



REMARKS  
BY

**Her Excellency Ambassador Alya Ahmed S. Al-Thani**  
**Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar**  
**to the United Nations**

At

**The International Expert Group Meeting on Vulnerable  
Targets and Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS)**

(Part of the Global Programme on countering terrorist threats against  
vulnerable targets)

Online event

6 October 2021

09:00 EST

**Thank you, Mauro,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am honoured by the opportunity to, once again, join USG Vladimir Voronkov in opening another UNOCT event, which brings together different stakeholders to have a timely discussion of an important issue in the field of counterterrorism.

**Dear Colleagues,**

Critical infrastructure, open public spaces and other so-called “soft” targets are uniquely vulnerable to terrorist attacks and deserve continued efforts to mitigate all sorts of risks. In this field, international cooperation and partnerships among a wide range of actors are needed. For its part, the State of Qatar has taken this matter into consideration within the framework of its partnership with international partners such as the UNOCT and INTERPOL. It has developed expertise and capabilities in this field, and is ready to contribute to enhancing international cooperation and capacity-building to counter terrorist acts against vulnerable targets.

The United Nations, in specific the UNOCT, has an important role to play in coordinating efforts to protect vulnerable targets, identify best practices and gaps, and support capacity building. In this context comes UNOCT’s Global Programme on Countering Terrorist Threats against Vulnerable Targets, which was launched earlier this year, and for which the State of Qatar is proud to contribute funding as part of its commitment to support UNOCT’s strategic priorities, and robust partnership with the other implementing partners, including UNOCT, CTED, UNAOC, UNICRI and INTERPOL. We are glad to see this new and timely program taking concrete steps to deliver on its mission, including by convening this meeting.

**Dear Colleagues,**

To effectively take necessary preventive and protective measures in connection with vulnerable targets, there is a need to better understand the various and new threats against them, including unmanned aerial systems (UAS). This technology offers a means to gather intelligence, conduct surveillance and reconnaissance, as well as carry out attacks. As expected, terrorists have wasted no time in exploiting these opportunities to carry out their reprehensible agenda, as they have with other new technologies.

But although UAS technology is relatively new, it has proven accessible to actors with limited resources, which makes it especially dangerous.

The open nature of so-called “soft” targets is cause for special concern in this regard as it makes them prime targets. Therefore, there is a need for specific measures to protect them, and to anticipate and thwart misuse of drones by terrorist groups.

But while UAS can be a threat in the wrong hands, this versatile technology can be harnessed by Member States and the United Nations in the context of security and as a useful addition to the CT toolkit. This includes intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, border security and management, and protection of vulnerable targets.

To that end, we are confident that the sessions today and tomorrow would contribute to protection against the threat posed by UAS both through discussion of policy frameworks, and discussion of practical approaches to prevention, preparedness and response.

I wish the participants in this expert meeting all success, and look forward to fruitful discussions and outcomes.

**Thank you.**