Mr. Voronkov commends regional efforts at the 2019 OSCE-wide Counter-Terrorism Conference

Bratislava, 26 March 2019 - Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov, the Head of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), closed the 2019 OSCE-wide Counter-Terrorism Conference on “Taking Stock of Efforts to Prevent and Counter Terrorism as well as Violent Extremism and Radicalization that lead to Terrorism (VERLT) in the OSCE Area”, which was held in Bratislava, Slovakia on 25-26 March 2019.

Thanking the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship for organizing the conference, Mr. Voronkov praised the regional leadership of the OSCE and its comprehensive approach to security, including in combating terrorism. “Opportunities such as this conference are essential to sustain the momentum in our collective effort to respond to the evolving and multifaceted threat from terrorism and terrorist radicalization,” he added.

Mr. Voronkov warned that following its territorial defeat, ISIL is transforming into a covert network that remains a threat as a global organization with centralized leadership. He expressed particular concerns about the spread of toxic propaganda online, the return and relocation of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) and their family members, and the fate of children associated with FTFs. He also noted the increasing concern of the international community over emerging terrorist threats, including from racial supremacists and far-right groups.

Mr. Voronkov shared four points that are guiding the work of the UN in response to the growing demand for support from Member States: “First, we need to encourage local solutions. Second, to scale up our work supporting the victims of terrorism, which will assist efforts to build resilience. Third, to take gender aspects into account as a prerequisite to be effective. Fourth, to engage and invest in our youth as partners rather than as a risk we need to mitigate.” As a cross-cutting element, he stressed the importance of civil society engagement to effectively counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism.

Commending the cooperation between the OSCE and UNOCT, Mr. Voronkov said that the two organizations are working on a biennial plan of action following the signature, in October 2018, of a Memorandum of Understanding to lay the groundwork for action-oriented collaboration. The plan of action includes projects to strengthen the capacities of States in Central Asia on most pressing counter-terrorism issues, such as border security.

During the visit to Bratislava, Mr. Voronkov also met with Mr. Thomas Greminger, Secretary-General of the OSCE; Mr. Makis Voridis, Chair of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s Ad Hoc Countering Terrorism Committee; as well as senior officials from Egypt, the European Union and the United States, among other delegations.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), was established in June 2017 to provide leadership on the implementation of General Assembly counter-terrorism mandates, to enhance coordination and coherence, and to strengthen the delivery of the United Nations counter-terrorism capacity building assistance to Member States, through the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT).

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