2021 United Nations Counter-Terrorism Week

Side event on

“Handling terrorist content online: towards transparency”

Monday, 28 June 2021, 1.30-3:00 p.m. EDT

Pre-recorded statement of

Assistant Secretary-General Michèle Coninsx,
Executive Director, CTED

Excellencies, distinguished participants,

Allow me to begin by thanking the Government of Canada for its support, and thanking the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism and Tech Against Terrorism for co-organizing this side event with CTED.

As the global pandemic has made us more reliant on information and communications technologies, terrorists and violent extremists continue to exploit digital platforms to support their activities and produce online content as part of their violent attacks.

Today, we see that technology platforms face significant challenges in their efforts to regulate these types of content, including by relying on algorithms and artificial intelligence.

Concerns have increasingly been raised about how those platforms define terrorist content and about the perceived lack of human oversight, transparency and accountability.
In line with the Security Council resolutions, States must ensure that any measure taken to combat terrorism comply with all their obligations under international law, and should adopt such measures in accordance with international law, including international human rights law.

The same should apply to measures taken by all actors — from Governments to technology companies through adequate legislation — when moderating online content.

In this regard, it is essential that a whole-of-society, multistakeholder approach is adopted.

CTED is actively working with Governments and partners such as the CTED-led Tech Against Terrorism initiative and the GIFCT to assist States and private companies to adopt good practices in online content moderation.

A prime example of Governments’ promotion of good practices in countering the use of ICT for terrorist purposes is the “Christchurch Call” supported by over 50 Member States across the globe to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content online.

CTED also recently published an updated factsheet on the Committee website on the policies and practices of the Security Council and the Counter-Terrorism Committee as well as the undertakings of the Committee and CTED in addressing the various aspects of cyber security to prevent the abuse of ICT for terrorist purposes, and I invite you all to have a look at this document.

*Excellencies, distinguished participants,*
In conclusion, I wish you a fruitful discussion and I look forward to hearing your views on ways to promote and improve transparency in handling online terrorist content.

*Thank you.*