My thanks to the Kingdom of Spain and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism colleagues for organizing this vital conference on human rights, civil society and counter-terrorism.

This gathering reflects a central truth.

Terrorism is not only an attack on innocent people.

It represents an all-out assault on human rights.

The threat is growing and global.

Da’esh and Al-Qaeda continue to expand into Africa.

Terrorism is resurgent in Afghanistan.

Extremist groups target women and girls with gender-based violence, including sexual violence.

Xenophobia, racism and cultural and religious intolerance are accelerating.

Technology allows terrorists to spread and export lies, hatred and division at the touch of a button.

Online hatred can quickly incite real-life acts of horrifying violence.

At the same time, global responses to terrorism can make things worse.

In the name of security, humanitarian aid is often blocked – increasing human suffering.

Civil society and human rights defenders are silenced – particularly women.

And survivors of terrorism and violence are left without the support and access to justice they need to rebuild their lives.

We need to re-affirm our commitment to core values.
By addressing the conditions that can give rise to terrorism, including by investing in health, education, protection, gender equality and justice systems accessible to all.

By safeguarding principled humanitarian action and fully respecting international law.

And by opening the door to civil society – and especially women – to meaningfully engage with counter-terrorism efforts.

As a moral duty, a legal obligation, and a strategic imperative – let’s put human rights where they belong: front and centre in the fight against terror.