



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM
UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT)**

**Opening remarks
Mr. Vladimir Voronkov,
Under-Secretary-General, UN Office of Counter-Terrorism
Virtual Launch Event
*INTERPOL-UNCCT/UNOCT Initiative***

**Global Threat Study on Non-State Actors and
*Their Potential Use of CBRNE Materials***

***16 November 2020
09:00 (New York) – 15:00 (Lyon)***

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the virtual launch of the joint United Nations Office of Counterterrorism-INTERPOL project to produce a Global Threat Study on Non-State Actors and Their Potential Use of Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive (CBRN) Materials.

This 5-year project is an excellent example of how the CBRN teams of INTERPOL and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre – an integral part of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism - work closely together to design innovative initiatives in the framework of the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact.

Our partnership with INTERPOL offers an opportunity to ensure that the analysis of intelligence-based information, usually available only to law enforcement and security agencies, can also become a useful tool for the international community and practitioners from Member States in assessing the threat of CBRN terrorism, and thus drive our capacity-building work to where it matters most.

The presence of Mr. Kavanagh, Executive Director of Police Services of INTERPOL, is a testament to the strong commitment of our institutions to work together in the fight against terrorism. It builds on on-going cooperation on issues such as cybersecurity, countering the financing of terrorism, border security and management, and addressing the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon.

You will hear the details about the study—including the envisaged phases, regions and focus—, from INTERPOL and UNCCT panelists, who will also share their insights into the CBRN world.

While terrorism continues to pose a threat to the whole world, CBRN terrorism is of particular concern for Member States and the international community.

We must remain vigilant as any possibility of terrorists accessing and using CBRN weapons and materials brings a serious threat to international peace and security.

The use of chemical weapons by ISIL in Syria and Iraq is a stark reminder of how this group will use any means at its disposal to carry out its terrorist agenda.

In 2014, it was reported that ISIL had seized 40 kilos of low enriched uranium from scientific institutions at the Mosul University in Iraq.

And in March 2020, a man in Germany was imprisoned for preparing an attack in the name of ISIL and manufacturing an improvised explosive device containing ricin.

This shows that the possibility of such materials falling into the hands of terrorists is real.

We are living in the times of COVID-19 – a pandemic that strained critical health infrastructure, showed us the vulnerabilities of response systems, and tested the resilience of the whole world.

The pandemic has brought changes to all aspects of our live. It has also brought to light new or emerging challenges, risks and threats.

Allow me to highlight that Secretary-General Guterres has drawn attention to the renewed risk of bioterrorism noting that the weaknesses and lack of preparedness exposed by the pandemic provide a window of opportunity to terrorists. In this respect, UNOCT is working closely with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) in the field of biorisk mitigation.

Addressing the threat of CBRN terrorism requires our collective action. The global nature of the risk underscores the need for multilateral and multi-stakeholder cooperation. We need to join forces to keep prevention and response to CBRN terrorism as a top priority.

In addition to our work with WHO and UNODA, our partnerships with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) are critical in this regard.

The Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Ambassador Rafael Grossi, and I recently participated in the 'NuSec Talks', an innovative event to generate awareness about the importance of the Convention for the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials (CPPNM) and its amendment of 2005, and of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT) for ensuring enhanced nuclear security.

UNCCT experts were also recently invited to brief the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) about the important capacity-building support we are providing to Member States.

UNCCT is also increasing its efforts to support Member States at the global, regional and national levels to prevent and counter CBRN terrorism. This year we conducted capacity-building and outreach activities for more than 800 officials and we hope to resume our work in the field soon.

Our activities include trainings for law enforcement, intelligence, first responders, customs officials, the judiciary and many more engaged in the prevention, preparedness and response to this type of terrorism.

The partnership we are launching today with INTERPOL will enhance and reinforce our programming by leveraging national law enforcement information to develop strategic-level regional threat assessments, which will be published in a series of reports.

The studies we will produce with INTERPOL will look into groups of malicious non-state actors that have been involved in sourcing, smuggling, acquiring, deploying or attempting to deploy CBRN materials in different regions.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me conclude by emphasizing that, while much work lies ahead, I am confident that the results of this initiative can benefit Member States in

improving their understanding of the threat and supporting their actions to combat it.

I am convinced that through this type of effective cooperation and partnerships, we can succeed in addressing the global risk of CBRN terrorism.

I thank you.