



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

Opening Remarks by

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Under-Secretary-General, UN Office of Counter-Terrorism

Launching event

**Project on Addressing the terrorism-arms-crime nexus: Preventing and
combatting the illicit trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons
(SALW) and their illicit supply to terrorists - Supporting the
implementation of UNSCR 2370(2017) and the Madrid Guiding Principles**

UNHQ, 21 February 2020

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the launching of the project on Addressing the nexus between terrorism, arms and crime by preventing and combatting the illicit trafficking of Small-Arms and Light Weapons and their illicit supply to terrorists focused in Central Asia.

This is a joint project led by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in close collaboration

with the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) and the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (ODA).

It is widely acknowledged that the connection between terrorism and organized crime, including the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, is a serious threat to international peace and security. It is also an obstacle to sustainable development and a threat to the rule of law.

Just to give you an idea of the challenge we are facing, it is worthwhile reminding ourselves that some estimates indicate that, for example, the African continent alone has one hundred million uncontrolled small arms and light weapons, concentrated in crises zones and security-challenged environments. With an estimated population of 1.2 billion in Africa, this is an unfortunate and significant ratio of 1 to 12.

Small arms and light weapons are increasingly becoming the weapon of choice of many terrorist groups around the world as they are cheap and easy to access, transfer, hide and use.

Both the Security Council and the General Assembly have stressed the need to stem the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons to terrorist groups.

Security Council resolution 2370 (2017) reaffirms the pressing need to counter the illicit trafficking of weapons and explosives to prevent their accessibility to terrorists, and to address the nexus between terrorism and organized crime.

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy underlines the connection between terrorism and the illicit trafficking of small arms, light weapons,

conventional ammunitions and explosives, and calls on Member States to strengthen coordination and cooperation to address this challenge.

Insufficient international response in countering the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, the challenges that some Member States face to detect and seize them, as well as porous borders, allow terrorists and criminals to move illicit weapons from one country or region to another.

For example, in the recent 25th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, some Member States reported that illicit weapons originating from Libya were finding their way into the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To address this challenge, throughout last year my Office and UNODC worked closely with CTED and ODA to develop a project to enhance the national legislative, strategic and operational capacities to prevent, detect and counter the firearms trafficking and other illegal activities related to terrorism and organized crime in Central Asia.

The first phase of this project includes the implementation of 17 activities in 15 months, including country visits, legislative workshops, national trainings and a regional conferences.

This project is fully aligned with and supports the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, UN Security Council resolution 2370, the Madrid Guiding Principles, as well as the Firearms Protocol to the UN Convention Against Transnational Crime.

The project is also another example of our “All-of-UN” approach to support counter-terrorism efforts of Member States. I thank the Executive Director of UNODC, Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly, for her video message and I am grateful to my CTED and ODA colleagues for attending today’s event in person.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This project would not have been possible without the generous contributions from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Russian Federation. I am very grateful for their strong support.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Permanent Representatives of the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan as well as Turkmenistan colleagues for joining us. This demonstrates strong support and regional ownership of the project.

Last but not least, I welcome the participation of the Director of the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Mr. Jumakhon Ghiyosov.

I am pleased to say that earlier this week Mr. Ghiyosov and I signed a Memorandum of Understanding between our two organizations. Now we will work to make sure this partnership translates into tangible results on the ground.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Yesterday, we held the first expert workshop of the project here in New York to discuss the interconnection between illicit arms trafficking and terrorism and agree on the way forward. Much more work, however, lies ahead.

I am confident that the implementation of the project will bring concrete results that will benefit all Central Asian States. Our common goal is to make Central Asia a more secure and prosperous region, free from illicit weapons and terrorism.

Thank you very much.