



Co-chairs Summary

International High-level Conference on Countering Terrorism through Innovative Approaches and the Use of New and Emerging Technologies

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

Minsk, 4 September 2019

Your Excellency, Mr. Vladimir Makei, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus,

Your Excellency, Mr. Lukáš Parizek, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, and Special Representative for the 2019 OSCE Chairmanship,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank His Excellency President Lukashenko for making a major contribution to international security by bringing us together to discuss how to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism conducive to terrorism through innovative approaches and the use of new and emerging technologies.

The Republic of Belarus rightly has a global reputation as a place for multilateral diplomacy and dialogue and this city is a major technology hub with its Hi-Tech Park.

I would like to thank their Excellencies, Mr. Thomas Greminger, Secretary-General of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Ms. Gabriela Cuevas Barron, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Mr. Fabrizio Hochschild, Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General of the United Nations as well as Ms. Michele Coninsx, Assistant Secretary-General and Executive Director Counter Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and Mr. Miroslav Jenca, Assistant Secretary-General Department of Political and Peace Affairs and Peace Operations and all those who have made this conference possible through their leadership, participation and contributions.

I would like to express my gratitude to the chairs and members of each panel for their informative and expert remarks.

I would also like to thank the State of Qatar for their financial contribution for the Conference.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

This has been a unique cross-regional conference that has gathered over three hundred high-level officials and experts from fifty-five states from across Europe and Asia, ten international and regional organizations, as well as representatives from civil society, business and academia.

I would like to express my special gratitude to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations for their support for this event.

There will not be a negotiated outcome from this conference, but together with my distinguished Co-chair Minister Makei, please allow us to summarise the sessions and set out some key conclusions and our joint vision for the way forward.

In the high-level and first sessions, we considered how to strengthen multilateral action and encourage global innovation to tackle terrorist misuse of new and emerging technologies in accordance with international law.

We heard that the digital, physical and political threats from terrorist abuse of technology are increasing and diversifying.

Hatred is thriving in the digital space, with unmoderated forums where far-flung violent extremists can find each other, inflame each other, and spur each other into action.

Social media is being used to polarize societies, to prey on their youth and to demonize people, often targeting women, minorities and the most vulnerable.

Terrorists are hiding in the shadows of the dark net, using encrypted messaging services to communicate anonymously and crypto-currencies to raise and transfer funds.

With the power of artificial intelligence, we face a new era of larger and more precise cyber-attacks, which can evade detection and overwhelm existing defences.

The threats involving chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) materials are increasing as terrorists seek to exploit fast developing biotechnologies and techniques for offensive purposes.

Commercially available drones, self-driving cars or autonomous weapons systems could be reprogrammed, including connecting them to AI, by terrorists to launch lethal attacks, release deadly materials in public areas, or carry out targeted killings.

The ability to use artificial intelligence to generate high-quality fake videos or images - so-called deepfakes - is a powerful new tool that could be used by terrorists for misinformation and to undermine trust in governments and political figures.

The second session focused on new technologies that enhancing our detection and screening capabilities at borders and airports through the use of Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record data.

We learned that implementation of these new technologies varies around the world and there is a need to build the capacities of states to fulfil their obligations given in the United Nations' Security Council resolutions and related Annex 9 ICAO standards.

We heard that another priority is to ensure border security and detection capacity against the illicit entry of CBRN materials, small arms and light weapons. Adapting cargo information systems is essential to strengthening monitoring and risk-based controls of international supply chains to address this threat.

The third session provided an in-depth discussion on the development of national, regional and international approaches and strategies to address the misuse of new technologies and artificial intelligence by terrorists.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me now outline some key conclusions from our discussions.

First, this conference has shown there is an urgent need to strengthen international cooperation to tackle terrorist abuse of new technologies and to share innovative approaches to counter this threat.

We therefore need to enhance cooperation in practical and operational areas both within regions and between different regions, such as sharing biometric information and other alerts to prevent terrorist travel.

We need to explore possibility of new cooperation frameworks in this area. Technological developments transcend borders, so our response must do the same.

