



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

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

Third High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States

**Session II: Building Effective and Resilient Member States' Institutions in the Evolving Global
Terrorism Landscape**

19 June 2023

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon and a warm welcome to you all!

I am delighted to be co-chairing this Session together with Ambassador Vanessa Frazier,
Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations.

In this session we will delve into the concept of resilience in effectively preventing terrorism
and violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

Terrorism in the last quarter of the 20th century was most often associated with small gangs
who used hostage-taking, assassinations, and bombings to attract attention to their cause and
impose their will on a government. Today we face a different situation in which mass casualty
attacks are meant to inflict suffering and the goal of terrorist insurgencies is to overthrow
governments and rule territory.

Evidence shows that the path to terrorism and violent extremism today is often shaped by the
gradual erosion of civil liberties, widening socio-economic disparities, and manipulation of
localized grievances.

We also see how terrorism grows in conflict settings and in deeply fractured, or broken, social
contract environments between state institutions and their citizens.

As the social contract and trust between governed and governing has eroded, individuals in different corners of the world are increasingly disillusioned, alienated, and fearful, causing some to seek security in hateful ideologies. Community bonds are being tested, good governance and accountability is often under threat, creating conditions that are ripe for radicalization leading to violence.

Without a decent path to equality and human dignity, membership in terrorist and violent extremist groups may lend itself as a misleading alternative for many.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Resilience is a global priority and plays a pivotal role in developing effective responses to address terrorism.

But what makes resilience so vital now?

The answer lies in recent events, most notably the global COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic revealed the fragility of our societies and exacerbated the profound inequalities that exist – both within and between our national borders.

It highlighted the crucial role that resilient institutions play in confronting and overcoming complex crises – and what happens when those institutions fail to deliver.

Those institutions that had the ability to swiftly adapt, respond, and recover, were better placed to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, protect their communities, and maintain stability.

In the 2021 United Nations Common Guidance on Helping Build Resilient Societies, resilience is defined as the capacity to prevent, resist, absorb, adapt, respond, and recover positively, efficiently, and effectively when confronted with a wide range of risks.

This comprehensive definition demonstrates the broad nature of resilience, which finds application in diverse fields.

It is imperative for us to work towards establishing a shared understanding of resilience, drawing upon the collective wisdom and expertise of different disciplines.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The New Agenda for Peace – proposed by Secretary-General Guterres in his report on *Our Common Agenda* - aims, in part, to bring together the peace and sustainable development agendas, and ensure that we comprehensively address the underlying conditions that can lead to terrorism and violent extremism through prevention.

It also calls for counter-terrorism responses to be firmly grounded in international law, including international human rights law, and to reflect age- and gender-responsive approaches.

The Summit of the Future in 2024 presents an opportunity to enhance global cooperation on critical challenges and to harness innovation and technology in our pursuit of peace and security.

This includes the use of behavioral science, empirical evidence, sports, as well as collaboration with the entertainment industry, to improve the effectiveness of our responses.

UNOCT took an important step in this regard in 2020, establishing the International Hub on Behavioral Insights to Counter Terrorism in Doha, with the generous support of the State of Qatar.

By integrating behavioral insights into our strategies, we can effectively address the behavioral drivers that contribute to radicalization and help build resilience within our communities.

Our groundbreaking work in this area has positioned UNOCT as a pioneer in operationalizing behavioral science in the field of security.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Concerted action is required to contain and reverse the spread of terrorism.

Key to this is a bold investment in prevention and building resilience, to buttress necessary security measures that to make sustainable gains.

We know from experience that human rights and the rule of law must underpin all our efforts and permeate everything that we do if we want sustainable outcomes to our counter-terrorism strategies.

Engaging women, youth, civil society and other local actors from the outset is also crucial for community ownership of counter-terrorism measures.

And at every step of the way, we must never forget the crucial role of victims and survivors of terrorism in building resilience and strengthening our prevention efforts to end terrorism.

Let us all work together with renewed determination to build a safer, more resilient, and secure world for all.

Thank you.