



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

**Opening Remarks by Mr. Alexandre Zouev, Acting Under-Secretary-General
United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

**Launch of the Regional Working Group on API/PNR for Member States of the League of Arab
States**

26 November 2025, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is a great pleasure to be here with you today to launch the regional working group on Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Records for Member States of the League of Arab States. At the outset, I would like to express my sincere thanks to our generous host, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre within the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism enjoys a long-standing and strong partnership with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In 2005, the Kingdom hosted the first International Counter-Terrorism Conference in Riyadh, where His Majesty King Abdullah, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, called for the creation of an international centre to counter terrorism. His Majesty's foresight eventually led to the establishment of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism- Centre in 2011, with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as its founding donor.

Since then, the Kingdom has remained one of the closest and most reliable partners of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, ensuring that counterterrorism remains- a priority of the international community. This partnership has enabled the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre to deliver valuable capacity-building assistance- to the efforts of Member States around the world to counter terrorism.

I am extremely pleased and encouraged that yesterday I signed with General Al-Howairini a cooperation agreement between the United Nations and the Presidency of State Security of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

This umbrella agreement will guide our continued partnership and, hopefully, help establish a presence of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism here in Riyadh, further strengthening our strategic partnership.

Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,

In a globalized world, people, information, and goods and service travel with ease – unfortunately, so do terrorists and serious criminals. To contain the threat they pose, we must remain alert, exchange information, collaborate, and take action to strengthen our individual and collective response capacities.

We have experienced in other regions of the world that establishing Regional Working Groups on Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Records are a step in the right direction, as they strengthen national capacities to detect and prevent the movement of terrorists and organized criminals.

By convening law enforcement officers and policymakers from regional neighboring countries, they facilitate the sharing of good practices, the harmonization of standards, and solutions to operational challenges. Therefore, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to you all for launching the Regional Working Group for members of the League of Arab States.

The United Nations is proud to be your partner in this initiative, which will facilitate new partnerships between passenger information units across the region.

I would like to underscore two policy elements critical for the success of the Working Group: First, data protection and privacy must remain central to the use of API and PNR systems. Respect for human rights, the rule of law, and fundamental freedoms is both a legal obligation and a strategic necessity. Second, capacity building is essential. Many Member States face challenges in developing the infrastructure, legal frameworks, and human resources needed to implement Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Records systems effectively.

The United Nations, through the Countering Terrorist Travel Programme, stands ready to provide tailored assistance. In this regard, I would like to acknowledge the excellent collaboration with the National Traveler Security Centre of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Together, we have produced tangible results, including the training of officials from Algeria, Iraq, Nigeria, and Yemen, who visited the National Traveler Security Centre to study and learn from its experience.

I am very pleased that our partnership is now being formalized through a three-year Arrangement on Cooperation, which will support direct capacity-building, and -the further deployment of the goTravel system.

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

To conclude, allow me to express my sincere gratitude to the Presidency of State Security Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its central role in organizing this workshop.

The Presidency's dedication, professionalism, and strategic foresight have been instrumental in bringing us together today. And thank you all for joining us for this important event today.

The launch of this Regional Working Group is an important step in our collective efforts to counter terrorism and enhance regional security.

It reflects the commitment of Member States of the League of Arab States to collaborate, share expertise, and build resilience against transnational threats.

I wish you a productive meeting, and I look forward to the outcomes of your discussions.

Shukran.