



High-Level International Conference on Human Rights, Civil Society and Counter-Terrorism



UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM



GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA
MINISTERIO DE ASUNTOS EXTERIORES, UNIÓN EUROPEA Y COOPERACIÓN

SUPPORTED BY:



Ayuntamiento
de Málaga

10-11 May 2022, Málaga, Spain

For a Future Free From Terrorism: The Role of Human Rights, the Rule of Law and Civil Society Engagement in Effective Counter-Terrorism Efforts

Opening remarks of Mr. Vladimir Voronkov United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the first United Nations High-Level International Conference on Human Rights, Civil Society and Counter-Terrorism.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of Spain for hosting and organizing this event together with the United Nations, and for its continued cooperation with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism.

I am honoured to be speaking directly following the remarks delivered by Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and alongside His Excellency Mr. José Manuel Albares Bueno, Minister of Foreign Affairs, the European Union and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Spain.

I am thankful to representatives from Member States the United Nations and regional organizations for their presence; and I am especially grateful to our human rights and civil society colleagues and partners for their participation in this Conference.

Allow me at the outset, to acknowledge and thank all our 35 donors, including our leading donors, the State of Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the European Union, whose financial contributions are critical in the implementation of our policy leadership, coordination and capacity-building mandates entrusted to my Office by the United Nations General Assembly.

This Conference follows last year's Virtual Dialogue with Human Rights and Civil Society partners, which we convened together with Spain.

It also builds on the renewed emphasis on the rule of law, human rights and gender equality in the 7th review resolution of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

This Conference focuses on a central – yet too often neglected - component of our united front against terrorism.

Countering terrorism helps protect human rights, but only if human rights are protected while countering terrorism.

Moreover, the violation or abuse of human rights plays into terrorists' hands, as these seek to provoke heavy-handed and indiscriminate responses from security forces. Terrorists do this with the aim of undermining public confidence in the ability of governments to protect their own citizens.

That is why a human rights-based approach is not aimed at challenging or frustrating counter-terrorism initiatives.

On the contrary, its essential to ensure effective, long-term, and sustainable counter-terrorism efforts.

Its also why human rights, the rule of law and gender equality are cross-cutting and crucial elements of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The General Assembly's last review of the Strategy resulted in strengthened language on the rule of law and human rights, including the rights and needs of victims of terrorism, on women's participation, civil society engagement, the rights of the child, and safeguarding humanitarian action.

So this Conference is a direct implementation of the important provision of the resolution.

While Member States have the primary responsibility to implement the Strategy, they can count on the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism's full support to do so in a balanced way.

Yesterday marked the official launch of UNOCT's new Human Rights and Gender Section, which will run both our Global Human Rights and Gender Programmes.

Its establishment will ensure that human rights and a gender perspective are mainstreamed in our policy, coordination, and programming activities.

We have also continued to strengthen the implementation of our Civil Society Engagement Strategy, with dedicated roundtables that allow direct dialogue between civil society organizations and programme managers of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, as well as a civil society online community forum hosted on our Connect & Learn Platform.

Honoring, advocating for, and supporting victims of terrorism remains a high priority for my Office. The "Memories" Campaign, which will be launched tomorrow during the victims' session of the conference. I look forward to welcoming you later this year to the first United Nations Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism held in New York in September to discuss this issue further.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The international community is aware that promoting and protecting human rights and preventing and countering terrorism are mutually reinforcing goals.

Yet, much remains to be done.

At a time when human rights are under assault around the world, this Conference and its side events allow us to reflect on challenges, identify solutions and chart a path forward to place human rights and the rule of law at the very heart of effective counter-terrorism measures.

I look forward to our open, honest and transparent dialogue, and wish you all a successful conference.

Thank you.