



AUSTRALIA



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United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism Virtual Counter-Terrorism Week

Statement on Civil Society and Media Perspectives on Preventing and Countering Terrorism in a Pandemic

**H.E. The Hon Mitch Fifield
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Australia to the United Nations**

Thank you Chair and thanks to all of today's speakers.

Australia commends the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism for organising this virtual Counter-Terrorism Week.

As Australia's Foreign Minister recently noted, COVID-19 has highlighted the major role of international institutions in addressing and coordinating a global response to a global problem.

The UN has a key role to play in both pivoting to a COVID-19 response and addressing ongoing CT challenges.

Terrorism is one such global problem. Terrorists and violent extremists have sought to exploit the pandemic in their narratives and to assist in their mobilisation of grievances in many places.

Officials engaged in counter-terrorism and addressing social cohesion have been distracted by COVID-19.

Collaboration between international organisations, governments, civil society, tech companies and media is therefore critical for an effective response.

Australia is pleased to support the important work of UNOCT, including contributing to the Countering Terrorist Travel Program and the UN's support for the ASEAN Bali Workplan.

More broadly, Australia has partnered with the OECD, and co-financers New Zealand and Korea with support from Canada, to develop a Voluntary Transparency Reporting Protocol on how online platforms are preventing, detecting, and removing terrorist and violent extremist content.

This work will help deliver commitments under the Christchurch Call to Action and the G20 Leader's statement on preventing exploitation of the Internet for terrorism and violent extremism.

As Co-Chairs of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum Countering Violent Extremism Working Group, Australia and Indonesia are leading an Initiative on National-Local Cooperation in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism.

We are also leading work on preventing and countering violent extremism in recognising the role of gender on the radicalisation to violence of men, women and youth.

Australia was pleased to work with Switzerland and the UK in the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum to develop a *Policy Toolkit on the Zurich-London Recommendations on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism Online*, delivered in late 2019.

The Toolkit provides practical guidance, including on collaboration between governments, ICT companies and civil society. It emphasises the importance of respect for human rights, the rule of law and gender sensitivity.

Australia is committed to working with UN bodies, government, civil society and media partners to respond to the enduring impacts of COVID-19.

Thanks very much.