



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

Statement of Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism

High-Level Event on “International Collaboration to combat the use of the internet for terrorist purposes: opportunities and challenges”

**New York
27 June 2018**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by especially thanking the Government of the United Arab Emirates, as well as the Governments of the Member States who have partnered to organize this important side-event on combating the use of the Internet by terrorists.

Over the past two decades, we have witnessed exponential technological development.

The Internet offers numerous opportunities to individuals and States. It allows us to access information and connect to other people. It provides a platform to freely engage with other persons and to exercise the right of freedom of expression. The internet also enhances political participation and contributes to economic growth.

At the same time, the internet poses challenges and threats. Terrorists have been misusing the internet for their own heinous purposes. This includes incitement to violence, spreading extremists propaganda, recruiting young people, and planning attacks. We have all heard of the beheadings by ISIL that were filmed, put on the Internet, and shared with millions. Terrorists are also using the dark web to acquire weapons.

In the sixth review resolution of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, Member States expressed importance of cooperation among stakeholders to prevent misuse of new technologies by terrorists. It is going on about Member States, international, regional and subregional organizations, the private sector and civil society. Of course, this issue should be addressed with all respect to human rights and fundamental freedoms and complying with international law and the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. Only in this case such technologies can be powerful tools in countering the spread of terrorism, including by promoting tolerance and dialogue among peoples and peace.

Security Council Resolution 2354 (2017) calls for the implementation of a comprehensive international framework to counter terrorist narratives.

I would like to present briefly the activities of UNOCT and its Counter-Terrorism Centre in this regard. We are enhancing our collaboration and coordination within the United Nations through our inter-agency working groups on communications as well as the working group on the protection of critical infrastructure, which includes the Internet. Speaking about concrete projects I would like to mention that UNOCT together with INTERPOL is implementing a joint project on the use of social media to counter and prevent the Foreign Terrorist Fighters phenomenon. In two weeks' time, the training of law enforcement officers from Southeast Asia in this important area will take place. This work will be extended to the Middle East and North Africa later this year, with the generous financial support from United Arab Emirates.

A project to Prevent Violent Extremism through Strategic Communications include trainings to enhance strategic communication skills, for example on data-driven social media analytics and on dissemination channels on the Internet. In April 2018, one of this training was held in Trinidad and Tobago, in partnership with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and representatives of civil society.

Our colleagues from CTED have been successfully engaging with the private sector. They launched an online knowledge-sharing platform under their "Tech-against-Terrorism" initiative, that allows big tech-companies to share knowledge on responding to terrorist exploitation of the Internet with smaller companies.

An important aspect in the context of the use of social media and the Internet is the Youth. Today, 46 per cent of the world's population is twenty-four-years-old or younger.

As one of the four themes of the High-Level Conference of Heads of counterterrorism agencies focusses on preventing violent extremism by engaging Youth and preventing the misuse of new technologies and the Internet by terrorists, our colleagues of the UN Alliance of Civilizations will organize a side-event on Friday, 28th June, on behalf of the UN inter-agency working group on communications. The topic of the event is “Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism through Communications and Empowerment Strategies involving Youth.” I would like to invite you to this important event.

In collaboration with UNESCO and the League of Arab States (LAS), we have developed a project that aims to promote dialogue, tolerance and openness through the media to counter narratives associated with terrorism in the Arab Region. The project's objective is to promote digital literacy, critical thinking, intercultural dialogue and an understanding of rights and ethical principles and to empower users and consumers of media.

In closing, I would like to express my sincere thanks for organizing this important event.

Thank you.