

Knowledge Management is the Right Response at the Right Time
for CBRN Risks

*Welcoming Address at the Kick-Off Meeting of the Knowledge Management
System on CBRN trafficking in South-East Europe and the Caucasus*

Sandro Calvani, UNICRI Director
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Honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen, Good morning.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Kick-Off meeting of this new challenging UNICRI initiated project that is designed to develop and maintain a knowledge management system on the prevention of illicit trafficking of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials in South-East Europe and the Caucasus. While my colleagues would talk in more detail about this Knowledge Management System, I would just like to stress one thing – its main purpose is to help better integrate national and international efforts in each of the four areas (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear) and make the maximum use of available resources.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Directorate-General EuropeAid Co-operation Office and the Directorate General for External Relations of the European Commission for their political and financial support.

I would also like to take this opportunity to most sincerely welcome the distinguished representatives of the countries that have agreed to take part in the project.

I am also delighted to see that representatives of EUROPOL, IAEA, OPCW and the SECI Center are present here today, and I thank them all for their ongoing support in many of UNICRI's Counter Terrorism activities.

Furthermore I would like to welcome our new friends - the representatives of the BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU), the JRC-Institute for the Protection and Security of the Citizen, and Sandia National Laboratories.

I thank you all for having so graciously accepted our invitation and truly hope that you will feel encouraged to participate fully, share expertise and exchange ideas during this meeting.

The UN Counter Terrorism strategy highlights the importance of preventing terrorists from acquiring Weapons of Mass Destruction. UNICRI, an independent UN entity and member of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), is a significant contributor in this and many other aspects of the fight against terrorism.

More specifically, in 2004, UNICRI started the worldwide programme *Strengthening International Cooperation to Combat Illicit Trafficking and Criminal Use of CBRN Substances and Weapons*. The aim of the Programme continues to be to improve countries' capabilities to prevent and combat the illicit trafficking and criminal use of CBRN material.

Today no State can stand alone to face the challenge of terrorism involving CBRN materials, regardless any kind of efforts to improve security. Neither can any State make itself immune to this threat. Even the most powerful State can be held hostage by the threats posed by non-State actors, particularly when such groups seek to exploit weapons of mass destruction (WMD) expertise and knowledge already widely disseminated throughout the public sphere. A biological, chemical, radiological or nuclear terrorist attack may have a devastating impact. In addition to causing widespread death and destruction, it could deal a crippling blow to the world economy and drive millions of people into dire poverty.

Individuals associated with terrorist networks, such as Al Qaida, made it clear, in statements from as far back as the late 1990s that it would seek to acquire and use CBRN weapons in a terrorist attack. And we know there are terrorist groups that have been trying to develop CBRN programs. Despite the obvious challenges involved in doing so, it would be a mistake to see this as a hollow threat.

Contemporary terrorists seek to terrify and destabilise secular and pluralist societies as much as they seek to maximise casualties - and this makes the use of CBRN weapons or at least agents and devices to employ them, particularly attractive to them. The long-term psychological, economic and social - not to mention human - impact of a CBRN terrorist attack, or a credible threat of one, could potentially be enormous.

While we must be realistic about the difficulties involved in terrorists acquiring and operating CBRN weapons - the technological, regulatory and economic impediments are significant - there is a heightened awareness globally that more can and should be done to prevent and prepare for a possible CBRN terrorist incident. More so than with conventional terrorist attacks, the risks involved with terrorists succeeding just once with a CBRN attack are simply too great for governments not to take all steps possible to prevent this becoming a reality.

One should realize that just as no single state can deal with the problem of terrorism single-handedly, equally no single approach will be sufficient to prevent the threat of terrorism with weapons of mass destruction. However, I would submit to you that preventing illicit trafficking of CBRN material both within and among countries is probably one of the most important lines of defences against the threat.

Your contributions, I am sure, will drive this ambitious programme to prevent illicit trafficking in CBRN forward, and I really believe that by working together, we can gather information and build experience that will improve the regional and international efforts to combat the illicit trafficking of CBRN material.

I would now like to give the floor to Francesco Cappè, the Head of UNICRI's Laboratory on Security Governance and Counter Terrorism, who, I am sure, will be delighted to tell you more about our Counter Terrorism activities.

Once again, thank you for your participation and your support to the work of our Institute.