



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

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

Briefing to Donors on Support for the Joint Plan of Action Project in Central Asia

**Conference Room 3, UN Headquarters
20 July 2022**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to this joint briefing by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia on our collaboration with the five Member States of the Central Asian region on countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Asia and Head of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, Ms. Natalia Gherman, with whom I have the pleasure of working closely on various policy and programmatic initiatives in Central Asia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For more than a decade, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, through its Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT), and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia have worked with Member States of the Central Asian region to implement the Joint Plan of Action in furtherance of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The framework continues to deliver concrete achievements for Central Asian States at the national and regional levels. Indeed, the Joint Plan of Action was a pioneering initiative and a model for other regions in the way it brought together countries to jointly commit to the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. It also demonstrated to the world how to address terrorism and violent extremism through regional and international cooperation as well as national initiatives.

The success of Central Asia has been welcomed by the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council, both of which have called upon all Member States to develop national and regional strategies to enhance the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

I would like to thank the Governments of Norway, Saudi Arabia, the Russian Federation, and Kazakhstan, as well as the European Union for their generous contributions to the various phases of implementation of the Joint Plan of Action. As a result of this important financial support, UNOCT, UNRCCA and other key United Nations entities have been able to successfully complete three phases of the Joint Plan of Action's implementation, with significant results.

We have convened dozens of capacity-building workshops and trained thousands of Central Asian frontline officials, local practitioners and relevant stakeholders – including women's and other civil society bodies – on the effective implementation of counter-terrorism and prevention of violent extremism practices, such as on border management, countering the financing of terrorism, and safeguarding the Internet from terrorist abuse.

All of our capacity-building initiatives are fully in line with the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, especially the emphasis it places on protecting human rights, international law, civic space, and victims of terrorism.

I am particularly pleased with the good progress that Member States of Central Asia have made on the adoption, implementation and strengthening of their national strategies and action plans on counter-terrorism and prevention of violent extremism. This gives us the impetus to continue providing our support in this important area.

But a lot more needs to be done, especially in light of the challenging developments in the region, which offer a reminder to us that terrorism and violent extremism remain a grave threat to regional and international peace and security.

The developments in Afghanistan have raised security concerns for neighbouring countries in Central Asia, underscoring the need for more coordinated and collaborative efforts to counter the threat of terrorism and violent extremism from spreading further.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the spread of violent extremism online and offline, across the ideological spectrum, compounded by hard-to-trace fundraising, hate speech and anti-government sentiments.

Our meeting today, therefore, provides an opportunity to highlight the significant progress that Member States of Central Asia have made on a broad range of counter-terrorism issues that are front and centre to the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and its review resolutions. It also allows us to highlight the urgent need for that progress to be supported by international partners through additional resources.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we embark upon Phase IV of the implementation of the Joint Plan of Action, which was launched at a regional event in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, in December last year, it is important that we take stock of our important achievements and direct our attention and resources towards the key objectives for this phase.

As with previous phases, Phase IV of the Joint Plan of Action prioritizes the General Assembly's call to ensure the repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters and associated individuals in the region, understand and address the ways through which new technologies can be abused by terrorist groups, and support all vulnerable communities to enhance their resilience against terrorist recruitment.

As a part of Phase IV, we successfully co-organized together with Uzbekistan the "High-Level International Conference on Regional Cooperation among Central Asian States within the Framework of the Joint Plan of Action (JPoA) for the Implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy" in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in March 2022.

That Conference resulted in an updated version of the Joint Plan of Action and reinvigorated international and regional efforts to counter the evolving threat of terrorism. The updated Joint Plan of Action leverages the coordination role of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, the good offices of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, the technical assessments from the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, and the specific capacity-building mandate of various United Nations entities and partners.

However, for its implementation, 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 its neighbourhood.

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

I would now like to pass the floor to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Natalia Gherman. Thank you.