

**Opening ceremony
of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)
Programme Office on Parliamentary Engagement in Preventing and Countering
Terrorism
Doha, Qatar - 16 June 2021**

**Statement by Mr Rik Daems,
President of the Parliamentary Assembly
of the Council of Europe**

Dear Speaker of the Shura Council of Qatar,
Dear Under-Secretary General of the United Nations,
Dear President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,
Excellencies,
Dear colleagues and friends,

It is an honour for me to participate in **the opening ceremony of the UNOCT Programme Office on Parliamentary Engagement in Preventing and Countering Terrorism**.

On behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the oldest and largest Pan-European organisation representing the interests and protecting the rights of over 830 million European citizens, I welcome the establishment of this **new institution** which aims to serve as a **global hub** to support and build the capacity of **parliamentarians worldwide in their efforts to counter terrorism** through the United Nations Global Programme on Parliamentary Engagement in Preventing and Countering Terrorism.

Dear colleagues,

Terrorism, together with violent extremism and radicalisation, is a major threat to the

Despite relentless efforts of the international community, it is out there, still killing and murdering innocent people to create fear and frustration and to destroy the very foundations of our societies.

We know it jeopardises human rights, threatens democracy, undermines the rule of law and aims at destabilising our governments. Terrorism, and the threat of terrorism, can sharpen social and political divisions, weakening a pluralist civil society through intimidation and, specifically, increased polarisation.

To answer this global threat, we must all unite our forces. We have to build on our synergies.

Parliaments, and international parliamentary fora, shall remain at the forefront of this fight. That is why stepping up international and inter-parliamentary co-operation is today more necessary than ever.

Over the last twenty years, Europe has been one of the main targets of terrorist attacks.cks.

As parliamentarians, we have a duty to see to it that legal decisions are duly implemented on the ground, to hold governments to account that counter-terrorist policies are compliant with our fundamental values, and to remain in close contact with our constituents.

I trust that the newly established Programme Office will cope successfully with its statutory goals to support parliamentarians in fulfilling their duties, to help build their capacities, and to facilitate inter-parliamentary dialogue and the sharing of experience and best practices on countering and preventing terrorism.

Our Assembly looks forward to fully **participating in these activities** and to continue **our excellent co-operation with UNOCT** and with our parliamentary partners.

Dear colleagues,

I wish us well in doing so, and I wish full success to the Programme Office!