



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM**

**Opening remarks of Mr. Vladimir Voronkov
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism (UNOCT)**

**“Launch of the Global Network of Experts on the Protection of Vulnerable Targets against
Terrorist Attacks”**

15 February 2022, 10 a.m. (NY time)

Your Excellency, Ambassador Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations,

Your Excellency, Ambassador Cho Hyun, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations,

Excellencies, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to warmly welcome you to the launch of the Global Network of Experts on the Protection of Vulnerable Targets against Terrorist Attacks.

Following the success of the three Expert Group Meetings on vulnerable targets protection that my Office organized last year, which focused on religious sites, urban centres, tourist venues, and Unmanned Aircraft Systems, today we will take a further step in institutionalizing and sustaining these efforts through the launch of a dedicated network of experts.

I am pleased to share this opening session with their excellencies Ambassador Al-Thani and Ambassador Cho. The State of Qatar is not only the main contributor to our Global Programme on the Protection of Vulnerable Targets, it is also a leading funder of UNOCT's mandated functions. The Republic of Korea is the main funder of the UNOCT Connect and Learn platform, which will host the Network of Experts. I am grateful to both Member States and to their Permanent Representatives for this generous support.

Member States agreed by consensus during the seventh review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June last year that the protection of vulnerable targets should be a priority. General Assembly resolution 75/291 stressed the need to bring together all stakeholders – Member States, international and regional organizations, private sector, civil society and academia to address the unprecedented threat that terrorist attacks pose to critical infrastructure and “soft” targets.

Terrorists have increasingly explored vulnerabilities in public and private utilities of almost all sectors, including transportation and energy, as well as water infrastructure and even nuclear facilities. Crowded places, such as markets, pedestrian areas, tourist places and religious sites, continue to be prime objectives of terrorist attacks.

From Ouagadougou to Sydney, from Manchester to Mumbai, from Paris to Kabul, terrorists have increased their attacks against these objectives over the past years. Their goal is well-known: to terrorize through mass casualties, undermine confidence in the state’s ability to protect its citizens, and coerce change.

Only by working together at all levels will we successfully address this threat.

The Global Network that we launch today will contribute to this effort by fostering synergies between experts from the public and private sectors as well as academia, civil society, international and regional organizations. The Network, which was established in November 2021, already counts close to 150 members and is hosted online on the UNOCT Connect and Learn Platform.

This virtual tool will allow more enriching interactions among experts through a social media community application; grant them access to a library of international good practices on vulnerable targets protection; and, in the near future, provide access to e-learning courses.

In the coming months we also plan to organize thematic, regional and sub-regional in-person expert meetings of the Network.

Such a multi-stakeholder approach is a key component of our Global Programme on the Protection of Vulnerable Targets, under which the Network has been developed.

In addition to bringing experts together, the Programme focuses on two other main work streams: providing to requesting Member States specialized technical assistance and capacity-building to prevent, protect, mitigate, investigate, respond to and recover from terrorist attacks

against vulnerable targets; and developing knowledge products that identify and share good practices through tailored tools, such as modular guides.

This Programme is implemented in partnership with United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities -- namely, the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI); and in collaboration with other Counter-Terrorism Compact entities, such as the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), and other international and regional organizations.

Let me conclude by thanking everyone for joining us today, and for your continued engagement and support. I wish you a productive discussion, and I wish this new Global Network all possible success going forward.

Thank you.