



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

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

**“Launch of the UNOCT Global Programme on
Security of Major Sporting Events, and Promotion of Sport and
its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE)”**

**3rd February 2020 – New York, UN HQs
Conference Room 1**

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to welcome you today at the launch of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism Global Programme on Security of Major Sporting Events, and Promotion of Sport and its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism.

Let me start by thanking the generous support to this UNOCT Initiative of the Government of the State of Qatar—who also gave us the idea to develop this Global Programme and helped us to launch it. My words of gratitude also go to the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Korea, who joined and contributed to this initiative.

Many thanks to Ambassadors Al-Thani, Zhang, and Cho [as well as Ambassador Craft] for being with us today.

I also highly value our partnership on this track with the UN Alliance of Civilizations, the Counter Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and the International Centre for Sport Security. Many thanks to Mr. Moratinos, Ms. Coninx, Ms. Tucci and Mr. Hanzab for your personal commitment to the success of the programme.

We are also very pleased to welcome here today representatives of the International Olympic Committee, national Olympic committees, FIFA, sport federations and private companies. Your expertise and recommendations are of great value to this meeting and the global programme, so I am very grateful for your presence.

As you can see from the attendance, this is truly a unique—and would dare to say historical—gathering. We are very proud that for the first time the United Nations is engaging with such a diverse group of people in such a comprehensive and strategic manner to discuss sports, security and PVE.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Over the past decade, terrorists have conducted a number of deadly attacks against soft targets and crowded places resulting in casualties, panic, and severe damage to the way of life and the economy of affected countries.

Sport events, especially those in which international famous athletes participate, have been for a long time a preferred terrorist target.

Let us recall the attacks against the 1972 and 1996 Olympics, and the bombings during the 2008 Sri Lanka and 2013 Boston marathons.

It should not come as a surprise that terrorists aim to destroy what sport represents.

Sport has always played a significant role in the dissemination of positive values across civilizations and cultures.

Sport pushes people to be better, to aim higher and further. It promotes tolerance and gender equality. It strengthens communities, builds resilience and channels natural competitive instincts in a harmonious way.

Sport is a fundamental and true human value. A strong vaccine against any kind of criminal disease.

We have a moral obligation to protect and promote sports.

Preventing and securing are the two pillars of our multi-year programme, which we are launching today. While this Expert Group Meeting will focus on the vulnerability of sport venues to terrorist attacks, the second one, to take place in April, will concentrate on strengthening youth resilience through sport and its values.

In order to promote sports as a tool to prevent violent extremism conducive to terrorism, the Programme will gather best practices, assist Member States in developing comprehensive national strategies, launch a major campaign "Say NO to Terrorism" involving sports' champions, and work with civil society organizations at the grassroots level.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Protecting major sporting events entails multi-level cooperation and coordination, as well as complex security and policing arrangements—including securing locations; cybersecurity; and crisis planning and management; strategic communication, etc.

Through our joint programme, we will focus on the exchange of information and best practices, and on sharing resources and facilitating partnerships. We will explore how to

develop and implement operational collaboration between Member States, and undertake joint initiatives with private stakeholders.

If we want to succeed in this endeavor, we need the advice of highly experience experts such as you.

Through this two-day expert group meeting we will seek to collect recommendations and advanced policies and practices to enhance the security of major sporting events and strengthen relevant Member States' capacities.

In this context, we must not forget the importance of protecting human rights, including privacy and data protection. Through the Global Programme, we will encourage the sharing of responsibilities between public institutions and private entities in the organization of major sporting events, including the correct use and management of citizens' data collected for marketing, sale and transportation purposes.

To ensure sustainability, and multiply our reach and impact, the outcomes of this Expert Group Meeting will also feed into a compendium of global guidelines to assist Member States in organizing major sporting events.

In parallel, UNOCT and its partners are already working to set up a Global Digital Network of National and Regional Focal Points to enhance the exchange of information, good practices and lessons learned for policy makers, law enforcement and security operators.

The primary focus will be on inter-agency coordination, public private partnerships, social media management, security legacy, intelligence fusion and dissemination.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

As Secretary-General Guterres said, “let us use sport to build the peaceful, prosperous and sustainable future we want.”

I look forward to your active engagement over these two days and wish you all a productive and results-oriented discussion.

Thank you.