



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
& INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION



UNITED NATIONS  
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM



Hedayah  
countering violent extremism

## **Co-chairs Summary**

### **Joint United Nations – UAE Regional Conference for Arab League Countries**

#### **“Empowering Youth and Promoting Tolerance: Practical Approaches to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism”**

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

**19 December 2019  
Abu Dhabi, UAE**

Your Excellency, Mr. Omar Ghobash, Assistant Minister for Cultural Affairs of the UAE,  
  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First and foremost, allow me to express my deep gratitude to the Government of the United Arab Emirates for its warm and gracious hospitality.

I would also like to thank His Excellency, Zaki Anwar Nusseibeh, Minister of State on Cultural Affairs of the UAE; His Excellency Mr. Péter Sztáray, State Secretary for Security Policy of Hungary; Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of UNODC; Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, United Nations Youth Envoy; Mr. Adama Dieng, UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide; Mr. Miguel Moratinos, High Representative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations; Ms. Fatima Benoughazi from the Young Leaders Council of Tangier; and all of you who have contributed to the success of this Conference through leadership, participation as well as intellectual and financial contributions.

I am grateful for the special partnership we had with Hedayah to organize this Conference, under the leadership of its Chairman, His Excellency Dr Ali Al Nuaimi, and its Executive Director, His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Al Qasimi. I am happy to announce that on the sidelines of this conference, The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and Hedayah signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen cooperation.

My words of gratitude to Ivo for the able managing of the Conference.

I would also like to thank the Global Centre for leading and organizing the civil society workshop on 17 December. Jason, thanks a lot for your personal contribution.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Today, we are concluding the sixth Regional High-Level Conference that the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism has organized this year in partnership with Member States as part of a broader initiative to invigorate practical and multilateral cooperation among the United Nations, Member States, Civil Society and other partners, to address the evolving threat of terrorism and violent extremism.

These Regional Conferences aim to promote national and regional ownership of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and advance our collective efforts in addressing the priority counter-terrorism issues identified in General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

The outcomes of these Conferences will feed into the Second Counter-Terrorism Week at the United Nations in New York next year, from 29 June to 2 July.

Here in Abu Dhabi, over the last two days, around 250 representatives from 32 Member States, a number of UN entities, international and regional organisations, and civil society partners gathered for a remarkable event.

As there will not be a negotiated outcome of this conference, allow me to set out some key conclusions and a vision for the way forward, on behalf of the Co-chairs of the Conference.

First, all sessions of the Conference underlined the need to further strengthen international and regional cooperation, including the sharing of good practices and lessons learned to empower youth and promote tolerance.

We all have a role to play to facilitate regional cooperation in this regard, and regional organizations, such as the League of Arab States, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation are key partners of the United Nations.

We will explore additional areas of cooperation and assistance within the framework of the support we are providing to the Arab Interior Ministers' Council in developing and implementing an Arab Security Vision based on the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Second, we focused on tolerance as central to building cohesion and solidarity, tightening the social fabric of our societies. This is an essential bulwark against the corrosive spread of violent extremism.

The journey of achieving tolerance must start with social inclusion and not stop till social cohesion.

As we heard over the past two days, we need to start our work at home – good parenting and elimination of violence at home including violence against women, can be our first step to preparing responsible youth.

We need to embrace an attitude of empathy towards our youth and understand the era of uncertainty they live in, where old institutions are increasingly vulnerable to questions. We need to foster the value of empathy in them towards others as a first step to breeding tolerance.

We need to build bridges and understanding to promote resilience and rejection of narratives that demonize and dehumanize the other.

We heard from several participants about excellent programmes to foster and promote dialogue and tolerance in different local communities in this region. Let us continue to implement these good practices and nurture the connections we made during this Conference.

Working together to safeguard religious sites, places of worship and cultural heritage can be instrumental in this regard.

Many speakers underscored the promotion of inclusive and quality education – one of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals – as critical to fostering tolerance.

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization are the engines within the United Nations system on these issues. We stand ready to work closely together in providing support to interested Member States in promoting tolerance and leveraging education to prevent and counter violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

Third, based on discussions during the Youth Circle on enhancing partnerships between governments, youth, and communities to strengthen resilience to terrorist narratives through education, we must do more to listen to youth perspectives and engage young people to help shape counter-terrorism policies and programmes.

