



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM**

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

**Meeting with the EU Political and Security Committee
Brussels, 8 December 2017, 10:00 am**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you, Chair, for organizing this meeting and giving me the opportunity to exchange views with the European Union Political and Security Committee on how we can better work together to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism. I also look forward to the opportunity to listen to your comments and priorities, and respond to any questions you may have.

Allow me to start by conveying the warm greetings of United Nations Secretary-General, His Excellency, Mr. António Guterres. Just last week he had very good meetings with Madame Mogherini and other EU leaders in the context of the African Union-European Union Summit in Abidjan, underscoring the crucial role of our EU-UN partnership in supporting the African continent.

I, myself, am just back from the Sahel. By making this my first official trip as Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, I wanted to highlight the importance we give to supporting this critical region, which is suffering so much from the scourge of terrorism.

In Mali, I met with several of the country's political leaders as well as with civil society and community leaders. I also carefully listened to families and victims of terrorism, one of the most touching moments of my visit. I understood well the urgency of helping improve the lives of so many that are daily threatened by terrorism.

I welcome that the EU also agrees on the need to increase its assistance to the G5 Sahel and wish that the Summit convened by President Macron next week will be a success.

I also hope that this initiative, and my visit to Brussels, will serve to gain momentum and develop a success story of trilateral counter-terrorism capacity-building cooperation, EU-UN-G5 Sahel,

with real impact on the ground. Your support in mobilizing political will and resources, for both military and civilian efforts, would be invaluable.

Excellencies,

The establishment of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism by the UN General Assembly in June this year is the product of the first reform initiative of the Secretary-General Guterres, a clear sign of the importance the UN attaches to countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism.

The Office is intended to provide leadership in the UN's work to address counter-terrorism; significantly enhance coordination and coherence across relevant UN bodies and international organizations; and strengthen capacity-building activities in support of Member States, always upon their request. We will need to work hard, as "One UN," to fulfil these obligations.

My Office coordinates 38 entities, making the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, which I Chair, the largest coordination mechanism in the UN – reaching across the peace and security, development, human rights and humanitarian pillars of the Organization. To further strengthen this coordination, the Secretary-General is developing a new UN system-wide Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, which will institutionalize our coordination efforts, and further strengthen our "All of UN" efforts.

While enhanced coordination is important within the UN System, we also need greater unity in the international community on counter-terrorism. As Secretary-General Guterres said in his recent speech in London, "governments and security agencies [have] to collaborate far more effectively in fighting terror, while respecting human rights... It is time for a new era of intelligence-sharing, and collaboration to save lives."

To contribute to this effort, the Secretary-General will convene in June 2018 the first-ever UN Summit of Heads of Counter-Terrorism agencies, to forge new partnerships and build relationships of trust. We count on the support of the European Union and your Member States to make this event a success.

Excellencies,

Over the past several years, national and multilateral counter-terrorism efforts have disrupted networks, reclaimed territory and prevented attacks—but more needs to be done. Stronger international cooperation remains crucial against terrorist groups, as they constantly evolve and adapt.

For example, even as ISIL continues to be under sustained military pressure in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic and the flow of Foreign Terrorist Fighters is significantly reduced, other potential dangerous scenarios could be emerging. These could include:

- ISIL reorganizing itself in independent sleeper cells and transferring its main forces to new countries and regions; such as in South-East Asia;
- the increase in the number of terrorist attacks internationally, including through Foreign Terrorist Fighters' returning to their countries of origin or traveling to third countries. North Africa, the immediate southern neighbourhood of the European Union is at particular risk in this regard;
- the multiplication of online efforts to radicalize youth, fund terrorist activities and promote atrocious crimes; and
- e terrorist use of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons or dirty bombs

While countering these threats remains fundamental, preventing them is more crucial than ever.

The United Nations has adopted a common framework to coordinate and strengthen the efforts of the international community and individual states for structural prevention, including through preventive diplomacy.

This preventive approach championed by Secretary-General Guterres can also help through the prevention of violent extremism that can be conducive to terrorism. Such an approach may help to address the conditions conducive to terrorism highlighted under Pillar 1 of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

To strengthen and give content to this Pillar, the United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism included more than 70 recommendations, built around seven key areas. Solving conflicts through inclusive political processes; addressing socio-economic grievances; supporting youth; and strengthening good governance and the rule of law are important complements to traditional counter-terrorism measures.

