United Nations
Interregional Crime and Justice
Research Institute

**Opening Remarks by Bettina Tucci Bartsiotas**

**Director of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)**

## Artificial Intelligence and Robotics: Reshaping the Future of Crime, Terrorism and Security

*2 April 2019, UN Headquarters, New York*

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Colleagues and friends,

It is a great pleasure to be here with you today, alongside our co-hosts and friends from the Permanent Missions of Georgia, the Netherlands, the United Arab Emirates and INTERPOL, and to welcome you on behalf of UNICRI. I would like to express my deep appreciation to our co-hosts for their exceptional support in bringing this meeting to fruition. We hope to continue this collaboration into the future.

We are riding a wave of innovation and technological development. Advancements in artificial intelligence and robotics are fundamentally altering how we live our lives, how we work, how we communicate with one another, and how we move about - very often unbeknownst to us.

Since 2015, UNICRI has been advancing knowledge and understanding of these technologies. We seek to leverage AI and robotics for positive change, to enhance crime prevention and control, criminal justice, and security, as well as to reduce the risks of their malicious use by criminals and terrorist groups and understand how AI-induced automation will impact the future of work in terms of social stability, crime and unmanaged migration.

In this regard, with the support of Georgia, we convened one of the earliest UN discussions focused on the impact of AI and robotics on the margins of the 70th session of the General Assembly in 2015. We continued this work, organizing several training sessions and multi-stakeholder forums for discussion and encouraging responsible innovation throughout the public and private sectors.

This work culminated in the opening of our Centre for AI and Robotics, which we are proud to say is hosted in the Hague, The Netherlands – the city of peace, justice and innovation. The Centre was opened with the generous support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, The Municipality of the Hague and 1QBit Information Technologies.

Last July, our Centre joined forces with INTERPOL to convene a first global meeting to take stock of specific challenges and opportunities of AI and robotics for law enforcement. There, the national agencies and experts shared with us their experiences in exploring the possibilities presented by these new technologies, as well as concerns about possible malicious use.  We are proud to be continuing this partnership with INTERPOL as we prepare for the second global meeting, which will take place in Singapore from 2-4 July.

Today, you will find a copy of our joint report on AI and robotics for law enforcement, which we hope you will find a valuable resource. The report analyses the potential contribution of AI and robotics to policing, examines use cases at varying stages of development by national law enforcement agencies and provides general recommendations for the way forward, as well as specific suggestions for police Chiefs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In line with Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions of, AI and robotics can be used to enhance national capabilities of law enforcement and

the criminal justice system, helping us to combat crime and counter-terrorism and strengthen security in our communities like never before.

The Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammad, added an important caveat to this optimism at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona this past February – "digital surveillance combined with artificial intelligence can help law enforcement but can also be used to violate privacy and persecute dissenting voices".

This is precisely the point I wish to underscore this afternoon.

Innovation cannot and should not stop. But, as we embark down this road and explore the use of these innovative technologies in law enforcement and the security sector, we must ensure that we never lose sight of rule of law and the comprehensive body of human rights law that has been meticulously developed over decades. The risk of harm is too great. It will not be easy to translate these laws and principles into code, but I am confident that, if we continue to explore these opportunities and challenge collectively, we will succeed, and our communities will be safer and more secure as a result.

Before concluding, I am very pleased to also announce that UNICRI and the United Nations Office of Information and Communications Technology have agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding here today to facilitate our joint exploration of technological innovation for crime prevention and criminal justice. This is an important step for us in turning theory into practice and we are privileged to be doing so with OICT.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Let me close by thanking you all for joining us here today. With representatives coming from the Missions, law enforcement and security agencies, academia, the private sector and civil society, this is an excellent example of the multi-stakeholder dialogue needed to ensure we can reap the benefits of these technologies for making the world more safe and secure for all.