



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

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United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

Making a Case for Fusion Cells: Key Takeaways from Global Partners

**30 June 2021
8:30 – 10:00 a.m.**

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to help open and welcome you to this side event on the importance of fusion cells and the interagency cooperation necessary to make it work.

I would like to thank our program implementation partners, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), INTERPOL, the United Nations Police (UNPOL), and the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT/CAERT), for their commitment and dedication to our shared goals.

I am also grateful to the representatives of Belgium, Colombia, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (EUROPOL), Norway, the Russian Federation and Spain for participating in this event and sharing their valuable experiences and lessons learned in developing and operationalizing fusion cells.

Excellencies, Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

Twenty years ago this summer, the president of the United States received a briefing warning that Al-Qaida was determined to strike in the United States. As documented later by the 9/11 Commission, different parts of the U.S. government had information which if shared and fused could have alerted authorities to the nature of the attack that was about to take place in September.

I had just finished a tour of active duty at the Pentagon as a Navy intelligence reservist before the attack hit the Navy Command Center there, killing a number of shipmates. The lessons of 9/11 followed me everywhere I served in government after that, and I carry them into my work here as Director of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism.

Over the past year, terrorist groups and violent extremists have aimed to capitalize on the pandemic by spreading misinformation and inciting hateful messages and violence to advance their agendas. We have seen ISIL and Al-Qaida lure thousands of men and women with their perverted narratives, inspiring lone actors across the world, and co-opting regional franchises under their banners.

Effectively addressing persistent, new, and emerging terrorist threats require coordinated responses at the national, regional, and international levels.

Fusion cells can contribute to a comprehensive and cohesive coordination system, whereby agencies work under clear and specific mandates and cooperate based on trust, mutual understanding, and transparency.

Building stronger partnerships to support Member States' efforts to prevent and counter-terrorism is one of UNOCT's top priorities and the Fusion Cells Program is an excellent demonstration of our efforts in that area.

Our Fusion Cells Programme was launched in January 2020 through the UN Peace and Development Trust Fund, thanks to the generosity of China, which also helped make today's event possible.

The programme aims to provide technical support to beneficiary Member States by ensuring robust legislative and institutional frameworks, effective concepts of operation, and relevant standard operating procedures that facilitate fusion centers to operate seamlessly.

Through specialized technical assistance, the programme seeks to support and strengthen existing national security structures and entities which engage in collecting all-source information and produce strategic and operational level outputs, such as strategic threat assessments.

The program also seeks to support Member States' capacities to develop and maintain "terrorist watchlists" where possible.

I am proud to announce that UNOCT will shortly launch its Compendium of Good Practices and Related Guidelines for a Fusion Center, created with the support of Member States experts. The Guide will provide a detailed "A to Z manual" on how to establish and operate a Fusion Center.

Recently, Member State experts identified several key lessons learned during a series of study visits to other states' fusion cells. We will soon release a report on the significant outcomes of those visits shortly.

Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen,

I am confident that by sharing challenges, experiences, and effective approaches today, we will make a case for fusion cells and raise awareness of their important role in enhancing inter-agency coordination in the fight against terrorism.

As we near the 20th anniversary of 9/11, let's learn from past experience and do whatever we can to reduce the risk of terrorist attacks, in whatever form they come.

Thank you.