Excellencies,

The new Office of Counter-Terrorism intends to make a qualitative difference in our support to Member States by bringing leadership, mobilizing resources, and developing, together with UN entities at Headquarters and the field, a coherent and well-coordinated “One UN” framework to counter terrorism.

Support and assistance for Member States are the key elements of this approach. Listening and acting on Member States' priorities will be my priority.

I intend to work closely with all Member States, as well as international, regional and national stakeholders. The European Union will be an indispensable partner if we are to be successful.

Only by working together we will be able to multiply impact, reduce duplication and overlap and respond to increasing demands.

Fortunately, there are solid foundations to build on as we develop new projects in areas of common interest to the EU and the UN, including on foreign terrorist fighters and returnees; preventing violent extremism; border controls; addressing the terrorist use of Internet; and countering the financing of terrorism, among others. Geographically, we are focusing our action in Africa, Central Asia, and South and South-East Asia.

Let me give you some concrete examples of our work:

- The Office of Counter-Terrorism, taking an “All-of-UN” approach, has developed a Security Council-mandated comprehensive Foreign Terrorist Fighters Capacity Building Implementation Plan by mobilising and coordinating the efforts of 38 United Nations entities, including the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the ISIL and Al-Qaida Monitoring Team.

The plan addresses the full life-cycle of foreign terrorist fighters, including a number of projects related to information sharing, Advanced Passenger Information, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration to support Member States in their efforts to address returnees.

New projects have also been added which specifically address women and children returnees through a human rights-based and gender-sensitive approach.

The latest version of the Plan includes 50 capacity building projects submitted by 13 United Nations entities with a total budget of 107 million dollars over 5 years. My Office has provided a total of 9 per cent of the funding for the Implementation Plan, but overall the Plan is still only 41 per cent funded.

The European Union has generously pledged to fund one of this projects on management of violent extremist prisoners and the prevention of radicalization in prisons.

We hope that the EU and EU Member States can consider supporting other projects included in this Plan.

- The Office of Counter-Terrorism is also working with UNESCO on a project on “Prevention of Violent Extremism through Youth Empowerment in Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia,” both a topic and a geographical focus that are of primary interest to the European Union.

The overall objective of this project is to empower young women and men with the values, knowledge, capacities and skills to hold exchanges, communicate online and offline, and cooperate across social and cultural boundaries. Furthermore, the project aims to enable young women and men to become responsible citizens, resilient to any form of abuse or manipulation, including radicalization and violent extremism, and to mobilize critical thinking to counter radicalization and recruitment.

The total budget of the project is approximately 1.9 million dollars. The Government of Canada has already provided nearly 600,000 dollars.

- A third example is the OCT project on the Comprehensive Implementation of the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) for Central Asia, which aims at operationalizing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in the region.

Partly thanks to the support of the European Union, two phases of this project were successfully conducted and capped by a ministerial conference chaired by the UN Secretary-General in June. A third phase has now been developed for which new funding will be required.

- Finally, I would be remiss after coming from the Sahel not to reiterate the important work we are conducting under OCT’s Integrated Assistance for Counter-Terrorism—or I-ACT—in Mali and the G5 Sahel countries.

At the regional level, the OCT has helped develop a G5 Sahel I-ACT framework, composed of 9 strategic, mutually reinforcing projects that respond to the stated needs of the G5 Sahel.

At the national level, OCT is supporting the Government of Mali in finalizing its Counter-Terrorism and PVE Comprehensive National Strategy and its Plan of Action.

The implementation of these two frameworks, and the counter-terrorism and PVE projects envisaged in the implementation phase, will require substantive resources. I urge you to consider supporting our efforts.

Excellencies,

The United Nations, including its Office of Counter-Terrorism, is proud of its partnership with the European Union.

We share many priorities. Over the past years, through a number of mechanisms, including the annual EU-UN Dialogue on Counter-Terrorism, we have been strengthening our institutional ties, exchanging information and strategic priorities, and collaborating programmatically.

As the terrorist threat evolves and Member States demands for assistance increase, the moment is ripe for us to develop a more ambitious partnership.

The Secretary-General has been clear: “We can only win this fight by upholding the dignity and worth of the human person. Principles however will not be enough”. World leaders must lead and countries must strengthen their multilateral counter-terrorism cooperation.

I count on your support and thank you for your attention.

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