



Statement by Vladimir Ivanovich Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Head of the Office of Counter-Terrorism

High-level conference on international and regional cooperation to combat terrorism and its sources of financing, including illicit drug trafficking and organized crime

Dushanbe, 17 May 2019

Your Excellency Mr. Emomali Sharipovich Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan,

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank the distinguished Mr. President, Rahmon, and the government of Tajikistan for their kindness and hospitality. I bring you warmest wishes and greetings from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres. For the second year in a row, an international high-level conference on counter-terrorism is being held in Dushanbe. This is the start of a welcome tradition. We can already speak of a "Dushanbe process," which highlights the leadership of Tajikistan in countering terrorism, including the issue of the return of Tajik children and women trapped in Iraq and Syria, as was emphasized by distinguished President Rahmon in his speech.

This time the theme is highly topical: how to counter the financing of terrorism more effectively through united efforts, including by combating organized crime and illicit drug trafficking. Tajikistan and other States of Central Asia and beyond have first-hand knowledge of this subject. They have accumulated significant experience in fighting this scourge. One of our purposes today is to share that experience.

I am very glad that our event builds on the recommendations of the United Nations High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States held in New York in 2018.

The Dushanbe conference marks the opening of a series of similar international events to be held in 2019 and 2020, with the support of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism in Kenya, Belarus, Hungary, the United Arab Emirates, at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe under its auspices and with the sponsorship of Switzerland, and perhaps also in a number of other countries. It is vital to build on the impetus from the New York conference: regional conferences are to take place on various aspects of countering terrorism and extremism.

The outcomes of these discussions will be reviewed during the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Week in New York in June 2020, during which there will be a review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the second High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States and the first global congress of victims of terrorism.

Since the United Nations will be celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary next year, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Week will be one of the general anniversary events.

This is what lies ahead in terms of United Nations counter-terrorism efforts.

Now, let me say a few words on our current situation following the General Assembly's decision in 2017 to establish the Office of Counter-Terrorism. I can report that we are a full office of the United Nations Secretariat with clearly defined priorities and stable, albeit voluntary, long-term funding.

This would have been impossible without the backing of all United Nations Member States, and I would like to express my gratitude to them for their constant support. I would like to mention the main donors to the Office: Saudi Arabia, Qatar – to which I would like to express my gratitude for its financial support to this conference, the Netherlands, the European Union, the Russian Federation, Japan and others.

Mr. President,

The adoption of Security Council resolution 2462 (2019) reminds us how important it is for the international community to combat the financing of terrorism. According to some sources, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) alone still possesses financial resources close to \$500 million. These funds are circulating through both legal and illegal channels.

Terrorists are becoming more and more experienced in using new technologies to raise funds and transfer money across borders. The link between organized crime and the financing of terrorism is a cause of growing concern in many countries, including in the Central Asian region.

The aims set out in the aforementioned Security Council resolution will serve as a guide for all of us in our joint efforts.

The resolution mandates the Office of Counter-Terrorism to strengthen its activities with regard to coordination and capacity-building throughout the United Nations in order to combat the financing of terrorism.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism has paid particular attention to supporting Central Asian States. In particular, there has been close cooperation on the implementation of the regional counter-terrorism Joint Plan of Action for Central Asia, the first regional initiative of its kind in the world. This has allowed for wider interaction on cross-border issues such as countering the financing of terrorism, enhancing border security, promoting dialogue with religious institutions and leaders, and enhancing the role of the media in countering terrorism and violent extremism.

Last year, we launched the third phase of the Joint Plan. Our primary partner in this undertaking is the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia. I would like to thank Ms. Natalia Gherman, Head of the Regional Centre, for this cooperation.

Speaking about this productive cooperation, I would like to note that last year, at the request of the Central Asian States, we jointly conducted a five-day border-security training course in Ashgabat. A regional seminar on preventing and countering violent extremism was also organized in the capital of Kazakhstan. These activities have been recognized by all of the "quintet" of Central Asian States as productive.

In 2019, we plan to conduct regional training courses on countering the use of the Internet to promote terrorism. The main event will be held in Kyrgyzstan, with two additional events in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In addition, trainings will also be organized in Uzbekistan, on the subject of countering the financing of terrorism, as well as in Tajikistan, on border security and control. Mongolia and Afghanistan have been invited to these events along with the Central Asian countries.

Mr. President,

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism stands ready to continue its efforts to combat the financing of terrorism. According to its mandate, one of the main tasks of the Office is to coordinate the counter-terrorism efforts of United Nations institutions and other international structures.

In the context of countering the financing of terrorism, we work closely with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the 1267 (ISIL and Al-Qaida sanctions) Committee,

the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and INTERPOL.

We are interested in developing closer cooperation with the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering and FATF-style regional money laundering groups, such as the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are our allies and partners in countering the financing of terrorism.

I would like to acknowledge the OSCE and the Government of Turkmenistan for holding a conference on countering the financing of terrorism last month in Ashgabat.

Just a few weeks ago, in New York, the European External Action Service's Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Serrano, and I signed the United Nations-European Union counter-terrorism framework, which sets out common priorities for cooperation between the two organizations including in the Central Asian region. Countering the financing of terrorism is one of the key topics highlighted in the document.

I would also like to take this opportunity to encourage countries and international organizations to make available experts to participate in United Nations training programmes, so that beneficiary countries can study the practicalities of countering the financing of terrorism. Additional financial support is also needed for United Nations efforts in this critical area.

Mr. President,

Only through active collaboration and targeted efforts we will be able to achieve concrete results in our fight against terrorism and terrorist financing. The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism stands ready to work towards this aim.

Thank you.