**Statement by Mr. Raffi Gregorian,
Deputy to the Under-Secretary-General and Director
United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)**

High-Level Research Launch on Examining the Intersection Between Gaming and Violent Extremism

**5 October 2022 (Wednesday), 10:00 am - 11:45 am EST
Format – Virtual event (WEBEX)**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Dear Colleagues,

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to our distinguished Member State representatives, speakers and our researchers for joining us today to launch UNOCT's research on the intersection between video games and violent extremism. I would also like to thank everyone who joined us today online and via UN Web TV; it was great to see so much interest in this work from across the globe.

Today we have heard how UNOCT's research on the intersection between gaming and violent extremism contributes to this emerging field of work. As we have learned, perhaps unsurprisingly, a spectrum of violent extremist ideologies have appeared in gaming communities, seeking to exploit their appeal and their reach.

As our researchers have described, extremists most likely use gaming due to its cultural appeal and networking opportunities. It is clear that some gamers report frequent exposure to hateful and toxic content in gaming spaces. Importantly, much of this behavior goes unreported, and is often ignored. With nearly three billion gamers globally, there has never been a more critical time for the insights that this kind of research provides.

What we also heard clearly today, however, is the importance of listening to the voices of gamers. As noted by Ms. Linda Schlegel and Dr. Amarnath Amarasingam, many gamers noted *positive* experiences from gaming, with some survey respondents even calling upon our researchers in the survey not to create a narrative that gaming is the problem. We should also recall that we found clear insights to suggest that harnessing the positive aspects of gaming might make video

games themselves a powerful potential tool in PCVE efforts, in fact we just heard about one of them from the UK.

The insights provided here by the researchers are an important step forward in our collective work to understand the nexus of violent extremism and video games. But it does not end here. This is the first step of many- and we need your help. First, we look to expand our own research. We cannot fall into the trap of looking at this emerging issue through a Western-centric, English language lens. Gaming is growing in popularity, access and audience share throughout the world, including in communities where terrorism and violent extremism have established a hold.

In response, UNOCT's Global PCVE Programme looks to conduct research in other regions and languages to further broaden our understanding of the intersection of gaming and violent extremism for real life end users around the world. We are particularly interested in piloting research in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia to look at possible interconnections between countries in those regions.

We also look forward to further work with our excellent partners, such as the Extremism and Gaming Research Network, which UNOCT has recently joined as a member. However, we would like to call upon Member States who also see the value in getting ahead of this emerging threat to support us in these efforts. Together we can work towards understanding gaming and violent extremism without stigmatizing the gaming community and instead harnessing it as a positive response to terrorist and violent extremist encroachment.

Thank you for joining our Research Launch on Examining the Intersection between Gaming and Violent Extremism, and thanks again to all the participants.