



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

HIGH LEVEL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE “COUNTERING TERRORISM THROUGH INNOVATIVE APPROACHES AND USE OF NEW AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES ”

Opening Address

OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger

Minsk, 3 September 2019

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.
President Lukashenko,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is always a pleasure to be back to Minsk. I was here almost a year ago, on the occasion of another interesting and productive event, the High Level Conference on “preventing and countering terrorism in the digital age”, jointly organized with the OSCE.

At the outset I would like to commend the Government of Belarus and the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism for giving us this valuable opportunity to consider the practical implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy through the prism of new technological developments.

Lately there has been a lot of talk about new technologies and the unprecedented possibilities they offer. There are also many discussions about their risks, sometimes presented in almost apocalyptic terms. While clearly there is a lot of hype, there actually is a lot happening. So there are many interesting developments and trends that we need to understand.

Regrettably, there is not yet much in-depth thinking about how all these emerging and partly promising partly disruptive technologies will affect security. Let me give you a revealing example: the vast majority of current national strategies on artificial intelligence make no link between AI and security issues – not even its potential use by terrorist organizations or violent extremist groups.

So we need serious multi-stakeholder discussions about the impact on peace and security of emerging and disruptive technologies like machine learning and robotics.

This is precisely what we will be doing here in Minsk. So many thanks again to the organizers for proposing such an interesting and relevant topic.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Violent extremists and terrorist groups use communication technologies to mobilize resources, to train, and to radicalize and recruit others to join their networks, in particular youth. Some have become extremely skilful in exploiting the Internet, video editing, social media and other communication tools.

So it is reasonable to think that they will try to adapt and take advantage of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. This means that supporting state institutions, in particular law enforcement, to enable them to keep up with new technological developments will be an increasingly important task for international organizations. States need to learn how to counter misuse of new technologies – but also how to use these tools proactively to enhance peace and security.

At the OSCE, we are only beginning to explore these complex issues. But I am convinced that, thanks to our comprehensive approach to security and our extensive experience with security-related issues, the OSCE could become a useful platform for meaningful dialogue on the nexus between technology and security.

There is already some conceptual work going on in my office. We are exploring how new technologies can both amplify and counter transnational threats like terrorism and human trafficking, as well as their implications for human rights and freedom of the media.

Allow me to mention a few upcoming OSCE initiatives.

On 23 September, our Annual Police Expert Meeting will be exclusively dedicated to the role of AI in law enforcement. This is a field where many promising uses of AI, such as predictive policing, might be common practice in the near future.

Later this year, on 8 November, I will host a Security Days conference on the importance of human rights and the ethical dimension of the use of new technologies in countering transnational threats, such as terrorism or organized crime.

We are also plan on holding a series of forums in major capitals of the OSCE on how to use new technologies and artificial intelligence to more effectively counter transnational threats.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I said before that we should not restrict our focus to countering the malicious uses of new technologies by terrorist organizations, but we must also learn how to use these technologies proactively.

We are already doing this with some well-established technologies. Let me give you an example.

In recent years the collection and use of Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Records by government authorities for the purposes of exit, entry, and transit control of air passengers has become increasingly important for national security.

In line with UNSC Resolutions 2178 (2014) and 2396 (2017), the OSCE is providing assistance to our participating States on the use of these systems to disrupt terrorists' travel. These systems are complex and require a high degree of technical capacity and skills. They are also expensive to purchase, maintain and operate. Quite often legal and institutional changes are required.

Our goals are to help participating States prevent the movement of terrorists, build capacities where needed, and encourage good practices in information sharing. Experience shows that the effectiveness of such measures is directly linked to the level of co-operation and co-ordination among government agencies, civil society and the private sector, in particular the tech sector.

Ladies and gentlemen,

States bear the primary responsibility for protecting the life and security of individuals under their jurisdiction. They have a duty to effectively prevent the destructive impact of terrorism on human rights, in particular the rights to life, liberty and physical integrity of individuals.

At the same time, States need to carefully address the terrorist threat while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms in their entirety. Privacy rights and freedom of expression need to be respected and protected. A gender sensitive approach should ensure that gender-specific concerns are considered.

This is not just a matter of principle, but also makes sense from a purely security perspective. Indiscriminate counter-terrorism policies are likely to alienate whole segments of the population, which can lead to greater radicalization and further violence.

Effective counter-terrorism and the protection of human rights are complementary undertakings.

Dear colleagues,

In concluding, I would like to thank President Lukashenko and Under-Secretary-General Voronkov once again for organizing this important conference. I would also like to reiterate the need for strengthened international co-operation on preventing and countering terrorism, and the importance of working together to make better use of new technologies to protect our citizens from terrorism in full respect of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Thank you for your attention.