Press Release

High-level Conference on Countering Terrorism and the Use of New Technologies starts in Minsk

Minsk, 03 September 2019 – The joint Belarus-UN International High-level Conference on Counter-Terrorism and the Use of New and Emerging Technologies, co-organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, started its work today in Minsk, Belarus.

The Conference brings together more than 400 participants from 55 countries, including members and partners of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, members of the Association of South East Asian Nations, international organizations, NGOs and civil society organizations as well as the private sector to address most pressing issues of counter-terrorism through technology such as online radicalization, artificial intelligence, hacking, lethal autonomous weapons and the cross-border travel of foreign terrorist fighters.

The President of the Republic of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, outlined in his opening remarks that “The creation of a united counter-terrorism front with the efforts of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the European Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and other international organizations is the only true way to counter this threat vigorously and effectively”.

The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Counter Terrorism, Vladimir Voronkov welcomed the collaboration with Belarus on this important topic. He highlighted the vital importance of multilateral coordination to prevent terrorist abuse of technology and to develop innovative initiatives to tackle these issues. “We must join forces to prevent and curb the risks of terrorist abuse of new and emerging technologies, while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms,” he stressed, adding that “Only together in a spirit of partnership and cooperation, we will be able to harness technological advances to help tackle the evil scourge of terrorism and ensure a more peaceful and prosperous future”.

The President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Gabriela Cuevas Barron, the Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Thomas Greminger, and the Executive Secretary of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Sergey Lebedev, also participated in the opening ceremony.

The Conference will include three plenary thematic sessions, focusing on preventing the misuse of new technologies and artificial intelligence by terrorists, the innovative use of new technologies to strengthen detection capacity, and the development of national, regional and international approaches to address the misuse of new technologies and artificial intelligence by terrorists. At each session, senior representatives will have the opportunity to consider the practical implementation of relevant aspects of the four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and to share information, expertise and experiences and discuss the
threat of new technologies being used by terrorists, and how to counter it while upholding human rights.

This Conference is the fourth in a series of regional conferences on counter-terrorism that follow-up on the first-ever UN High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism of Member States, which focused on “strengthening international cooperation to combat the evolving threat of terrorism,” and was held in New York on June 28-29, 2018 under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres. These conferences are taking place around the world, at the initiative of Member States, to strengthen regional cooperation on common counter-terrorism and preventing violent extremism priorities.

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