



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM**

Statement of Mr. Vladimir Voronkov

**Open Briefing of the Counter-Terrorism Committee on
'Building partnerships in protecting soft targets from
terrorist attacks'**

27 June 2019

Mr. Chairman, Ambassador Meza-Cuadra,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to brief the Committee on this important topic.

I would also like to thank you personally, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership and initiative in convening this event. In addition, I would also like to thank ASG Coninx and CTED for its proactive and expert work in this area.

In recent years, the number of terrorist attacks against soft targets has increased.

From Barcelona to Bamako, Ouagadougou to Paris, and New York to Istanbul, terrorists have targeted easily accessible locations that are filled with worshippers, diners, shoppers, tourists or students going about their daily lives.

These atrocities are not only tragic for the innocent lives lost but they also represent a violent assault on a country's way of life.

Protecting soft targets is, by definition, very difficult. But this does not mean it is impossible.

It requires national and local institutions to work together and build strong partnerships, especially with the private sector, which owns and operates many of these public spaces.

Governments and the private sector need to share information on evolving terrorist threats and mitigation measures to help reduce the vulnerabilities of soft targets.

The importance of partnerships and the sharing of information for securing soft targets is recognized under Security Council resolutions 2341 (2017), on managing the risk of terrorist attacks on critical infrastructure, and 2396 (2017), which includes specific references to the protection of soft targets.

The 2015 Madrid Guiding Principles on stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters and its 2018 Addendum, which have been endorsed by this Committee, also underscore the importance of sharing information between the public and private sectors.

My Office has responded to the call from the Security Council to provide enhanced support to Member States to help them protect soft targets, in close coordination with CTED.

In particular, allow me to highlight three areas that we are working on.

First, my Office will soon launch a four-year global programme on the protection of vulnerable targets, especially safeguarding religious sites from terrorism-related threats.

This will help to operationalize the Secretary-General's Action Plan to Safeguard Religious Sites, which is being developed by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)

My Office will implement this programme in close consultation with relevant UN entities, including CTED and UNAOC, as part of a comprehensive “all-of-UN” approach.

The programme will identify and share good practices and contribute to the drafting of an Addendum to the CTED-led United Nations Compendium of Recommended Practices on the Protection of Critical Infrastructures against Terrorist Attacks.

It will also support and improve the ability of Member States to identify, prevent, deter, and counter threats against soft targets by providing expert technical assistance to increase their practical and operational threat mitigation capacities.

Second, my Office will soon launch another major four-year programme on the protection of vulnerable targets during major sport events.

On Monday, I signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Center on Sport Security, a non-profit organization based in Doha. This marks the start of a new partnership together with other UN agencies, particularly UNICRI, to support Member States.

This new programme will map current initiatives and available resources, identify good practices, develop standard operating procedures, create a global network of experts, and offer training and capacity-building support to interested Member States. It will also include an important component on the use of sport and its values to prevent violent extremism. I would like to express my gratitude to the State of Qatar for financially supporting this programme.

Third, the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre in my Office is also implementing a number of other projects to help Member States protect their soft targets, thanks to the financial support of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other generous donors.

For example, Member States have expressed concerns over the threat of cyber-attacks and the misuse of emerging technologies such as drones against critical infrastructure facilities, which can have devastating effects on soft targets.

To address these concerns, we have established a new Unit within the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre to build the capacities of Member States on cyber-security, Artificial Intelligence and other new technologies, in collaboration with other Global Compact entities. This Unit has already started to implement projects in South-East Asia.

Mr. Chairman,

It is only through collaboration and cooperation at the global, regional and national levels that we can reduce the vulnerability of soft targets to terrorist attacks.

I look forward to a productive session this afternoon.

Thank you.