

Timbuktu, Mali

5 December 2018

**Statement of Mr. Vladimir Voronkov
Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism**

Mr. Governor,
Members of civil society,
MINUSMA and UN colleagues,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege and an honor to address you from the ancient city of Timbuktu. A city that has been at a crossroads in the fight against terrorism and in efforts to prevent violent extremism. A city that has suffered immense human, physical and cultural loss and is today still struggling to recover peace and stability.

Your country and your region that have seen destruction, violent conflict and extremism decimate communities and turn prospects of development and peace. Mali has made big sacrifices with very little resources and means. You continue to suffer from brutal terrorist attacks, which the Secretary-General has strongly condemned. I would like to express my deep appreciation to the efforts undertaken by the Government of Mali and the people and security forces of Mali to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism. I would like to offer my condolences to the people and government of Mali for all these losses. Mali deserves the support of the international community, and we are determined to do so, both at the national and at the regional level.

I come here as the head of the new UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, one of the first reforms of Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in the field of peace and security.

region. It is also a tribute to the work being done with a variety of actors, government, civil society, UN and MINUSMA colleagues, under threatening circumstances and periodical violent, unacceptable terrorist attacks.

Today, terrorists, particularly in armed conflict situations, are not only

legendary Sufi mausoleums and the ancient door of the Sidi Yahia mosque. Two ancient mosques were also severely damaged.

Five years later, in September 2016, the International Criminal Court convicted ~~Idn Abdou~~ ~~Abd~~ Faqi Al Mahdi who was the spiritual adviser of the Ansar Dine group of the war crime of intentionally directing attacks against religious and historic buildings in Timbuktu and ordered him to pay reparations.

Healing of the suffering endured by the people of Timbuktu is likely to take a generation Nevertheless, this case raises a hope that accountability for terrorist acts, including those that amount to international crimes, is possible. Timbuktu has set an important example for the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Protecting our cultural heritage demands a global criminal justice response that can prevent trafficking in cultural property by disrupting organized criminal and terrorist networks, including through anti-corruption and anti-money-laundering action, and effective accountability mechanisms. With the support of United Nations entities, Member States are strengthening their legal frameworks and criminal justice systems, and enhancing their collaboration to prevent and heritage.

Fifth, and finally, I would like to end my remarks with a moment of reflection on the victims of terrorism. Any balanced and comprehensive strategy for countering terrorism must recognize that victims of terrorism are entitled to our support. Far too often, victims are left to suffer in silence. Their needs are not addressed and their voices are unheard. This only exacerbates their trauma. We must do more to protect the rights of victims of terrorism and provide the services they need. I would like to pay tribute to the hundreds of victims of terrorism here

The United Nations Victims of Terrorism Support Portal, developed by the Office of Counter Terrorism, is a resource for thousands of victims, their families and communities, Governments and civil society organizations. It aims to promote understanding of the diverse needs of victims, and to offer guidance for addressing those needs effectively and comprehensively

