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**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM**

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

**OSCE Permanent Council Meeting
Vienna, 4 October 2018**

Excellencies,

I am grateful for the invitation from Ambassador Alessandro Azzoni, Chairperson of this Council, to address you today.

I am delighted to be back in Vienna where I served as Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the International Organizations until last year. I also fondly remember my time as Deputy Permanent Representative to the OSCE from 2005-2008.

The United Nations and the OSCE share many priorities, including our commitment to counter and prevent terrorism with policies and methods that promote multilateralism and do not compromise our respect for the rule of law and human rights.

The United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, has made it a priority to mainstream countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism into the core work of the organization, both at Headquarters and in the field.

Excellencies,

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism was born a year ago. A lot of efforts have been undertaken to get the baby to walk. We were crawling for a few months but are now steady on our feet and walking purposefully.

One of our top priorities is to strengthen international counter-terrorism cooperation.

The transnational nature of terrorist groups such as Da'esh, Al-Qaida and Boko Haram means we need multilateral cooperation more than ever before to address this challenge. There is no other option but multilateralism to defeat terrorism.

We need to build new partnerships at global, regional and national levels.

We need to strengthen the resilience and cohesion of our societies, joining families, communities and the state together with a common purpose - to withstand terrorist ideologies and challenge those who espouse them.

In particular, the issue of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) continues to be a serious concern. In 2014, the Security Council adopted its first resolution 2178 on the FTF issue, which focused on preventing FTF travel to conflict zones. The situation has evolved. We now face the growing challenge of FTFs who relocate or who return to their countries of origin, nationality or to third countries. Security Council resolution 2396 addresses these challenges in a comprehensive manner.

We need to work together to address the return and relocation of foreign terrorist fighters in a human rights compliant way. The OSCE Conference on this topic in Rome in May was an excellent opportunity to share experiences and good practices. I count on the OSCE to continue leading the way on this issue.

As the tactics used by terrorists evolve, we must also tackle new and emerging aspects of the terrorist threat in a more dynamic manner. For example, the international community must urgently address the looting and illicit trafficking of cultural artefacts, which provides terrorist groups such as Da'esh with much-needed funds.

The Security Council has recognized the importance of this issue. I myself have stressed how terrorists, particularly in armed conflict situations, destroy not only lives and property but in targeting World Heritage Sites, also attack historical roots and cultural diversity. I am glad that this matter remains high on the OSCE's agenda. I commend all the important work that you have done, particularly in the context of addressing transnational threats, in this regard.

Moreover, the issue of illicit trafficking of arms is increasingly urgent. The prevalence of illicit small arms, light weapons and ammunition fuels terrorism and violent armed conflict in many regions of the world. These weapons enable terrorist groups to considerably increase their capabilities, and, sadly, the number of innocent victims. Moreover, it is difficult to explain how up to now, terrorists have still been able to arm themselves and create regular armed groups, despite not having a military industry.

All these challenges can only be addressed with the expertise, commitment and support of regional organizations.

As the world's largest regional security organization, with fifty-seven diverse participating States spanning three continents and including more than a billion people, the OSCE is a vital partner for the UN in our common efforts against terrorism.

It delivers a wide range of activities to support the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in accordance with the OSCE Consolidated Framework for the Fight Against Terrorism.

We have worked well together, such as our collaboration to develop the Joint Plan of Action for the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia.

But I want us to do more. This is why this morning, I and OSCE Secretary-General Greminger signed a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance cooperation between UNOCT and the OSCE Secretariat.

I believe we can focus on practical impacts in a few key areas where we can utilize our respective strengths and avoid duplication.

First, I hope we can work together on more projects on a co-funding basis where our priorities overlap, such as border security and management, preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism, preventing terrorist use of the Internet, and ensuring the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The FTF issue that I mentioned earlier is another key area of possible cooperation. For example, UNOCT will launch a new global project later this year to enhance the capacity of Member States to prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute terrorists using Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record data. This is a very significant digital technology to track the movement of FTFs in airports. We are grateful to the Government of the Netherlands who have granted the UN this technology. Our task now is to promote it to other countries. This project is a concrete, practical dimension in the fight terrorism and I hope that my Office will be able to work together with OSCE countries on this in the future.

Second, I would like us to cooperate more closely in the field, especially where OSCE has established operations such as Central Asia, the South Caucasus, Eastern Europe and South-Eastern Europe.

We can benefit from the OSCE's expertise to ensure our capacity-building activities to Member States in these regions are based on accurate assessments of their needs and concerns. These are first and foremost, about prevention.

Third, we should improve the way we exchange information and analysis, especially on evolving terrorism trends such as the threat from returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters or child trafficking by terrorist groups. In particular, we look forward to benefiting from the OSCE's expertise on the issue of destruction of cultural heritage and the illicit trafficking of cultural artefacts, as it relates to terrorism.

Fourth, the issue of victims of terrorism is a key priority for my Office and the United Nations. As Secretary General Guterres has said, "Caring for victims and survivors and amplifying their voices helps to challenge the narrative of hatred and division that terrorism aims to spread." In line with this, my Office is implementing a multi-year, multimillion dollar program to support victims and survivors, building their capacity to speak out as well as raising awareness of their needs. We have organized major conferences and exhibitions, recorded victims' testimonies as well as developed guidebooks and reference materials. We welcome the OSCE working with us to stand in solidarity with victims and survivors of terrorism.

Fifth, the UN and OSCE should consolidate its efforts to address the illicit trafficking of arms. The international community must work together to prevent terrorists from acquiring lethal technologies and weapons. My Office has a strong track record on these issues, including working in the Central Africa region as well as in Kenya and Cameroon, as well as now developing projects in Iraq and Jordan. We are also working to expand partnerships in the field of countering terrorism involving Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) weapons, so as to better support Member States in building national capacities to address these threats.

Sixth, enhancing information-sharing was a key theme from the first-ever United Nations High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States, which the UN Secretary-General convened in New York at the end of June. In line with the outcomes of the Conference, my Office is now consulting Member States on establishing a Network of Counter-Terrorism Coordinators to share information, expertise and best practices.

Finally, I hope we can work together to ensure sustainable and predictable funding for multilateral counter-terrorism efforts.

Excellencies,

The United Nations and the OSCE are natural partners in our common efforts to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism.

There are excellent relationships between my Office and the OSCE Secretariat and Parliamentary Assembly at both senior and working levels.

Next week I will be in Minsk with Secretary-General Greminger to speak at the High-Level International Conference on Preventing and Countering Terrorism in the Digital Age, jointly organized by the OSCE and the Government of Belarus. This will be a very important discussion – it will follow-up on the 2017 initiative undertaken by France, Italy and the UK on this issue, as well as relevant Russian ideas in this regard.

So, our counter-terrorism cooperation has strong foundations on which to build.

We now need to focus on the practical implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding that was just signed to deliver real impact on the ground together.

I look forward to enhancing our collaboration and continuing to work with all of you to rid the world of the scourge of terrorism.

Thank you.