

**Remarks by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov,
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

**Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee
Open briefing on Central Asia**

**United Nations Headquarters, ECOSOC Chamber
20 December 2022, 3 p.m. – 6 p.m.**

Madam Chair,
Mr. Acting Executive Director,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to brief you on the engagement of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and its United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre in Central Asia.

The threat of terrorism looms large in the region. The security situation in neighbouring Afghanistan risks deteriorating further, compounded by a humanitarian and human rights crisis.

Central Asian Member States have shown continued commitment to work together under the auspices of the United Nations through their Joint Plan of Action to Implement the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, following a comprehensive and whole-of-society approach.

A significant milestone was reached last March with the adoption of an updated Joint Plan of Action during a high-level conference in Tashkent on the occasion of the ten-year anniversary of the regional strategy.

My Office was proud to support this process and to co-organize in October in Dushanbe a high-level conference on border security and management cooperation. I would like to thank the Governments of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan for the excellent collaboration in organizing these events. Thank you, dear Colleagues.

Madam Chair,

Since 2018, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, in partnership with the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, has developed a fruitful engagement with Member States in the region.

The Joint Plan of Action has provided direction for coordinated technical assistance by the United Nations and its regional partners, aligned with the needs identified by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate.

It has also guided the provision of capacity-building by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, which has been implementing the fourth phase of the Joint Plan of Action project since December 2021.

In addition, my Office is implementing fifteen thematic programmes in Central Asia across all four pillars of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Development Programme and other partners in the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact.

As part of this joint programmatic support, the STRIVE Asia initiative with the European Union has promoted stronger involvement of parliamentarians, civil society, women, and youth in preventing and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

The border security management and cooperation programme, implemented by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, has fostered good practices on information exchange, responsible use of new technologies, and human rights protection at borders.

The Centre's prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration programme is supporting Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan under the Global Framework for United Nations Support on Syria and Iraq Third Country National Returnees.

And in May, the Joint Plan of Action project launched an e-learning course for law enforcement officials on human rights and counter-terrorism.

Our work in Central Asia has also expanded to new innovative areas, such as vulnerable targets protection; child- and gender-sensitive approaches to returnees; and managing violent extremist prisoners, countering weapons of mass destruction and cyber, biological, radiological and nuclear terrorism.

This support has produced tangible results. For example:

- A regional Counter-Terrorism Early Warning Network was established last June in the context of the rapidly changing situation in Afghanistan and related security challenges;
- Kazakhstan was supported in establishing a Prison Staff Training Center on preventing violent extremism;

- A recently completed regional project on small arms and light weapons strengthened the capacities of 500 officials through 19 tailored capacity-building activities, following roadmaps developed for each country; and
- Just last month, with UNCCT support, Kyrgyzstan achieved a higher compliance rating from the Eurasian Group on the implementation of the Financial Action Task Force Recommendation 8 to prevent the abuse of the non-profit sector for terrorism financing.

Madam Chair,

Member States in Central Asia can count on the continued support of the United Nations to prevent and counter terrorism in line with their international obligations and Security Council requirements.

The Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact has registered 50 projects by six United Nations entities benefitting Central Asian countries since 2018. This includes 13 regional and 19 national projects exclusively for Central Asia, with a budget of \$40.5 million and a funding gap of \$11 million.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism has already addressed, to various degrees, 36 of the 78 technical assistance recommendations for Central Asian Member States shared in 2019 by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate.

Subject to available resources, my Office will provide support, at the request of Member States, on another 11 recommendations and will incorporate in its work findings from the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate's latest assessment visits.

For example, next year the United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel Programme will begin implementation in Kyrgyzstan and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate will lead capacity consultations with Kazakhstan and Tajikistan.

Madam Chair, Dear Colleagues,

I would like to thank the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, and all our partners for their close collaboration with my Office.

I am grateful to our donors whose contributions make our capacity-building work in Central Asia possible, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Qatar, the Russian Federation, the European Union, the United States of America and Canada.

And I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for their partnership with the United Nations Office of Counter-

Terrorism, including Kazakhstan's support through financial contributions and Junior Professional Officers.

I thank you for your attention.