



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

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

Eighteenth Symposium and Exhibition on ICAO Traveller Identification Programme (TRIP)

12 September 2023, Montréal, Canada

Secretary General Salazar,

Thank you for the opportunity to help welcome everyone at the Eighteenth Symposium and Exhibition on the International Civil Aviation Organization Traveller Identification Programme.

Secretary General,
Executive Director Diallo,
Distinguished Guests,

Allow me to share a few thoughts on traveller mobility and its intersection with technology and innovation.

Terrorism remains a threat to international peace and security. No region of the world is immune.

While it is heartening to see international air travel returning to pre-COVID levels, there is no reason to think that terrorist groups have lost interest in targeting or using air transportation for terrorist purposes as they did 22 years ago yesterday.

Over the past decade, the UN Security Council has adopted a series of resolutions to improve aviation security and to stem the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon. The International Civil Aviation Organization has also worked to make sure its standard and recommended practices remain fit-for-purpose.

Technological advancements have revolutionized the way we travel, from biometric scanners that expedite security checks to artificial intelligence algorithms that detect anomalies in travel patterns, discover unknown networks, and identify potential risks.

At the same time, we must also consider the traveller's experience and the potential harm the misapplications of such tools may have on the human rights of travellers. This requires a balanced approach and recognition that technology and innovation, when applied responsibly, are vital to achieving these goals.

Over the next few days, you will hear from my colleague, Ms. Christine Bradley, Chief of the Countering Terrorist Travel Section in the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, on how two of our flagship programmes work to prevent and counter threats to aviation, through threat assessment models, and the use of passenger data to detect and prevent the movement of foreign terrorist fighters.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism Countering Terrorist Travel Programme, which includes an all-of-UN team comprising the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), is currently assisting 68 beneficiary countries to meet their obligations under UN Security Council resolutions to adapt and use advance passenger information (API) and passenger name record (PNR) data systems in combination with biometrics and national, INTERPOL and other relevant watchlists.

The implementation of API and PNR systems have proven instrumental in identifying high-risk individuals and with enhancing risk assessment capabilities.

The timely sharing of passenger data allows security agencies to analyze travel patterns, detect suspicious behaviours, and identify high-risk individuals associated with terrorism or organized crime networks.

Moreover, by concentrating on known and suspected threats, these systems can also help speed the movement through airports of legitimate travellers.

At the same time, it is crucial that we ensure that the collection, storage, and sharing of sensitive data are conducted within a robust legal framework, respecting human rights and privacy rights.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The discussions we have this week are vital for us to better understand collectively how we can apply technology and innovation in our global fight against terrorism and organized crime.

I encourage each of you to share your expertise and to explore innovative and balanced solutions that ensure traveller security while preserving personal freedoms and privacy.

I wish you fruitful discussions, and I look forward to our continued cooperation.

Thank you.