



- Opening Remarks -

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**The Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Advancing Women's
Participation and Leadership**

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Good morning,

We are here today to discuss the upcoming review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and how to better integrate gender and advancement of women's leadership in that strategy and to kick-start our discussions ahead of the biennial review in June.

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Preventing extremism and countering terrorism is a truly complex challenge requiring a multi-faceted, dynamic approach that integrates a host of UN agencies and entities, in partnership with governments and civil society. As such, I am pleased that we have such a diverse group with us today that can speak to the dimensions of integrating a gender perspective and promoting women's participation and leadership in countering terrorism and preventing extremism, especially as it applies to rural women, the theme of this year's Commission on the Status of Women.

The UN Office of Counter-Terrorism has made great strides in its first nine months in addressing gender in its work and strengthening its partnerships with UN-Women, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, and Member States. We are looking forward to hearing about progress in that regard from our distinguished speakers.

This event comes in advance of the Sixth Review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June. Although this strategy was adopted in 2006, it was only in its 2016 review that gender was referenced, calling on Member States to consult with women and women's groups. We must ensure that implementation is emphasized in order to turn rhetoric into reality. To that end, today's discussion aims to explore **how we can integrate a gender perspective in our efforts to prevent extremism and counter-terrorism.**

Terrorism and extremism claim innocent lives, undermine sustainable development, and displace millions of people. But perhaps the most frightening aspect of these phenomena is the extremists' attempt to destroy our values, particularly through the **dehumanization of women.**

Extremists place the control and subjugation of women and girls at the heart of their agendas, using gender stereotypes to radicalize and recruit. Their vile tactics of terror have highlighted how the use of gender-based crimes is part of the strategic objectives of these groups.

So, we collectively as an international community cannot let such destructive ideologies continue to spread. We have to fight back, and we need to insist on comprehensive and inclusive approaches. If the terrorists utilize the subjugation of women as their modus operandi, then our approaches and solutions must integrate a gender perspective and promote women's leadership and participation in countering those attempts.

The UAE promotes gender equality and women's empowerment because we know in global terms that more inclusive communities lead to more stable, prosperous, and tolerant societies. But we also promote these principles because they are inherent to the values that our country was built on.

This also directly translates to our work on preventing extremism and countering terrorism. Which I would like to share with you this morning. We know that women are critical to confronting this problem for two reasons:

First, empowering women and increasing their participation and leadership throughout every aspect of society is, by itself, a **counter-measure to radicalization**. We have deployed this strategy in building our own nation, where the promotion of women's rights has been the cornerstone of our peaceful and inclusive society. As a result of our National Strategy for the Empowerment of Women, women in the UAE hold two-thirds of public sector jobs and constitute 47 percent of the labor force. The UAE is considered one of the highest performing countries in the region, having made notable improvements on gender parity in ministerial positions and wage equality for similar work, according to the World Economic Forum's 2017 Global Gender Gap Report.

Second, women have a role to play in **developing prevention strategies**, identifying early signs of radicalization, and countering the narratives of extremism, both online and offline. That is why the UAE co-sponsored resolution 2242 on Women, Peace and Security in 2015. And it is why the UAE continues to work to integrate gender analysis into countering radicalization, while also considering the impact of counterterrorism strategies on women's human rights and women's organizations. Further, women have a role to play in the counter-terrorism capabilities of law enforcement, including in police and military forces, investigations, electronic crimes, and human trafficking investigations. In 2014, the UAE opened the region's first military college for women - the Khawla bint Al Azwar Military School - to provide training and leadership development for women, making them equal partners in maintaining the stability and security of the UAE and its region.

On the international level, the UAE has a long-standing partnership with UN-Women to explore women's roles in preventing extremism, and to mainstream gender throughout counter-terrorism efforts. Furthermore, the UAE supported the appointment of a Gender and Preventing Violent Extremism Expert through UN-Women to advise the UN's counter-terrorism architecture on mainstreaming gender throughout their work.

The UAE strongly emphasizes that **women's voices** – and their active participation in formulating CVE strategies – are necessary if we are to combat this global threat that knows no region, no religion, no boundaries.

We are dedicated to advancing a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the **role of women in countering extremism**, in order to develop tailored, effective, and sustainable policy, and to implement programmatic responses.

Not only must women be a part of developing counter-narratives to extremism, but these narratives must also integrate gender as a key component. Women's empowerment, protection, and participation are vital to all efforts to fight extremism.