Concluding Remarks at the CTITF Workshop on the Regional Implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in East Africa

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- I would like to express my thanks to the Ethiopian Government, especially Ambassador Negash Kebret, Director General Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for co-hosting and supporting this CTITF Workshop in Addis. I would also like to express my thanks to Ambassador Michael Battle, US Ambassador to the African Union for his Governments strong support for the implementation of the UN Counter-Terrorism Strategy. My thanks are also due to Mr. Peter Otim, Expert of Peace and Security Department of African Union Commission for his presence at this occasion.

- From CTITF’s perspective, this meeting has been a truly rewarding exercise for three essential reasons:
  
  - First, your participation at this event is a signal of your ministries’ and your Governments’ dedication to the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and we at the United Nations hope to build on this dedication in order to collectively achieve our objectives of bringing peace, harmony and prosperity to the Eastern African region.
  
  - Second, our discussions over the course of the last two days centered on some serious challenges the region has faced and continues to face in terms of improving security, protecting human rights and enhancing capacity building in the context of countering terrorism. We have shared useful ideas on how to support Somalia, both at the regional and international fronts, in order to prevent the threat that emanates from groups operating in that country.
  
  - Third, we have reached useful conclusions on our way forward. Through refocusing regional policy to priority threats and through targeted yet inclusive regional action plans, we seek to collectively tackle some of the most critical challenges that this region faces.

- The CTITF Office will prepare a comprehensive report on this workshop for public distribution. The report will summarize key conclusions reached and will also outline potential options which the region, both in partnership with the international and regional organizations and with capacity-building partners, can pursue in order to improve its counter-terrorism efforts. I would like to take the opportunity to list some of the broader conclusions reached.

- First, on promoting effective leadership. It is important to design initiatives that draw on the framework of the Strategy to promote more effective leadership at national and regional levels to address key challenges under the respective pillars of the Strategy. Examples might include:
  
  - A high-level regional meeting of political leaders and policy makers to explore options to enhance regional and national responses to the threat posed by El Shabaab and/or the implications of instability in Somalia;

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- A high-level meeting in New York on key regional priorities and challenges.

- Second, on enhancing operational cooperation within the region on key areas relevant to the Strategy. It would be useful to convene regional meetings of operational officials and decision makers from key departments to develop a sustainable and workable strategy to promote regional efforts to counter conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism in the region. Furthermore, regional or national level workshops with key law enforcement and criminal justice officials may serve the purpose to promote specific aspects of cooperation in counter-terrorism matters, including previously under-explored areas like integrated criminal justice capacity building programmes, the role of transitional and restorative justice in supporting criminal justice responses to terrorism, de-radicalization processes, harmonized legislative frameworks, border management as well as exchange of information. It should be noted that the development of strong criminal justice mechanisms to prevent terrorism and rehabilitate offenders was given comprehensive coverage during our deliberations.

- Third, on a regional action plan for the implementation of the Strategy in the region. We have also highlighted the need for the UN CTITF to partner with key regional organizations to develop a counter-terrorism regional action plan for the implementation of the various pillars of the Global Strategy. The strategy implementation process should include follow-up and monitoring mechanisms, effective mechanisms to engage with member states from the region, and initiatives to promote cross-regional engagement.

- And fourth, on recognizing and enhancing the role of civil society. In the achievement of our objectives, civil society is an essential complementary center of gravity that can facilitate and effectively realize Government policies and actions, as well as narrow the inter-cultural and religious gaps through education, dialogue and understanding. It is important that we deepen the involvement of civil society in promoting the implementation of the Strategy through regional meetings organized by UN CTITF and/or ICPAT and other regional organizations, including regional civil society bodies. Such meetings would particularly assist in exploring the development of regional initiatives that serve in countering the appeal of terrorism in the region. The role of the media, in this regard, is also of great value.

- In conclusion, I would like to offer thanks to our donors, Austria, Germany, Norway, Turkey, Switzerland and the United States, for making this workshop possible. Many thanks also to the event organizers, CTITF staff and Foreign Ministry officials for their hard work in managing the logistics despite the challenges. And last but not the least, our thanks to all of you – participants from across the region and beyond – for taking the time to come here and sharing your insights with us.

- With a note to remember the tragedies that this region has seen due to terrorism, and with a conviction that from the ashes of those tragedies there will rise a more resilient Eastern Africa that can fight the menace of terrorism more effectively, I thank you all and wish us all good luck in our common endeavors.