Roundtable Format.

Session 2: Presentation on the 2022 Model for CSOs Roundtables

Thank you very much for your valuable insights and keen participation in the roundtable discussion.

Now, in this second session, I will outline for you the new format that we are proposing for the upcoming 2022 CSO Roundtable series, which we hope will be better structured to gain even more actionable input from CSOs. After the presentation, I will once again open the floor for questions, comments and feedback.

The Office believes that civil society, in all its diversity, has an important role to play in advancing UNOCT's mandate to ensure the balanced implementation of the four pillars of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and in strengthening the delivery of United Nations capacity-building assistance to Member States on countering terrorism and P/CVE. It is foreseen that strengthened engagement would improve the quality and impact of UNOCT policies and programming and that of the Working Groups of the Global Counter Terrorism Coordination Compact (Global Compact), contributing to the implementation of the GCTS and relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

The overarching idea of the 2022 CSO Roundtable series is to foster meaningful, continuous, systematic and structured engagement with CSOs that can inform policy and programmatic work. In order to ensure continued engagement and follow-up, we will host roundtables every four months aimed at gaining insights on local contexts to reflect the needs on the ground, instead of ad hoc and unbalanced interactions. This systematic engagement will prompt constant follow-up and will demonstrate that CSOs perspectives are included in the Office's work and the broader UN CT architecture.

These roundtables will also take a new format, where each roundtable event will be divided into two sessions. Session 1 will be a senior-level dialogue at the plenary level, including a briefing and overview of the Office's work, and an interactive session, much like this morning. The feedback from these sessions will be crucial in guiding the offices efforts to ensure that its work is both impactful and beneficial to the relevant communities it is targeted towards, while keeping CSOs informed as to UNOCT's activities.

The second half will feature in-depth discussions/workshops at the substantive and technical levels, including directly with UNOCT Programme Managers. These discussions and workshops will be held on specific thematic areas or regions of interest to CSOs and that are linked to the Office's programmatic activities and priorities with the objective of gaining critical

local and regional expertise to better inform the Office's work. This collaborative work will strengthen the Office's ability to deliver sustainable CT and P/CVE capacity-building to Member States, as programmatic activities will be tailored to consider the realities of those affected by project implementation. To determine future roundtable topics, UNOCT will solicit input from Programme Managers and circulate a survey to CSOs to gauge interest in the different topics identified. Depending on the topic with the most interest, UNOCT will invite CSOs with relevant expertise, whilst ensuring gender, age and geographic/regional inclusivity, to each roundtable.

The first roundtable of the new series will take place in February 2022, and the theme proposed will be centered around preparations for the upcoming 2022 Málaga Conference with Human Rights and Civil Society Partners. We are hoping to expand the scope of this conference by incorporating side events which will be thematically based on emerging threats, trends, and technology in order to maximize the outputs of this event. We very much look forward to seeing many of you as this will be one of our first events which will be held in person following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now, I will once again open the floor to you, for your questions, comments and feedback regarding the new format. Please also share through the chat function any suggestions for topics or themes for the Málaga Conference.

Closing Remarks

Thank you all for your insightful feedback regarding our 2022 format for future CSOs Roundtables. I would like to take the time to sincerely thank you all for your keen participation in the Third UNOCT-Civil Society Roundtable and for engaging in such thoughtful and in-depth dialogue. Your broad range of perspectives is invaluable, and we must work together to build resilient societies, and to fight terrorism and prevent violent extremism, especially now in covid times.

I would like to remind you about our most exciting upcoming event on 6 December from 9.30am to 11.30am on Video Games and Violent Extremism. As you know, with the growing popularity of video games, terrorists and violent extremists are increasingly exploiting this expanding space to recruit, fundraise, radicalize, and disseminate extremist propaganda to vulnerable youth. Given the lack of broad policy discussion and/or systematic programmatic approaches to counter this emerging threat, this event promises to hold vibrant discussions and exchanges amongst representatives from the public and private sectors, civil society and academia. We look forward to your participation at this important event and all of our upcoming initiatives.

I look forward to expanding the Office's meaningful collaboration with civil society, particularly within the new 2022 CSOs Roundtable Series which is expected to maintain a consistent, systemic engagement between senior-level officials at UNOCT and CSOs as well as concretely incorporate input from civil society organizations into the Office's programmatic development and implementation.

Thank you so much for providing your thoughtful feedback on the new proposed format, as well as UNOCT's current and upcoming civil society engagement activities.

So, thank you again for taking the time to have this conversation and thank you all for your participation. I look forward to continuing this important work with you soon. Until then, I wish you a safe and happy holiday season.