



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM
UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT)**

**Opening remarks by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General
United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)**

**High-Level Briefing to Member States on the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism's
Programmes and Projects in Central Asia: Achievements and Way Forward**

**Conference Room 3, UN Headquarters
23 January 2024**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to this joint briefing organized by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, in collaboration with the Member States of the Central Asian region.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Asia and Head of the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, Mr. Kaha Imnadze. UNRCCA is a vital partner for UNOCT on various initiatives in Central Asia, helping Member States implement their efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

I would like to thank the Counter Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and Assistant Secretary-General, Ms. Natalia Gherman for our excellent cooperation in the region and beyond, which illustrates the true value of an 'All-of-UN approach' to preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

Allow me to express my words of gratitude to the Permanent Representatives of Member States from the Central Asian region. The support and participation of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan has been essential to the success of our joint efforts in countering terrorism. The united front you see today is a testament to our continued and ever deepening partnership.

Today, we will cover the results of our initiatives on countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For more than a decade, Central Asian Member States have shown their common commitment in the implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, in partnership with the United Nations and other regional and international organizations.

In this context, since 2010, UNOCT and UNRCCA have worked with Member States of the Central Asian region to implement the Joint Plan of Action to advance the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, in alignment with the needs identified by CTED.

The Joint Plan of Action continues to serve as a pioneering initiative and a model for other regions, demonstrating to the world how to address terrorism and violent extremism through regional and international cooperation and national initiatives.

In response to the priority areas of the Joint Plan of Action, my Office is implementing fifteen thematic programmes in Central Asia across all four pillars of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. These activities are offered in collaboration with UNRCCA, CTED and other partners of the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, including on important issues such as:

- Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Foreign Terrorist Fighters and their family members
- Small Arms and Light Weapons
- Cybersecurity and New Technologies
- Countering the Financing of Terrorism
- Countering Terrorist Travel through the use of API and PNR; and
- Border Security and Management

As a result of this comprehensive and strategic engagement, my Office has already addressed, to various degrees, 36 of the 78 technical assistance recommendations for Central Asian Member States shared since 2019 by CTED which are applicable to UNOCT programmes and projects.

I am particularly pleased with the good progress that Central Asian Member States have made on the adoption, implementation and strengthening of their national strategies and action plans on counter-terrorism and on the prevention of violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

In 2023, we successfully ended the implementation of several important projects and programmes in the region, such as the EU-UN STRIVE Asia initiative; the 1st Phase of the Small Arms and Light Weapons project; and the EU-UN Support project to States in Central Asia for their Citizens returned from conflict zones.

We will hear more about these efforts later this morning.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

While this progress is noteworthy, a lot more needs to be done. The challenging development in the region reminds us that terrorism and violent extremism poses a grave threat to regional and international peace and security.

The continued presence and activities of terrorist groups remain a concern beyond Afghanistan¹.

In this regard, the recently published 'Fourteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2665 (2022), concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace stability and security of Afghanistan' [S/2023/370], highlighted that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan continues to pose a significant threat within Afghanistan, and Member States are concerned about its potential to develop external operations capability and to project a threat into the region and beyond².

To address these challenges, Central Asian Member states have called for more coordinated and collaborative efforts to contribute to the stabilization of Afghanistan, as well as to counter the threat of terrorism and violent extremism in the wider region.

Responding to these concerns, the Counter Terrorism Early Warning Network for Central Asia (EWN) was launched in 2022 as a collaborative effort between UNOCT and UNRCCA. Representatives from all five Central Asian States, UN agencies, international and regional organizations, as well as independent experts have joined the Network, aimed to bolster regional cooperation in sharing vital information related to security challenges and peacebuilding efforts.

In light of the evolving global and regional security landscape, Member States have expressed keen interest in integrating elements of artificial intelligence, new technologies, and community engagement into the EWN's framework to ensure its effectiveness in addressing emerging security threats.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

To fully realize the potential of the EWN and other ongoing UNOCT initiatives in Central Asia, we need strong donor engagement, and financial and in-kind support from across the international community. Without this support, we would be unable to meet the challenges in Central Asia and neighbouring countries.

¹ Para 72. [N2325802.pdf \(un.org\)](#)

² [N2312536.pdf \(un.org\)](#) + 32 Report

I would like to thank all our current funding partners, namely Australia, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, the Russian Federation, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, and the State of Qatar, as well as the United Nations Peace and Development Fund for their generous contributions to support the implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and related programmatic activities in Central Asia.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Central Asian States for their steadfast and deepening partnership with my Office. I am particularly grateful to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan for financially contributing to UNOCT's work in the region since 2017.

I am also thankful for the human capital that the region gives to UNOCT through a continuing stream of talented and hard-working Junior Professional Officers.

I urge all partners that have generously supported the United Nations in helping Central Asian States implement the Joint Plan of Action to kindly consider renewing their financial and in-kind contributions for 2024 and beyond.

And I request other partners that have not made a financial contribution to consider initiating their support, in order for us to continue the important work to prevent and counter terrorism in the region and globally.

Thank you.