

Statement of Mr. Muhammad Rafiuddin Shah
Opening Session
UN Capacity-Building Workshop for Technical and Vocational Training Institutes in
Pakistan
Islamabad; 31 May – 04 June 2016

Chairperson, Prime Minister's Youth Programme, Ms. Leila Khan,
Acting Resident Coordinator, Ms. Lola Castro [tbc]
Distinguished representatives of the Government of Pakistan and the United Nations in
Pakistan,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of Director of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, Mr. Jehangir Khan, it is my honour to welcome you all to this United Nations Capacity-Building Workshop for Technical and Vocational Training Institutes in Pakistan. I thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme for collaborating so closely with the United Nations in organising this training event. We would have not gathered here were it not for the leadership and vision of Chairperson Leila Khan of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme. I would like to extend my personal thanks to her and her team for entrusting the UN with this important endeavor. I would also like to thank the UN Resident Coordinator and his Office and the ILO Pakistan Office for the contributions they have made over the last several months in ensuring a timely and qualitatively successful delivery of this workshop.

Just over one year ago, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre and the Prime Minister's Youth Programme jointly convened the UNCCT Needs Assessment Conference on Youth Engagement, Skills Development and Employment Facilitation in Pakistan. That Conference marked the first UNCCT activity in Pakistan, a country at the forefront in the struggle against terrorism. The Conference was also the first UNCCT initiative on youth engagement, which is a major priority in the global effort against terrorism and violent extremism, and especially relevant in Pakistan.

The UNCCT Needs Assessment Conference was an effort on the part of the United Nations to engage directly with all relevant actors in Pakistan, identify niche areas where we could deliver credible and tangible impact on the ground and develop programming that would be aimed at training and empowering the youth of this country. The Conference brought together more than 80 officials from key ministries, major national and provincial vocational training centres, civil society and UN agencies, funds and programmes to discuss priorities in the field of youth skills and employment. The outcome of the conference identified key national priorities for Pakistan on youth engagement and skills development, including capacity-building for technical and vocational training institutes. This UNCCT capacity-building training event therefore has its roots in consultations that were initiated one year ago and carried out since then with the Government of Pakistan and ILO.

The UNCCT, which is placed within the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force of the UN Department of Political Affairs, is a key capacity-building arm of the UN system providing assistance to countries on implementing all aspects of the United Nations

Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and relevant Security Council resolutions. Pillar I of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy specifically calls upon all Member States and the UN system “to pursue and reinforce development and social inclusion agendas at every level as goals in themselves, recognizing that success in this area, especially on youth unemployment, could reduce marginalization and the subsequent sense of victimization that propels extremism and the recruitment of terrorists.” Youth unemployment, therefore, is one of UNCCT’s major priorities in its overall initiatives and activities against terrorism and violent extremism.

Over the years, the international community has come to recognize the critical importance of youth in preventing the spread of violent extremism, stemming conflict, promoting economic development, strengthening community resilience and engendering peaceful, progressive and democratic societies. In 2015, through the adoption of Goal 8 and Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Member States have resolved to promote employment and decent work for all and promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. This entails the strengthening of relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacities at all levels, in particular in developing countries, for preventing violence and combating terrorism and crime. Earlier this year, the Secretary-General’s Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism noted the direct impact that lack of socioeconomic opportunities, combined with other factors, has on the rise of violent extremism. The Plan of Action also underscores the need to engage and support the world’s youth, in particular by supporting young people “both in gaining access to continued learning and vocational resources, and in incubating their entrepreneurial talent.”

A secure and prosperous youth means a secure and prosperous nation. This is especially true in countries like Pakistan, the world’s sixth most populous nation, where one-fifth of the population is of 15-24 years of age, while almost three quarters of the population is less than 35. Analysts sometimes characterize this ‘youth bulge’ in negative terms, noting the pressures the numbers create on schooling, job requirements and the general well-being of an ever larger population. The numbers are clearly large: in Pakistan, more than one million persons are entering the job market every year. This number will be rising rapidly in the coming years, which poses a serious challenge. But if Pakistan can take advantage of its ‘demographic dividend’ and provides its young people with the necessary schooling, training and aptitude development, these numbers can also provide a major opportunity for growth, dynamism, innovation, revitalization and long-term political and economic stability in Pakistan.

We at the UN are well aware of the important work that has been undertaken in Pakistan on youth and skills development, including under the aegis of the Prime Minister’s Youth Programme and other relevant ministries. Last year, the Government of Pakistan announced its first ever National TVET Policy 2015 and also unveiled a National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF). The Policy highlights the strategic priorities of Pakistan on vocational training in light of industry demands. At the federal and provincial levels, technical and vocational training institutions are running and building training programmes for people in need of job trainings. Pakistan’s NGO sector, one of the most dynamic anywhere, has made significant contributions as well.

This workshop is therefore aimed at complementing existing national efforts. Our aim is to provide a humble but important measure of support to Pakistan’s TVET institutions in

gaining exposure to international and national good practices on institute management with the ultimate aim to facilitate students of participating TVET institutions acquire necessary skills, earn a better livelihood, support their families and stay safe from criminality.

Over the course of the next five days, this training will delve deep into key areas of TVET management and administration, with a special focus on enhancing the expertise and understanding of principals, managers and senior teachers and equipping them with the tools to strengthen and revitalize their TVET schools. The eminent set of national and international trainers we have gathered will deliver guidance on assessing a TVET institution's organizational capacity and technical expertise, successful models on training delivery, liaison with industry and the private sector, fundraising, career guidance and student performance and achievement. Each day, we will spend some time in practicing the development of comprehensive institutional developmental plans that would allow trainees to acquire the skills sets on successful TVET management. We are confident that the set of expertise that the trainers bring with them would generate active discussions, and help TVET institutions grow stronger and more productive. We are also hopeful that this exercise would contribute to the excellent work that ILO and the Prime Minister's Youth Programme has undertaken over the years, and provide leverage to these two institutions as they expand their activities further.

This workshop is UNCCT's first capacity-building activity in Pakistan, but it is not the last. Pakistan is one of the most important supporters of the UN system, especially in bringing and keeping the peace in conflict-ridden societies, and the UN has always enjoyed a productive relationship with Pakistan. The strength and activity level of the UN Country Team reflects the scope of our partnership. We are therefore grateful to both the Government of Pakistan and the UN Country Team for their collaboration with the UNCCT on this important endeavor.

In conclusion, I would like to note that this initiative ultimately demonstrates our collective faith in the youth of Pakistan. We are confident that Pakistan's youth holds the key to the nation's success as whole. This workshop is only a small investment in enhancing the youth's marketable and economically relevant skills, but it is our hope that from this and other such initiatives, we would harvest a peaceful, confident and prosperous Pakistan. I look forward to an open discussion and a productive workshop.

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