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# VIRTUAL COUNTER-TERRORISM WEEK

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6-10 JULY 2020

## **Interactive Closing Discussion: Member States' Counter-Terrorism Priorities in the Post COVID-19 Environment – Synergies and Complementarities between the COVID-19 and the Counter-Terrorism Agendas**

10 July, 11:30 –13:30 EST

### **Concept Note**

The Second United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States was postponed in tandem with the General Assembly's decision to hold the seventh biennial review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy during its 75<sup>th</sup> Session, instead of the 74<sup>th</sup> (in June 2020), due to the unprecedented circumstances caused by the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) is thus convening a *scaled-down* virtual counter-terrorism week to enable a collective reflection among Member States, international and regional organizations, United Nations entities, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders, on the implications of the COVID-19 crisis for counter-terrorism, Member States' priorities in this regard and the United Nations' work to support them.

As emphasized by the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, the international community is facing a "human crisis" unlike any other in the history of the United Nations, "one that is killing people, spreading human suffering, and upending people's lives." More than ever, Member States are called to act in a "coordinated, decisive, inclusive and innovative" manner to address the short, medium and long-term impact of this crisis and avert its devastating and far-reaching consequences across sectors through tailored and integrated responses.

While we have yet to fully understand the implications of the COVID-19 crisis on the terrorism threat environment, as well as national, regional and international efforts to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism leading to terrorism, some of the pandemic's immediate and long-term impacts on terrorism are increasingly becoming apparent. Terrorists have sought to exploit the situation to spread their ideologies, foster fear, hate and division, inspire and recruit new followers, and position themselves as



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alternative service providers to win support from local populations. In some cases, they have launched new attacks and intensified their operations. Despite the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire, which provides a unique opportunity to break the cycles of violence in which terrorism can thrive, this crisis has exposed existing fragilities, and exacerbated security, political and socio-economic challenges recognized by the General Assembly as conducive to the spread of terrorism. It has also brought to the fore emerging manifestations of terrorism in the form of bio and cyberterrorism, online extremist activity, and ethnically and racially motivated violent extremism, among others.

In the post-COVID environment, the international community needs to remain particularly vigilant to the persistent threat of terrorism, reaffirming its unity of purpose and solidarity. Since no state can defeat terrorism on its own, action should be founded on strong and concerted multilateralism, guided by all four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. It will be critical to ensure and mobilize adequate resources for innovative solutions to effectively tackle new and evolving threats to terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism. This will require political will and united efforts by all; not just governments, but also local communities, civil society, the private sector, women and youth. As we enhance our counter-terrorism preparedness and responsiveness, our approach should be anchored in good governance, as well as respect for human rights and the rule of law, which is Pillar IV of the Global Counter-terrorism Strategy.

This session will provide an opportunity to hear from regional perspectives how Member States are approaching the implications of the COVID-19 crisis for counter-terrorism and prevention of violent extremism conducive to terrorism, discuss key counter-terrorism needs and priorities, identify possible synergies and complementarities, and explore ways to strengthen international counter-terrorism cooperation to address the threat of terrorism in the post-COVID world.

**Building on the discussions held throughout the Virtual Counter-Terrorism Week, this session will address the following issues:**

- *What are Member States' counter-terrorism needs and priorities during the on-going and post-pandemic environments?*



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- *What are the synergies and complementarities between the response to and recovery from COVID-19 and the counter-terrorism agenda?*
- *How can we strengthen political support for international counter-terrorism cooperation and capacity-building, including through the UN and its partners?*

**Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General, UN Office of Counter-Terrorism will present main conclusions of the Virtual CT Week at the end of this closing Interactive Discussion.**