



Opening Remarks
by the Deputy Director of UNICRI, Leif Villadsen

2023 Counter Terrorism Week, New York

**The Nexus between transnational organized crime and
Terrorism in the Americas**

21 June 2023

Conference Room 9 and via Webex (17:00-18:30 EST)

With Opening Remarks circa 17:00

Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you here today on behalf of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) to this important event. The only side-event focused on the Americas during the Counter-Terrorism week.

In this regard, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Permanent Mission of Chile, as represented by Mr René Alfonso Ruidíaz Pérez, Deputy Permanent Representative, and to Assistant Secretary-General Ms Natalia Gherman, Executive Director of the Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) for their respective support in bringing this event together.

I would also like to extend my personal thanks and appreciation to Ms Alison Treppel, Executive Secretary, of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism of the Organization of American States (OAS) for our fruitful partnership – the evidence of which is today's joint side event and the research we will present.

Finally, I am ever grateful for the invaluable support of the Netherlands, which since 2017 has enabled UNICRI to advance its Nexus programme.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the years, our action-oriented research on the nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism has repeatedly demonstrated that the links between the two are complex and dynamic. These links tend to manifest in various ways and often reflect distinct characteristics in different regions. Increasing case studies reveal that the nexus has impacts across the globe and leaves no region unscathed – including in the Americas.

I am proud to say that UNICRI, in partnership with the OAS, has been at the forefront of this work and will soon publish a report on the nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism in Latin America, the highlights and main findings of which will be presented shortly by UNICRI's senior expert on this matter, Mr Christian Vianna de Azevedo.

How the nexus manifests itself at any given time is often a function of geography and the overarching political and security environment. In extreme cases, the nexus has a direct negative impact on security and development, contributing to the erosion of political, economic, and social stability. Even in regions considered more 'stable' and 'secure', the relationship between terrorist and organized criminal groups has been well documented and acts as an enabler of terrorism.

Since 2016, UNICRI has been working to address the nexus, in line with Security Council resolution 2195. In 2017, UNICRI launched the Nexus Initiative, in close cooperation with the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF). Under this Initiative, UNICRI developed *The Hague Good Practices on the Nexus Between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism*, to provide Member States and interested stakeholders with non-binding recommendations to assist them in developing policies and strategies to counter the nexus phenomenon and to serve as a basis for international engagement, assistance, and training.

Following this, UNICRI developed the *Policy Toolkit on The Hague Good Practices on the Nexus Between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism*, which goes one step further in supporting practitioners and policy-makers to put the identified Good Practices into action. The Policy Toolkit has a dual function: the first is to increase knowledge and awareness of the nexus by providing definitions and examples of its manifestations in different geographical regions.

The second is to provide action points to implement each of the 25 Good Practices, focusing on legal considerations, research and information sharing, local engagement and capacity building, and law enforcement.

Since 2019, various regions across the globe have been using the Policy Toolkit for awareness-raising, technical support and capacity-building activities. Diverse officials have benefited from the activities, including national practitioners and policy-makers, as well as law enforcement officers and civil society representatives. NATO and UN officers have also participated in the activities.

The Policy Toolkit demonstrates that regional variations of the nexus are relevant to the Americas given the continent's breadth and diversity, a view that is supported by our new report. This research is another important part of UNICRI's contribution to our collective efforts to better understand and combat the nexus. I encourage you all to read this new report and strive to implement, within your own organizations' mandates, the recommendations it presents. For our part, UNICRI will, going forward, seek to leverage the finding of this report to frame future nexus programming in the region and we look forward to and, indeed, rely on your support and cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, the data and lessons learned tell us clearly that manifestations of the nexus must be addressed comprehensively – both in the Americas and beyond. More engagement and cooperation at the national, regional and international levels are critical if we want to dismantle the nexus. Today's session and our coming together to share our knowledge and expertise on this stage during the 2023 Counter Terrorism Week takes us one step closer to our goal.

I thank you all and wish you an engaging and thought-provoking side event.