**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM**

**Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under Secretary-General
United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

Prevention and the misuse of New Communications Platforms

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m., 30 June 2021

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to open this side event on preventing the misuse of new communications platforms.

I am grateful to our partners, His Excellency Ambassador Abdallah Al-Mouallimi, Permanent Representative of the Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations; Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos, High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations; and Ms. Michèle Coninsx, Executive Director of the Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate for coming together to discuss challenges and priorities related to this critical issue.

I would like also to welcome the participation of Etidal, Discord and Moonshot in this important dialogue.

The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified existing and emerging trends in violent extremism and exacerbated its underlying drivers.

We have seen terrorists and violent extremists use social media, messaging and online gaming platforms to influence, communicate with and recruit young people and other vulnerable audiences online.

Terrorists and violent extremists are exploiting existing vulnerabilities, seeking to foment divisions and social polarization by spreading propaganda, using mis- and dis-information in pursuit of political and cultural manipulation.

At the same time, the COVID-19 'infodemic' of hate and conspiracy theories has fuelled a growing, transnational threat stemming from xenophobic, racist and other forms of intolerant violent extremist movements.

Against the backdrop of economic hardship, prolonged time spent online and global uncertainty, the pandemic has further isolated vulnerable populations and impacted many psychologically.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

Terrorists and violent extremists are innovative and often ahead in the use of new technologies. We have seen them capitalising on the digital revolution.

Their exploitation of online spaces is happening on a diverse range of platforms using sophisticated communication strategies.

We—international organizations, Member States, civil society, academia and the private sector— must come together to share knowledge about this emergent threat and discuss possible counter measures.

Our session today will focus on understanding the current threat environment of new online communication platforms. We will also discuss what we can do to effectively respond to this threat.

We will be hearing from young leaders from the Empowering Dialogue and Interfaith Networks (EDIN) Project, which works together with my Office and our partner - the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.

These young people are already contesting terrorist ideologies on these new communication platforms and sharing messages of peace. They are building coalitions and communities of young people online and offline to provide alternatives to terrorist narratives of hate and division. We have much to learn from their experience.

EDIN represents an important example of the role young religious leaders and media makers can play to prevent violent extremism, counter hate speech and enhance social cohesion online.

My Office will continue to invest in innovative, evidence-based practices to counter terrorist narratives through our Global Programme on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism.

We are also engaging with Member States, civil society and the tech sector to address the spread of violent extremist ideologies offline and online.

I am proud of the work we are doing together with these impressive young leaders and our partners around the world.

This is a priority issue not only for my Office but for the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Coordination Compact as a whole.

As the world continues to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, we stand ready to partner with you to better and more effectively counter the terrorist exploitation of online spaces.

Thank you.