We need to make young people governance actors in devising national PVE strategies and national action plans.

The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre in the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism has launched a new Global Youth Engagement and Empowerment Programme to ensure meaningful participation of youth in efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism leading to terrorism.

We would also like to recognize the crucial work of the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide through the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders to Prevent Incitement to Violence that could lead to Atrocity Crime, and the United Nations Plan of Action to Address Hate Speech.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General's Youth Envoy, Jayathma Wickramanayake, for her valuable and strong support to the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, as well as her participation in this Conference.

Placing victims of terrorism at the centre of our prevention efforts sends a strong and powerful message that helps put a human face to the effects of terrorism and builds resilient communities.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism has worked with youth victims, and I have met with many youth victims worldwide, and I have been struck by their desire to make a change. Youth victims themselves have turned their experiences into a force for change and shown their leadership. We need to support them, but more importantly we need to empower and engage with them.

Fourth, a number of speakers emphasized the need to do more to adopt holistic and inclusive approaches to preventing and countering terrorism, orientated towards action at the grassroots level.

We are delighted that civil society organizations attended this conference and led a special workshop.

Many speakers underlined the need for more meaningful and action-oriented engagement between governments and civil society, including community, religious and other actors in promoting dialogue, mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence.

This workshop was an important complement to the work of the conference and reflected and amplified core themes of the conference. It demonstrated our joint commitment to strengthen our engagement with civil society, as we recognize that non-governmental organization, youth and women's organizations, faith and community-based actors and organizations are essential partners to effective prevention of violent extremism.

Fifth, participants worked today in different sessions to share innovative ideas and recommendations from young people and the older generation alike.

In one Workshop, participants addressed the role of youth and civil society in the development and implementation of national and regional PCVE plans of action.

Speakers highlighted the unique contributions that these partners can make thanks to their insights, knowledge, access to vulnerable or hard to reach groups and individuals, in designing and implementing effective PCVE policies and programmes.

Through a strategic partnership with UNDP and working closely with many other UN entities, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism is facilitating support to Member States in the development and implementation of such national and regional PCVE Plans, based on national ownership, priorities and needs.

In another workshop, participants focused on the role of education and sports, arts and culture in promoting the values of tolerance, teaching positive values, forging bonds and celebrating our shared humanity within and between our societies.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism will start implementing at the beginning of next year a new global programme on the ‘Promotion of Sport and its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism’, including a global campaign with world famous athletes to “Say No to Terrorism.”

In the third and last workshop, participants discussed practical ways to create opportunities for open, intergenerational discussions between young men and women, religious leaders and governments.

Many speakers highlighted that facilitating such engagement requires trust, and building trust requires conscious efforts and time.

Mutual respect and recognizing youth as partners and not simply as a subject of public policy is a prerequisite for open and constructive discussion about sensitive topics.

The United Nations and its Country Teams can help convene and facilitate such inclusive dialogue among national stakeholders.

Lastly, in the spirit of the theme of our Conference, we dedicated important parts of this meeting to brainstorming sessions and formulation of innovative ideas to promote tolerance.

Let’s honour human rights and promote respect for rule of law to build resilient societies for a shared future as global neighbours in this age of hyper-connectivity to prevent and counter terrorism.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

We can never be complacent about the threat of terrorism.

While Member States have the primary responsibility to prevent and counter terrorism – we all have a vested interest in helping resolute and effective action to prevent terrorist from jeopardizing peace, undermining sustainable development, and destroying human rights.

We need to invest in prevention, in building social and institutional resilience to the scourge of terrorism.

It is in this context that the Second High-Level Conference of Heads of Counterterrorism Agencies of Member States in New York, on 1-2 July, will focus on strengthening social and institutional resilience to prevent and counter terrorism. I look forward to your participation in the Conference.

At the end of this sixth regional conference, let's make a joint commitment. A commitment to build resilient and tolerant societies in our respective areas, step by step, piece by piece!

I once again thank you all for your valuable contributions to this Conference and wish you safe travels.

This is the end of the Conference.

Thank you again for your participation.