

2021 United Nations Counter-Terrorism Week

Side event

“Prevention and misuse of new communications platforms”

Wednesday, 30 June 2021 (online) at 1.20 p.m., EDT

Opening statement of

**Assistant Secretary-General Michèle Coninsx
Executive Director, CTED**

Excellencies, distinguished participants,

First of all, allow me to thank the organizers of this timely side event, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, as well as our fellow co-organizer, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.

Today’s side event provides an opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved over the past four years, since the adoption of resolution 2354 (2017), which focuses on the importance of countering terrorist narratives and promoting positive and credible alternatives to those stemming from violent extremists.

Allow me to highlight a few achievements:

- **In the context of the country assessments undertaken by CTED on behalf of the Committee, we have continued to mainstream and more systematically integrate resolution 2354 (2017) into our dialogue with Member States concerning their efforts to counter terrorist narratives, always stressing the importance of adopting a human rights-compliant approach;**

- Through our assessments and our work in the CTED-initiated *Tech Against Terrorism* public-private partnership, CTED considers all counter-terrorism-related aspects of information and communications technologies;
- And, finally, CTED works in close collaboration with UNCCT in this area and continues to take an active role in the relevant Working groups of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact.

Excellencies, distinguished participants,

As important as it is to remove violent extremist content or posts from social media that incite violence, the deletion of content is not a solution by itself, because simply removing content does not challenge any of the claims or ideologies that terrorist and violent extremist groups promote.

Measures that restrict the right to freedom of expression can also result in purposeful or unintentional censorship.

It is therefore essential that we also engage in dialogue and offer alternatives to the stories, and visual narratives disseminated by such groups.

However, in some cases, countering terrorist narratives can be both counterproductive and have other unintended negative side effects.

At CTED, we believe that there is a need for genuine whole-of-society approaches, as well as more evidence-based research to guide our policies, programming, and other initiatives.

This is one reason why I am pleased to see that Dr. Kurt Braddock will be part of the discussion today.

Dr. Braddock is the Expert Consultant who was commissioned by the Global Compact Working Group on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism to work on this topic.

He collaborated closely with us to conduct research on effective counter-narratives, and on useful monitoring and evaluation tools in this field.

I am confident his contribution will be a valuable part of the proceedings.

Excellencies, distinguished participants,

Finding the most effective human rights-compliant way to prevent and counter terrorist messaging is an essential part of a comprehensive approach to overcoming the global terrorist threat.

I wish you success in your discussions today.

Thank you.