



UN GLOBAL CONGRESS OF VICTIMS OF TERRORISM

Advancing the rights & needs of victims of terrorism

Opening Remarks by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov

Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism

United Nations Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism

8 September 2022

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the first United Nations Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism.

I am honoured to be here alongside the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Ms. Amina Mohammed, and in the company of the President of the General Assembly and His Excellency Abdulla Shahid. I am equally honoured to be in the company of His Excellency Fernando Grande-Marlaska, Minister of the Interior of the Kingdom of Spain, and His Excellency Mohammed Hussein Bahr Aluloom, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Iraq, who are joining us today in their capacity as co-chairs of the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism.

I want to extend a particularly warm welcome to the many victims and survivors of terrorism present here today, as well as those following the proceedings online.

I also like to thank our main donors of the event, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Qatar, the Kingdom of Spain, the Republic of Iraq and the Federal Republic of Germany for their generous contribution towards making the Congress a success.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Terrorism can affect anyone.



In the past years, the international community has witnessed terrorism in regions and countries that suffer from instability and conflict. In fact, in 2021, more than 97 per cent of terrorist attacks and terrorist deaths occurred in countries experiencing violent conflict. At the same time, we have also seen terrorism happen in otherwise peaceful countries, on trains, on buses, in entertainment venues, on city streets and squares. The lesson to be drawn is: terrorism can affect anyone, and anywhere.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that terrorist groups are versatile, opportunistic, and able to adapt to changing environments. They have continued to spread hateful messages and propaganda, including through the internet and social media.

The rising threat posed by terrorist attacks on the basis of xenophobia, racism or intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief, is also of particular concern. The recent report of the Secretary-General on this topic advances our understanding of the motivations, objectives and organization of groups behind those attacks. Yet, the report underlines the need for further research to shed light on the full scope and nature of the threat.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have realized concrete achievements and progress over the last decade in supporting the needs and advancing the rights of victims of terrorism. I can mention the establishment of the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism; the creation of the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism; and the adoption of milestone General Assembly resolutions dedicated to victims.

But our work cannot stop there. More needs to be done. We must intensify our efforts.

I would therefore like to put forward a three-pronged approach:

First, we need to be more inclusive. We need to be better at putting victims first, engaging with them and reflecting their concerns in our work. We must be mindful of victims' interests in carrying out our work. We must be better in our commitment to uphold victims' human rights and the rule of law.

One of the clear messages we heard during the Malaga High-Level International Conference on Human Rights, Civil Society and Counter-Terrorism co-hosted by my Office and the Kingdom of

Spain earlier this year was the importance of ensuring comprehensive support to victims of terrorism.

Going forward, we need to ensure that Member States can meet the physical, medical and psychosocial needs of victims are met, and their human rights are recognized and protected. We need to recognize our obligations in this regard and rise to the challenge.

Second, Member States need to strengthen our commitment to victims at the national level.

This can be done by developing national comprehensive assistance plans that seek to provide an 'all of society' holistic approach to address the needs of victims of terrorism and their families, while taking into account gender and other factors.

Member States can also strengthen our national approaches by establishing and strengthening domestic legislative frameworks to protect and promote the rights of victims at the national level.

Member States need national frameworks that ensure assistance and protection, reparation, and access to justice for victims of terrorism, including for victims of sexual and gender-based violence. These frameworks need to be developed with the full participation of survivors and civil society.

My Office, together with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, has developed a set of model legislative provisions that can assist Member States to do this very thing – establish legal provisions for victims that can be enshrined into law. We stand ready to assist Member States in the implementation of these model legislative provisions.

Thirdly: we need to redouble our efforts at the international level.

Having recently commemorated the fifth International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, our resolve must continue to be translated into concrete action.

Gatherings such as this Congress continue to galvanize us to do more. I would like to use this occasion to announce that my Office will be organizing an African Summit on Counter-Terrorism, titled: "Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Institution Building to Address the Evolving Threat of Terrorism in Africa."

This Summit will be organized together with the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and other partners in Abuja in October 2023 with a pre- Ministerial event in the same place on 7th of December this year. The Summit is part of our efforts to mobilize more international

support for African States affected by terrorism and violent extremism, including for the victims of terrorist acts on the continent.

Our multilateral efforts do not stop there; my Office, together with its many Member State partners and other United Nations entities, will continue to promote and support the rights of victims in our global activities. We need to continue to strengthen cooperation at the international level by not only preventing terrorism and violent extremism, but also by supporting victims, including those who find themselves outside of their home country and in need of protection and assistance.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Global Congress provides us with a unique opportunity to promote dialogue and engagement among Member States, victims of terrorism, civil society, academics, experts, and the private sector.

Key priorities voiced by victims during the two-year consultative process have shaped the six overarching themes of this Congress. This consultative process will continue in the coming days, and should lead to concrete and actionable recommendations coming out of this Congress, and a Roadmap that will guide us on the path ahead.

In this regard, I would like to propose that an international conference on victims of terrorism is held every two years, to scrutinize our efforts in implementing this Roadmap.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Global Congress is our chance to take away the narrative from terrorists and violent extremists and return it to victims and survivors. The discussions today and tomorrow provide us with this very opportunity.

To all the victims in this room and around the world: I thank you for your courage, your resilience and your determination. Listening to you strengthens our resolve and reminds us of what needs to be done.

This is the start of a common journey of solidarity and action to protect, promote and fulfil the rights of victims.

I thank you.

It is now my honour to give the floor to Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, for her keynote address.

Madam, the floor is yours.