



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

**Remarks by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General**

**United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

**How to build stronger confidence in Asia and make CICA  
more responsive to the challenges of the 21st Century**

**2 April 2021**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to participate in this virtual event organized by the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) on *How to build stronger confidence in Asia and make CICA more responsive to the challenges of the 21st Century*.

First of all, allow me to thank the Government of Kazakhstan for supporting this event under its chairmanship of CICA.

I would like to acknowledge the participation of First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, His Excellency Ambassador Shakhrat Nuryshev; the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, His Excellency Ambassador Magzhan Ilyassov; and the Executive Director of CICA, His Excellency Ambassador Kairat Sarybay.

Today's meeting reaffirms the important role of the CICA forum in deepening mutual understanding of major problems and enhancing cooperation towards promoting peace, security and stability in Asia – the only ways to overcome the unprecedented COVID-19 crises.

In 2002, one year after the 9/11 attacks, the first CICA Summit adopted the Declaration on Eliminating Terrorism and Promoting Dialogue among Civilizations, in which CICA Member States committed to fighting terrorism and strengthening bilateral, regional and international cooperation in accordance with the United Nations Charter. They reaffirmed this commitment during the fifth CICA Summit of Heads of States and Governments in 2019.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) remains similarly committed to our common goal of supporting peace, security and stability in Asia. The region continues to be a priority for our work in supporting Member States to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which marks its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

Regional organizations and fora in Asia play an important role in what must be a joint endeavour. We are committed to building stronger counter-terrorism partnerships with regional stakeholders, and I welcome CICA's active engagement in this network.

I also appreciate the participation of CICA in our recent regional workshop in Central Asia on *Addressing the nexus between terrorism, arms and crime by preventing and combatting the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their illicit supply to terrorists*, organized by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) of my Office.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Recently, on the international day of Nowruz, the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, called for solidarity and compassion between communities, generations and countries as our human family is tested by the COVID-19 pandemic – the most challenging global crisis of the 21st century. This call is especially relevant taking into account the impact of the pandemic on the evolving terrorist threat.

Last year demonstrated that terrorism continues to pose a grave threat to international peace and security. Many of the worrying terrorist trends have been magnified during the pandemic, and many of its underlying drivers have been exacerbated by the political and socio-economic fallout from the crisis.

Terrorists are observed to exploit disruptions arising from COVID-19, further setting back the development and human rights agendas.

The threat has become even more difficult to prevent with terrorists adapting quickly to exploitation of new technologies, linkages with arms and organized crime, as well as deficiencies in national counter-terrorism capacities. In addition, we should not rule out the possibility of terrorists exploiting this coronavirus or other viruses or biological agents to unleash new infections that could significantly harm the world.

Moreover, thousands of battle-hardened terrorists remain at large and could relocate to other conflict zones and fragile areas, posing a mid- to long-term global threat.

Tens of thousands of individuals associated with terrorist groups designated by the Security Council, including women and children, remain stranded in overcrowded and precarious holding facilities in northeast Syria. I commend the leadership of so many CICA Member and Observer States, who have taken steps to repatriate their nationals, hold accountable those found guilty of crimes, protect the children and other victims, and work to rehabilitate and reintegrate them safely into society.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The world's most pressing problems urge that states and international organizations seek solutions together, join forces to overcome challenges caused by terrorism, develop confidence-

building measures and create a security architecture for our future. This is a real time for reinvigorated multilateralism!

It is essential to strengthen international counter-terrorism cooperation during and after the pandemic, focusing on emerging threats and challenges. We need an inclusive approach and a strategic investment in building resilience.

Let me conclude by saying that my Office stands ready to join efforts with CICA in combatting the complex problem of terrorism.

I wish you a productive event.

Thank you.