

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

Rehabilitation and Reintegration: Good Practices and Key Successes: Hedayah Side Event  
to the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly

23 September 2022  
Westin New York Grand Central Hotel, 1.30 p.m.

Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Dear colleagues,  
Dear Dr. Al Nuaimi,

I would like to begin by warmly thanking Hedayah for hosting this event on the margins of the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

I also would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Hedayah on its ten-year anniversary. During this period, Hedayah has implemented important programmes and initiatives in vital areas of countering violent extremism, including the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist offenders and affected family members.

My Office, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, celebrated its five-year anniversary on 15 June of this year.

The relatively recent establishment of both our entities shines further light on the need for enhanced global cooperation to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

Ladies and gentlemen,

More than three years have passed since the territorial defeat of Da'esh. Yet, many foreign terrorist fighters and their families remain stranded in Syria and Iraq.

These individuals—who include family members coerced into traveling to the conflict zone, as well as victims of Da'esh, and nearly 30,000 children—are facing dire humanitarian, security, and human rights conditions. This situation is still deteriorating on a daily basis.

Only a few thousand of the nearly 70,000 stranded have been repatriated, while

It is for both security and humanitarian reasons that the United Nations continues to urge Member States to repatriate their nationals from northeast Syria, provide protection to the children, and hold adults who have committed crimes accountable.

But to stop the cycle of radicalization to violence and to mitigate the risk these returnees might pose, comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration measures are needed for those returning, whether they enter the criminal justice system or not.

In its resolution 2396 of 2017, the Security Council underscored the need for all Member States to assess and investigate these individuals for any involvement in criminal or terrorist activities, including by employing evidence-based risk assessments.

It stressed the need to take appropriate action in compliance with relevant domestic and international law, including by considering appropriate prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration measures.

The Security Council also noted that children may be especially vulnerable to radicalization to violence and in need of particular social support, such as post-trauma counselling, while stressing that children need to be treated in a manner that observes their rights, and respects their dignity, in accordance with applicable international law.

We recognize that Member States repatriating or seeking to repatriate their nationals from Syria and Iraq face a number of challenges, which require coherent and multi-faceted solutions.

In response, the Global Framework for United Nations Support on Syria/Iraq Third Country National Returnees was formally launched on the margins of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly last year.

The Global Framework translates into action the United Nations Secretary-General's call for the United Nations system to leverage and coordinate existing mandates and capacities to support requesting Member States whose nationals have returned or will return from Syria and Iraq.

Through a partnership of fifteen United Nations entities, the Global Framework offers a coordinated "all-of-UN" response, to provide tailored, comprehensive, and coherent technical assistance to requesting Member States with regard to protection, prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration of returning nationals.

The Global Framework, which is already being implemented in Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Maldives, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, offers a way forward for requesting Member States.

Additionally, through the Global Programme on Prosecution, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration, my Office supports Member States in developing and implementing prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration strategies, taking into account gender and age

considerations, in line with the seventh review resolution of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The Programme continues to develop a number of useful knowledge products and tools, including the Compendium on Prosecution, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration Practices, which has compiled current practices from across the world, and identified those that may be most promising.

This compendium, which will be published by the end of this year, will make an important contribution to the field of prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to reiterate the importance of the contributions made by international non-governmental organizations like Hedayah to preventing and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

We know from experience that even in the most complex settings, with the right support, preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism is possible.

Because together, we can build a future without terrorism.

To conclude, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our partners, Hedayah, and today's speakers and attendees, for facilitating this timely dialogue. I look forward to learning more from today's exchange of experiences.

I thank you.