

Press Release

United Nations International Conference on Victims of Terrorism in Spain gives a message of global solidarity and calls for greater support for victims worldwide

Vitoria-Gasteiz (Spain), 8 October 2024 - The United Nations International Conference on Victims of Terrorism, co-organized by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the Kingdom of Spain, on 8 and 9 October, started today at the Palacio de Congresos Europa in Vitoria-Gasteiz.

The Conference aims to express solidarity with all victims of terrorism around the world and review progress on the international victims of terrorism agenda, as a direct outcome of the United Nations Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism held in New York in 2022.

Held under the theme "Education as a Tool for Prevention, Peacebuilding and Empowerment of Victims of Terrorism," the International Conference is gathering over 100 participants, including Member States, victims of terrorism and victims' associations and numerous UN representatives to discuss the role of victims and survivors of terrorism as educators, peacebuilders and agents for change.

In a Call to Action addressing the high-level opening of the UN International Conference on Victims of Terrorism in Spain, victims of terrorism expressed their solidarity with victims worldwide. Remarking that victims "are united in our pain and united in our humanity," they reminded participants that "even in the darkest of times, we can continue to strive for a brighter future, together."

They called for greater support for victims of terrorism, emphasizing the importance of education "not as an option, but as a right", especially in a context where disinformation and a lack of opportunities can fuel violent extremism conducive to terrorism. The importance of including victims' voices in policies and strategies to prevent and counter terrorism was emphasized, along with a powerful reminder to Member States and organizations present that "supporting victims is an integral part of building peace".

Their call was echoed by the His Majesty King Felipe VI of Spain, who thanked them for their powerful and moving testimonies. "Through your pain and grief – which, we all ought to share – you embody true bravery and dignity," he stated. The United Nations' Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism, Vladimir Voronkov, expressed his hope that the conference will "stimulate a vision for a strengthened, responsive, and fit-for-purpose victims of terrorism agenda." "We must all rise to the occasion. We owe it to victims and survivors of terrorism to provide the support they need to heal and rebuild their lives," he said.

of the Republic of Iraq to Spain speaking on behalf of H.E. Mr. Fuad Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Republic of Iraq.

Maidor Etxebarria, Mayor of Vitoria-Gasteiz, the city hosting the conference, gave an address welcoming the opportunity "to reflect together, to remember the things that have always united us, and to underscore the right of victims to the truth, to dignity, and to justice". Other participants including Ministers and government officials and heads of United Nations agencies reiterated the