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OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM
UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT)

Opening Statement by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov,
Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism

Quarterly Briefing to Member States by United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination
Compact Entities

23 October 2019, 10:00AM

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to thank you for attending this Quarterly Briefing to Member States.

I am grateful to the Permanent Representatives of Belarus, Hungary and the UAE, as well as my colleagues from United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities, for joining me.

Let me take this opportunity to formally introduce my new Deputy, Mr Raffi Gregorian, who many of you know from his previous roles in the U.S Department of State.

This year we have witnessed horrific terrorist attacks that have claimed hundreds if not thousands of lives, spread fear, and contributed to growing polarization and intolerance around the world.

I would like to express my solidarity with those countries that have suffered the scourge of terrorism.

My thoughts are with the victims and their families.

Excellencies,

This morning, I would like to brief you on four key areas.

First, I will set out my thoughts on the High-Level Week of the General Assembly, where I was delighted to meet with many of your Heads of State and Government, Ministers and other senior representatives to discuss our common counter-terrorism priorities.

Second, I will brief you on the outcomes of the regional high-level conference held in Belarus last month and say a few words on the upcoming regional conferences.

Third, I will brief you on the concrete ways in which my Office and CTED have continued to strengthen our collaboration, as per our recent briefing to the Counter-Terrorism Committee.

Lastly, I will highlight recent progress in implementing our capacity-building programmes to support the counter-terrorism efforts of Member States, particularly our work on addressing the needs and upholding the rights of victims of terrorism.

First, the High-Level Week:

During the General Debate, the numerous side events and my bilateral meetings, Member States confirmed that the evolving threat of terrorism remains high and has a global reach.

One hundred and sixteen Member States referred to terrorism or violent extremism in their General Debate statements, while sixty-seven countries highlighted the need to strengthen international counter-terrorism cooperation.

Sixty-seven Member States also emphasized the need to prevent violent extremism and address the conditions conducive to terrorism, making connections with the Sustainable Development Goals and other efforts to build peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies.

Twenty-five Member States noted the importance of countering the financing of terrorism and its nexus with organized crime, while eighteen countries stressed the need to enhance law enforcement cooperation and to bring terrorists to justice.

Fifteen Member States, twice as many as last year, highlighted the plight of victims and survivors of terrorism, reflecting the strong momentum that has been generated on this issue in recent months.

My Office took part in thirty-one side events which demonstrated the continued strong interest among Member States and civil society on issues related to counter terrorism and prevention of violent extremism.

We co-hosted nine side events organized by Member States, including one with UNODC and the Permanent Missions of Saudi Arabia and Japan on “Protecting Children Affected by Terrorism,” where we presented a new UNCCT Handbook on this matter. At the same event, UNODC presented its Comprehensive Training Package on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups.

Earlier, in April, at the request of the Secretary-General, my Office coordinated an interagency effort to draft a set of key principles for the UN system for the protection, repatriation, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of women and children with links to terrorist groups.

These Key Principles also provide basic guidance for the prosecution of FTFs by Member States, including in Iraq and Syria.

At the initiative of Jordan, New Zealand and France, my Office also co-organized a Leaders' Dialogue with King Abdullah II, President Macron and Prime Minister Ardern to discuss the issue of terrorist and violent extremism narratives, within the context of the Christchurch Call and the Aqaba Process.

Leaders from around twenty countries and major technology companies attended, highlighting the need for strengthened multi-stakeholder action to tackle the terrorist misuse of the Internet and social media.

My Office and other Global Compact entities participated in the Fourth Coordination Meeting between the United Nations and the Global Counterterrorism Forum, where we welcomed the progress in strengthening our cooperation, including by agreeing on joint thematic and geographical priorities.

During the High-level week, I also had bilateral consultations with sixty high-level delegations, including twelve heads of international and regional organizations.

Many of them expressed concern over the spread of terrorism, particularly in Africa, but also worrying trends in Asia and other parts of the world.

They welcomed the important work of the United Nations in keeping counter-terrorism high on the international agenda and fostering multilateral cooperation as we look ahead to next year's Counter-Terrorism Week.

Second, the Regional Conferences:

In partnership with Member States, we have now organized four regional conferences - in Tajikistan, Mongolia, Kenya and Belarus.

I am happy to see the Permanent Representative of Belarus among us today. Ambassador Rybakov will shortly brief us on the outcomes of the Minsk Conference, which focused on countering terrorism through innovative approaches and the use of new and emerging technologies.

The conference brought together nearly four hundred participants from fifty-five countries from across Europe and Asia, as well as representatives from international and regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector.

It provided a platform for Member States to discuss the terrorist exploitation of new technologies, such as drones and artificial intelligence, and to share innovative approaches to counter this threat.

The Conference highlighted the urgent need to strengthen international cooperation in practical and operational areas, including by sharing biometric information to prevent terrorist travel.

It also underlined the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach involving governments, the private sector, the scientific community, civil society, religious actors, and international and regional organizations.

In close collaboration with our Global Counter-Terrorism Compact partners including CTED, UNODC, ICAO, INTERPOL, UNICRI, OHCHR, UN Women and UNODA, we will continue to provide capacity-building support to Member States to help them address this complex threat.

