



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

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

**UNOCT Ambassadorial-level Quarterly Briefing to Member States
(Via MS Teams Webinar)**

**28 February 2023
10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,

Good morning and welcome to our first Quarterly Briefing to Member States this year.

During this meeting, we will review the progress we made in our joint counter-terrorism efforts last year and review our policy priorities for this year.

Let us begin by watching a short video, which will highlight the key achievements of UNOCT in 2022 and set the stage for my opening remarks.

Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,

Thank you for your attention. We are grateful for the enduring support and contributions of Member States and United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities, which made our achievements in the past year possible.

Despite the considerable progress that Member States, with the support of the United Nations, have made in preventing and countering terrorism, terrorist groups continue to adapt their methods and spread to new areas, especially in conflict settings.

Al-Qaida remains at large in Afghanistan while permanent attacks by its affiliates in Western and Eastern Africa continue to take lives.

The expansion of Da'esh and its affiliates in Central and Southern Africa, as well as in the Sahel region is particularly worrying, while the lethality of its so-called Khorasan branch in Afghanistan only worsens the already disastrous humanitarian situation there.

Despite repeated calls by the Secretary-General for urgent action, the situation in camps and detention facilities in northeast Syria, where persons with suspected links to Da'esh and other designated terrorist groups are held, continues to deteriorate, with potentially far-reaching and long-lasting consequences.

We also see an increase in the frequency and lethality of terrorist attacks based on xenophobia, racism, and other forms of intolerance or in the name of religion or belief.

Terrorist groups expand their use of the Internet, social media, video games and adjacent platforms to spread their propaganda and recruit new supporters – particularly young people.

The exploitation of new and emerging technologies by terrorists, including uncrewed aerial systems and virtual assets, is also very concerning.

Member States have repeatedly highlighted the interconnected and complex nature of global challenges, including the situation in Afghanistan, the climate emergency, the global food crisis, cyberspace security, and terrorism financing.

My United Nations colleagues here with us today will address the current terrorist threat landscape later in the agenda.

To help Member States address these increasingly complex challenges, UNOCT has set seven key strategic policy priorities for this year.

First, we will continue to implement our 18 global capacity building programmes together with relevant regional and national partners in support of Member States.

Second, we will again provide support as the substantive secretariat to the co-facilitators of the upcoming review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which this year are Canada and Tunisia.

On Friday (3 March), I will brief the General Assembly on the key highlights of the Secretary-General's report on the activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy since its last review in 2021.

We anticipate that during its eighth review of the Strategy that the General Assembly will adopt another consensus resolution when it meets on 22 June at the end of the Third United Nations Counter-Terrorism Week.

This signature week of events will also comprise the Third High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States from 20 to 21 June and a series of side events that we will organize in partnership with Member States, United Nations entities, and civil society throughout the week of 19 June.

These events will build on the successes of the two previous Counter-Terrorism Weeks and the eight regional high-level conferences we have convened since 2018 to strengthen international counter-terrorism cooperation and foster new partnerships, promote sharing of expertise and resources, reinvigorate policy dialogue, and help develop best practices and ideas to address critical counter-terrorism challenges.

Third, we are co-leading, together with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Department of Peace Operations and the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the development of the New Agenda for Peace, proposed by the Secretary-General in his landmark report on “Our Common Agenda.”

We are focusing on overarching global recommendations to address the terrorist threat through a multilateral approach, including putting more emphasis on human rights and rule of law. We are also working on inward looking recommendations to make the United Nations system more efficient, collaborative, and impact oriented.

Yesterday, we concluded a series of high-level consultations with the five regional groups of Member States to seek your views, ideas and input for this important document. We plan to hold expert-level consultations over the next few months and anticipate that a draft of the New Agenda will be ready as a policy brief by June this year.

Fourth, we will work to mobilize more robust international support for the counter-terrorism efforts of Member States in Africa.

As part of these efforts, UNOCT is planning to organize an African Counter-Terrorism Summit on the theme “Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Institution Building to Address the Evolving Threat of Terrorism in Africa”, later this year.

During the Summit, African leaders and key international partners will review the nature and severity of the terrorism threat in Africa and seek agreement on concrete priorities and measures to address this scourge.

Fifth, we will work to further strengthen cooperation and coordination between the 45 entities of the Secretary General's Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, Member States, and other multilateral and regional organizations.

The Compact with its eight working groups is also a one-stop-shop for Member States to get information about system-wide United Nations counter-terrorism efforts and collaborate with relevant Global Compact entities in areas of their interest.

Following the ninth Coordination Committee meeting of the Compact held last month, we are leveraging this framework to deliver a more evidence-based and data-driven "All-of-UN" approach to counter-terrorism, aligned with the four pillars of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Member States' priorities.

With the first ever briefing to the Compact Coordination Committee by civil society representatives in January, Compact entities are now also actively benefitting from the insights and knowledge of civil society partners to counter terrorism in the field.

sixth, from the organizational structure point of view, UNOCT is now in a consolidation mode.

I would like to thank Member States for their strong support in converting 25 existing Extra Budgetary positions of UNOCT to Regular Budget posts in December 2022, facilitating long-range planning and our mandated roles of policy, coordination, and coherence. We are also trying to address existing Extra Budgetary gaps in a proactive manner.

For the sustainability of United Nations counter-terrorism efforts, however, conversion to the Regular Budget of the second tranche of positions from the technical assessment the General Assembly called for in 2021 will be required. I will make a separate presentation to Member States.

I also wish to reiterate our sincere appreciation to our 36 donors, in particular the State of Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the European Union, the United States of America, the UN Peace Development Fund (China). These are the five largest donors!

Finally, the Secretary-General has emphasized the importance of “horizontal integration” of United Nations counter-terrorism work. I have heard from colleagues about the success of DPPA-DPO horizontal integration model. However, as of now, horizontal integration of United Nations counter-terrorism work is mostly being achieved through the Global Counter-Terrorism Compact and its eight working groups.

Given the challenges we are facing, including those related to the terrorist threat and resources, we will need to do a lot more to promote efficiencies and economize our existing resources.

Since 2019, UNOCT has deployed programme staff away from Headquarters, including by establishing several Programme Offices abroad and embedding our staff members within other United Nations entities in the field.

This approach has brought us closer to our beneficiaries, helped add value to our capacity-building activities, and allowed more efficient use of donor funds to extend programming further.

We also want to engage more closely with United Nations Country Teams on our counter-terrorism mandate, but do so in a more systematic and institutional way than is currently possible.

However, we have reached a ceiling in terms of what our existing infrastructure to support programme offices outside of Headquarters can sustain.

Accordingly, we are consolidating these presences and do not expect to open new ones beyond those already under discussion.

Excellencies, the main objective of my presentation of these priorities to you today was to hear from you. What are your priorities?

How could we jointly further strengthen United Nations counter-terrorism efforts? How could we collaborate better? Which thematic issues concern you the most?

Thank you for your kind attention.