



Second United Nations  
**HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE  
ON COUNTER-TERRORISM**

**28-30 JUNE 2021**

**UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS • NEW YORK**

**Statement by Ms. Cholpon Orozobekova, Co-founder and Director, Bulan Institute for Peace Innovations, Geneva, Switzerland**

**Second United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States**

**Breakout session A: Prevention through innovative programmes, including sports and behavioural insights to unite communities and build resilient societies,  
28 June 2021, 15 – 16:30pm**

Dear Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the invitation to speak at this important conference.

The Bulan Institute is a research institute and NGO based in Geneva, with the regional office in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Since 2019, we have been studying state policies toward FTFs and closely observing and studying the experiences of Central Asian states to repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration of ISIS fighters and their associates.

Today I would like to thank UN Secretary General HE Antonio Guterres, Under Secretary General HE Vladimir Voronkov, and UN SR Her Exc Fionuala Ni Aolain, and UN Office of Countering Terrorism, CTED and other UN agencies for their excellent dedicated work in countering terrorism. I also extend my gratitude and appreciation to international organizations such as Hedayah, Global Center on Cooperative Security, Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, and Search for Common Ground for their important projects and building dialogues between different stakeholders and supporting local civil society organizations that are working hard in the field.

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[www.un.org/counterterrorism/HLC2021](http://www.un.org/counterterrorism/HLC2021)  
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Today I want to emphasize three important issues. First, Pillars 1 and 4 of the UN counter terrorism strategy are extremely important, and demand more intensive and targeted focus on grievances and root causes. Fighting terrorism should start from addressing grievances and root causes. Without eradicating root causes, addressing grievances of people, countering terrorism is almost impossible. The covid pandemic has worsened the situation in many countries as the pandemic has affected economic opportunities of people and also slowed down counter terrorism efforts in every country in the world.

The pandemic should be a wake-up call for all governments reminding that how we are all can be fragile especially if we live in a society with illnesses such as corruption, nepotism, inequality and poverty. The lack of preparedness in developing countries will greater a window for terrorist groups to use grievances of people to recruit them or to win their minds.

The pandemic also reinforced concerns over the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) by terrorists. New technologies and Internet are giving unprecedented chances to ISIS and other terrorist groups to win minds of people online without any big efforts. In this context, we need to reinforce our efforts to counter these challenges and take united actions to defeat online propaganda and recruitment. I would urge social media platforms such as Facebook, twitter to take unprecedented measures to control and eliminate accounts used by terrorist groups.

Third very important issue is that how sport can serve in countering terrorism and especially in rehabilitation and reintegration programs for returnees.. I would like to thank UNOCT and the government of Qatar for launching important initiatives and bringing sport as an essential component into countering terrorism agenda.

Usually, young people join extremist groups having own grievances, and usually they join out of sense of isolation and being abandoned. When they feel excluded, sport can help them to reunite to their classmates or friends. Sport is a teamwork, and it teaches young people to have a feeling of serving to bigger goals. The Bulan Institute is studying repatriation of ISIS associates in Central Asia and we believe that female returnees and children should be involved in sport activities. Some states are trying to organize sport activities, but not in big scale. For example, in Kazakhstan NGOs are organizing team building exercises that involve some sport activities, but according to local NGOs they don't have capacity and adequate conditions to organize more... The Bulan Institute recently has published a big report on the experiences of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and we when conducted interviews, many local specialists highlighted that football, tennis or other sport activities would give another

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meaning and passion to children, and they have recommended to include more sport activities into rehabilitation programs.

Thus, the Bulan Institute emphasizes the positive role of sport activities for returnees, especially for children and we urge all countries that repatriated or plan to bring back their citizens from Syria and Iraq, to consider sport activities as one of the main pillars of rehabilitation and reintegration programs.

I stop here and thank you for this unique opportunity to speak at such a high level conference. Thank you for your attention!