Looking forward, the next regional conference will take place in Budapest on 7-8 November with a focus on prevention of radicalization to terrorism through regional policy responses and risk mitigation.

My Office has been working closely with Ambassador Bogyay to ensure this conference addresses the issues of most concern to Member States. We strongly encourage high-level participation from countries that have been invited.

The Permanent Representative of Hungary will shortly give you more details on the Budapest Conference, as will the Permanent Representative of the UAE on the Regional Conference that we will co-organize in Abu Dhabi on 18-19 December.

Other regional conferences are also planned next year with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in Austria in February with the generous sponsorship of Switzerland, and in Trinidad and Tobago with CARICOM countries in March.

Third, the briefing to the Counter-Terrorism Committee:

My remarks at the CTC last month focused on how my Office and CTED have strengthened our collaboration this year.

I highlighted the progress made in incorporating the technical assistance recommendations and analysis of CTED into the implementation of UNOCT's programmes and initiatives.

My Office has institutionalized consultations with CTED on the parameters of our capacity-building efforts, especially at the national and sub-regional levels.

By the way, we did a mapping of the recommendations created by CTED for the last several of years. There are close to 600 recommendations. How to control the implementation of these recommendations is a big challenge. Of course, the implementation of these recommendations is the primary responsibility of Member States, but we need to understand what can be implemented by UNOCT and what by other entities. Your comments and suggestions on this matter would be welcome.

The United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel Programme is a good example of how this collaboration works in practice.

CTED was instrumental in designing and developing the methodology to help identify and select potential beneficiary countries, based on its own analysis and assessments.

Additionally, Ms. Coninx is a member of the Programme's Steering Committee, which sets the overall strategic direction of this initiative with the aim of advancing the implementation of Security Council resolution 2396.

On priority regions, UNOCT and CTED continue to work closely at the sub-regional level in the Sahel and Central Asia. In recent months we also increased our collaboration in South East Asia and Africa, especially in Burkina Faso and Niger.

As I said in my briefing to the Counter-Terrorism Committee, CTED has become an integral partner across UNOCT's entire mandate, especially in strengthening the provision of coherent, coordinated and impactful technical and capacity-building support to Member States.

To further strengthen the practical cooperation between us, I have established a dedicated P5-level position to facilitate the incorporation of CTED's technical assistance recommendations into our capacity-building work and into joint resource mobilization efforts through the Global Compact.

One of the key ongoing tasks and deliverables of the Global Compact Working Group on Resource Mobilization and Monitoring and Evaluation, co-chaired by UNOCT, CTED and UNODC, is to map all UN counter-terrorism efforts against the list of CTED technical assistance recommendations.

Fourth, let me brief you on our progress in implementing capacity-building programmes across all four pillars of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

In the past quarter, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre has provided capacity-building support to requesting Member States on a wide range of areas, including strategic communications; cyber-security; social media investigations; technical and vocational education and training; countering the financing of terrorism; and the challenge of potential chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear attacks.

From July to October, UNCCT organized twenty-four workshops, delivering capacity-building assistance to a total of nine hundred and nineteen officials from Member States. These trainees are expected to contribute to the counter-terrorism efforts of their respective countries in a more effective manner.

So, the progress in increasing our capacity building support is evident. Capacity building is an important part of our mandate and I hope that the progress will continue with the same pace.

In this context, I would like to highlight our work on supporting the victims of terrorism, which is a key priority for the Secretary-General, as well as my Office and its UNCCT.

On 21 August, we observed the second International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism.

We screened a UNCCT documentary which showed the regional impact of attacks by Boko Haram. This was followed by an interactive roundtable involving three victims of terrorism.

The Secretary-General launched a UNCCT photo exhibition entitled “Surviving Terrorism: The Power of Resilience”, which was visited by over two hundred people and sixty Permanent Missions.

We also hosted an informal discussion with Member States and victims of terrorism on how best to support survivors with their short, medium, and long-term needs.

We also reached out to civil society networks dedicated to victims of terrorism in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Europe and North America to support them in their activities to commemorate the International Day.

All of our efforts were supported by a dedicated social media campaign that reached fifteen million social media accounts, generating fifty-two million impressions.

The commemorations of this International Day reflected the growing momentum in the international community to address the needs and rights of victims of terrorism.

In June, the General Assembly adopted resolution 73/305 to enhance international cooperation to assist victims of terrorism.

And, with the establishment of the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism thanks to the leadership of Afghanistan and Spain, supporting victims has been pushed to the very forefront of the counter-terrorism agenda.

The first-ever United Nations Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism next year will build on these achievements and strengthen our collective work to support victims and survivors.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

All of this important work would not have been possible without the support of our partner countries and donors contributing to the United Nations Trust Fund for Counter-Terrorism.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to all Member States that have collaborated with us in organising a number of conferences, training workshops and other events, and those who have generously provided funding for our activities.

I will now invite the Permanent Representative of Belarus, Ambassador Valentin RYBAKOV to brief on the outcomes of the Belarus Conference.

Thank you.