



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

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

High-Level International Conference “Countering Terrorism and Preventing Violent Extremism”

Dushanbe, 4 May 2018

Your Excellency President Emomali Rahmon,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking President, Government and people of the Republic of Tajikistan for their warm welcome and hospitality. It is my first visit to Tajikistan and I am amazed by the beauty of the country and its hardworking and decent people.

I am grateful for the opportunity to co-host and participate in this High-Level International Conference on Countering Terrorism and Preventing Violent Extremism.

I welcome you all here for what I know will be practical and informative exchanges involving senior representatives of governments, civil society, research institutions, and international and regional organizations.

I bring you the warm greetings of the United Nations Secretary-General A.Guterres, who has made countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism one of his top priorities.

His first reform initiative was to create the Office of Counter-Terrorism to provide strategic leadership to United Nations counter-terrorism efforts.

We are now at a crucial point in the global fight against terrorism. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Al-Qaida and their affiliates continue to pose a significant and evolving threat around the world.

ISIL suffered a series of devastating military setbacks in Iraq, Syria and the southern Philippines last year, but now is not the time for complacency.

ISIL is continuing to adapt from a terrorist group with a territorial base to a virtual organization, exploiting the Internet and social media platforms to inspire and direct its supporters to carry out heinous attacks.

This region is all too aware of the evolving threat from ISIL and its affiliates. An estimated 4,000 nationals from Central Asian countries may have travelled to Iraq and Syria to fight for terrorists.

Many foreign terrorist fighters died on the battlefield or remain in Iraq and Syria; others relocated to countries such as Afghanistan, Libya, Somalia and Yemen, which has fuelled existing conflicts and further destabilized fragile regions; others have returned home and remain determined to carry out attacks in their own countries.

We all need to remain vigilant to prevent ISIL taking root in other countries and regions around the world, including Central Asia. We know that ISIL is actively seeking to recruit and radicalize citizens of this region, especially young people.

The threat from terrorism is increasingly complex and transnational. No country is immune from this threat. No country has all the answers.

So there is an urgent need to strengthen international counter-terrorism cooperation at the global, regional and national levels, while respecting human rights and complying with international law.

I was in Ashgabat earlier this week to witness the launch of phase 3 of the Joint Plan of Action for the Implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia.

This Joint Plan of Action was the first regional initiative of its kind when it was approved in 2011. It has since become an example for others around the world about what can be achieved with collective action, leadership and political will.

Regional cooperation guided by the Joint Plan of Action has enabled the five Central Asian countries to make good progress on issues such as countering the financing of terrorism, enhancing border security, fostering dialogue with religious institutions and leaders, and highlighting the role of the media in addressing terrorism and violent extremism.

The United Nations continues to stand ready to assist in these efforts.

The United Nations Secretary-General will convene a High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States in New York on 28 and 29 June.

It will focus on sharing information, preventing misuse of new technologies, including misuse of cyberspace, addressing the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon, and the role of the United Nations in promoting international cooperation.

The High-Level Conference is for Member States' National Security Advisors and heads of counter-terrorism and intelligence agencies. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Excellencies,

The United Nations Secretary-General report on the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy will be issued soon.

Member States will then undertake the sixth review of the Strategy, which I hope will culminate in the adoption of a strong consensus resolution which sets a clear direction for our common efforts over the next two years.

Today's High-Level Conference is therefore a great opportunity for us to take stock and ensure that our policies are fit for purpose for the evolving challenges that we face. We also need to take practical steps to ensure that we are working closely to address the menace of terrorism.

I look forward to listening to your priorities and learning about your good practices during this conference. I also assure you of the full support of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, my office, to address our shared challenges.

Thank you.