

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to speak to you today, commemorating the 20th anniversary of the first UNSC CT resolution and the establishment of the CTC.

A special thanks to the organizers and speakers. I want to particularly commend Max Boon for his powerful statement and for showing us how to transform being a victim of some of the worst forms of aggression to being a force for good.

Indeed, role models like him, and voices from civil society in general, are quintessential in our CT and C/PVE efforts. Let me be clear: Sustainable and effective counter terrorism does not exist without the participation of civil society and it's therefore regrettable that they're not widely represented here today.

Notwithstanding, Ladies and gentlemen,

We have seen that 20 years of our joint efforts has led to very important gains. Notably, ISIS has lost most of its territory in Syria and Iraq and the UN is at the forefront of combatting terrorism in all its forms and manifestations

However, we have also seen that terrorism is a multi-faceted phenomenon that easily adapts to a changing landscape; keen to exploit those most vulnerable in society, leading to the situation that twenty years after 9/11, the threat of terrorism still exists and is more diverse, diffuse and decentralized than ever before.

Terrorist organizations such as ISIS, including IS-K, al Qa'ida, Boko Haram, al Shabaab remain active across different continents; and we have seen a steep rise of Right wing extremism in the West.

Stopping them will require us to be equally savvy in our responses.

In doing so, it is crucial that we also address root causes conducive to terrorism and violent extremism. The extraordinary work of Mr. Boon with his victims of voice initiative contributes to those efforts. Creating awareness and sharing personal stories, especially with the young, about the tremendous damage terrorism can cause truly helps de-glorifying the so-called cause of these horrific groups.

And although we might see that methods violent extremist use are evolving, I am certain that the root causes will largely stay the same, and even be further exacerbated due to the impact of COVID.

Violent extremists will continue to exploit large socioeconomic differences in society, and will keep preying on those most vulnerable. Political instability, repressive governments, lack of economic and social opportunities will continue to be drivers of disenfranchised populations turning to violent extremism and terrorism.

Moreover, to truly combat terrorism in the long run, our approach needs to be inclusive of civil society and respectful of Human Rights. We need to acknowledge the vital role civil society plays in supporting the most vulnerable in society and those who are targeted by extremist narratives.

Hence, let me close by pleading that, instead of focusing securitised or militarised approaches, or to misuse counter terrorism measures, to repress civil society, we must collaborate with them and provide a safe space where they can do their work as they are one of our most important allies in the fight against terrorism.