



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM**

**Statement of Mr. Vladimir Voronkov
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism
“The Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Advancing Women’s Leadership
and Participation”**

12 March 2018

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you, Ambassador Nusseibeh for your very rich in substance speech.

Welcome and thank you all for joining us today for this important discussion at the start of the Commission on the Status of Women.

I particular thank the women leaders on this panel and also UN Women for being such a strong and dedicated partner since the new Office of Counter-Terrorism has been established.

Excellencies,

Terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism remains a serious threat to many countries, leaving long-term scars on survivors and their families and destabilizing entire communities.

In many cases, women are the main victims of terrorist violence. We also know that women and their families may face stigma and other negative impacts as a result of their connection to relatives who may be associated with terrorism. Moreover, women can be involved in terrorist activities.

Terrorist groups continue to capitalize on gender dynamics to advance their objectives. They have used sexual violence as a tactic, subjugated women and girls, and severely limited their rights, as seen in Nigeria, Syria, Afghanistan and other countries.

Women are key actors in our fight against terrorism and violent extremism. Many of them are doing vital work on the ground. Their participation is critical to enabling sustainable peace. But often, women are not sufficiently involved in counter-terrorism efforts. It is in the interest of all to change this situation, first of all, in the field.

Excellencies,

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism was established last June to provide leadership to the United Nations' counter-terrorism efforts.

Our functions include enhancing coordination and coherence across 36 United Nations entities, Interpol and the World Customs Organization, and strengthening capacity-building support for Member States on counter-terrorism. Including CTED with its Executive Director Ms. Michele Coninsx with who we just finished our joint trip to Iraq.

In fulfilling these functions, we are committed to making gender a core priority.

We are strengthening the capacity of all UNOCT staff to integrate gender in their work, including in our efforts to support victims of terrorism.

We are also developing specific initiatives dedicated to advancing women's leadership and to providing a gender perspective in counter-terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism.

Critical for all these efforts is the involvement of grassroots women's groups in our work.

Excellencies,

The 2006 Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy is the source of our mandate. The Strategy is a unique instrument reviewed biennially by the General Assembly to enhance national, regional and international counter-terrorism efforts.

It was not until the 5th review resolution of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in 2016 that the importance of consultations with women and women's groups and of dedicated gender analysis were highlighted.

The 2016 United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism is also core to our work. The Plan provided a comprehensive approach to address the conditions underlying radicalization and violent extremism.

Advancing gender equality and women's empowerment was one of the Plan's key components.

The Plan echoes the call of Security Council resolution 2242 (2015) to further integrate the areas of our mandate with the women, peace and security agenda.

Excellencies,

We have made progress in all of these efforts, but challenges remain.

I saw this last December, when I visited Mali. Women's groups I met explained the complex challenges that the threat of terrorism posed on their communities. They also provided valuable insight on the factors contributing to such violence. For example, they raised the importance of increased participation and leadership of women, especially those from the rural areas, in both development and implementation of counter-terrorism and prevention of violent extremism policies. We need to address how best to do this in the months and years ahead.

We also have to ask ourselves why the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters includes an unprecedented number of women among them. And, how should we deal with the foreign terrorist fighters and their children now returning home in a gender-sensitive manner?

Another key question is how to ensure that women's organizations could continue to operate effectively in the face of national counter-terrorism measures?

I hope today's discussion will contribute to making the 6th review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which will take place this June, even more gender-sensitive and inclusive of women's participation and leadership than the last.

Thank you for your attention.