



UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

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**Regional Conference: Enhancing Resilience to Violent Extremism Among Migrant
Workers in Southeast Asia**

4 October 2022

Excellencies,
Distinguished Experts,
Dear Colleagues,

It is my great honour to open today's regional conference on 'Enhancing Resilience to Violent Extremism Among Migrant Workers in Southeast Asia'.

Let me begin by extending a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Andhika Chrisnayudhanto, Deputy for International Cooperation of Indonesia's National Counter-Terrorism Agency (BNPT). It is a great privilege to have you with us today. I commend you and your colleagues at BNPT and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for your excellent partnership in this joint endeavour and for your consistent efforts in helping advance the PVE agenda in the country and in the ASEAN region.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism has a strong and long-standing relationship with the Government of Indonesia, and I would like to acknowledge the important role Indonesia has played in driving international action towards preventing and countering violent extremism, including through its leadership role in the Global Counterterrorism Forum's CVE Working Group.

In addition to our host country, Indonesia, I also want to extend a warm welcome to representatives from Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. It is an honour to have you with us today and we look forward to listening to your experiences and insights in the coming two days on this important issue.

And let me also highlight the Member States that compose ASEAN, for the important work you do to protect the peoples of Southeast Asia against violent extremism. This region has provided a shining example of how neighbouring countries can come together and collectively fight the scourge of terrorism; the Regional Bali Workplan to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism paves the way for other regions in the world to integrate not just 'whole-of-

government' and 'whole-of-society' approaches, but goes further to incorporate 'whole-of-region' action. We applaud and continue to stand ready to support your work.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the Government of Australia for its generous contribution to this project, which has made the ground-breaking research we will discuss today, and this conference, possible.

Dear Colleagues,

Today's Conference comes at a critical time. The threat posed by Da'esh and its affiliates to this region and to international peace and security continues. The interplay between terrorism and conflict and the threat of regional spill over remains a strategic challenge globally, but also in the ASEAN region specifically. Suicide bombings have become a more prevalent tactic in Southeast Asia, with the region witnessing women playing a growing role as perpetrators of terrorist violence, as well as concerns about online radicalization and the misuse of social media, and terrorists' operationalization of disinformation and hate speech.

One such concern about the new topography of the violent extremist threat in the region has been a concern over the radicalization of Southeast Asian migrant workers. Frequent media reports of employer abuse, poor working conditions, and low wages – particularly among female domestic workers- have contributed to concerns about the potential for these workers to be vulnerable to violent extremist ideology- particularly online.

The ASEAN Bali Workplan of 2019 identified preventing radicalization of migrant workers as a priority, especially women, including through the creation of fair working conditions as means to prevent them from being radicalized.

In support of this priority area, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) at the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) launched a research project to better understand the potential radicalization of migrant workers in Southeast Asia.

One of the aims of this conference is to share with you the findings of UNCCT's research on the radicalization of migrant workers in Southeast Asia. Adopting a case study approach, the analysis examines 92 migrant cases with violent extremist profiles. This trail-blazing research contributes significantly to the body of knowledge on radicalization pathways. A summary of the findings has been made available to all conference participants and the final report will be made public later this year.

Together with BNPT, UNOCT validated its research findings with 75 civil society organizations, government officials, academics, and practitioners at a virtual workshop held on 15 and 16 June 2022.

A particular highlight of the workshop for UNOCT was the privilege of learning about the important role that civil society organizations are playing on the ground with migrant communities, some of whom are present here with us today.

These organizations have made huge strides over the last two decades in securing better rights for migrants in Southeast Asian host countries and their views need to be heard. We have also been heartened by stories of the resilience of many of these migrant communities, and the strength and opportunities that we can leverage to act against the unscrupulous exploitation of these groups.

The findings from the research and the virtual workshop have been used to inform today's discussion. The purpose of this conference is for practitioners and policymakers in the ASEAN region to identify the key areas of vulnerability for migrant workers and to collectively share best practices in each country, and to suggest measures of resilience for migrant workers in the region.

This is why your contribution this week is so important.

Dear Colleagues,

In the last 15 years, we have seen the UN system architecture take a more comprehensive, whole-of-UN and whole-of-society approach to addressing the complex and multifaceted threat of violent extremism and terrorism. This includes strengthening action to address the conditions conducive to violent extremism; strengthening human rights protections and the rule of law, ensuring young people and women are effectively engaged, and ensuring civil society has a voice and role in prevention measures.

This conference on enhancing the resilience of migrant workers to violent extremism is an important contribution to this whole-of-society approach to preventing and countering violent extremism in Southeast Asia. It brings leading policymakers, practitioners, academics, and civil society stakeholders together to exchange best practice, share innovative responses and to inspire collaboration and cooperation to address the complexity of violent extremism and its attraction amongst the most vulnerable and marginalised in our communities.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism stands ready to continue to support Southeast Asia as a region and ASEAN as a partnering regional organization in their efforts to increase our collective impact against violent extremism.

I wish you all a fruitful discussion. I am confident that your participation will contribute to the evolving field of preventing violent extremism in the region.

Thank you.