This means strengthening international and regional cooperation to share information and expertise and build understanding of the threats, as well as our own vulnerabilities.

It means working collaboratively to develop and implement innovative approaches that improve national security while protecting privacy and upholding individual freedoms and respect for human rights.

It also means sharing cutting-edge technology and data-driven solutions with countries that lack the capacities to deal with the threat on their own.

And it means ensuring meaningful impact on the ground to strengthen all lines of defence: the owners and operators of critical infrastructure and vulnerable targets, the end-users of technology at home and at work, front-line law enforcement officers and emergency responders.

For instance, it is critical to educate and empower our young people to recognize and reject manipulative narratives, xenophobia and hate speech in cyber space, which can lead to online radicalization to terrorism.

As we heard yesterday afternoon, the United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel Programme is an excellent example of how technical expertise can be shared to tackle the scourge of terrorism.

As was proposed in the second session, Member States may benefit from a handbook on the legal, practical, operational and technological challenges in the implementation of such a system on the ground.

Second, our discussions have underlined the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach to counter terrorist abuse of new and emerging technologies.

There needs to be a strategic coalition involving governments, the private sector, the scientific community, civil society, including religious and community actors, international and regional organisations, and all those who can make a difference in building resilient societies. The United Nations could serve as a platform to facilitate the exchange of expertise between such entities.

As many of you have mentioned, women and young people must be fully involved in designing and delivering policies and programmes to enhance their effectiveness.

Public-private partnerships are crucial in tackling terrorist exploitation of the Internet, protecting critical infrastructures, building cohesive communities, and preventing new technologies from becoming lethal terrorist weapons.

We would like to express appreciation to the efforts of the Global Internet Forum to Counter-Terrorism, the ‘Tech Against Terrorism’ initiative, and other similar partnerships.

The Christchurch Call - a commitment by some governments and leading technology companies to eliminate online terrorist and violent extremist content - is another important contribution.

Technology companies have made progress in preventing terrorists from exploiting their online platforms and we welcome their commitment in the Christchurch Call to establish new crisis response mechanisms and networks of online first responders.

But there is more that can and needs to be done.

For example, we must ensure that those who come across online terrorist propaganda are not automatically directed to similar hateful content.

There needs to be better information and knowledge sharing between the private and public sectors on data connected to the removal of terrorist content.

We also hope that technology companies can enhance their efforts to understand local and cultural nuances and contextualized speech used to incite hate and violence around the world.

Third, this conference has shown that there are great benefits in working together to consider future terrorist threats from technology and undertaking joint scenario planning and simulation exercises to enhance our operational preparedness and capabilities.

We hope that our discussions here in Minsk lead to many similar expert events across Europe and Asia that brainstorm future terrorist threats and the ways to counter them.

Fourth, many of you rightly highlighted the importance of protecting human rights and ensuring fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of expression, while tackling terrorism and preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

An open, secure, stable and accessible Internet offers extraordinary benefits to society and this must be safeguarded, in line with international law.

The United Nations will continue to support Member States in combatting terrorism while complying with international law.

Lastly, this conference has confirmed that the United Nations has a crucial role to play to assist efforts of Member States and their partners to counter terrorism through innovative approaches and the use of new and emerging technologies.

We encourage the use of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact framework to provide you with coordinated assistance to support your implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

The United Nations will continue to provide tailored and innovative capacity-building support for Member States that helps to generate new ideas and solutions to tackle the misuse of technology by terrorists.

In particular, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre in the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism will continue to scale up its work to implement global, regional and national projects that address the evolving threat.

We are delighted to confirm that there will be a specific session on terrorist exploitation of the Internet and new technologies on the sidelines of the United Nations High-level Conference on Counter-Terrorism in New York next summer.

This side event will be an opportunity to share the key points and lessons learned and provide updates on our discussions over the last two days with the international community.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

This conference has shown that the international community is fully committed to curbing the risks of terrorist abuse of new technologies while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We now need to turn that commitment into concrete action.

We must seize the moment to deliver on the promise of technological advances and harness them for the common good with a view to implementing Goal 16 of Agenda 2030.

Thank you for your participation in this conference and we wish you a safe journey home.