



# UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

**Opening Statement by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov,  
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

**High-Level Meeting  
Towards a comprehensive implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-  
Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia**

**Ashgabat, 30 April 2018**

Your Excellency Deputy Head of the Cabinet of Ministers and  
Minister of Foreign Affairs Meredov,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to visit Turkmenistan for the first time as Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. I am grateful to the people and the Government of Turkmenistan for their warm welcome and hospitality.

Yesterday H.E. President of Turkmenistan Gurbanduly Berdymuhamedov received me to have a friendly and substantial talk confirming his intention to continue cooperation with the United Nations with regard to the neutral status of Turkmenistan. I am very thankful for this conversation.

I am particularly fortunate that my visit has coincided with Turkmen Horse Day. I had a wonderful day yesterday celebrating the Akhal-Teke horses, which are renowned for their endurance, speed and intelligence. They are rightly the national pride of this great country.

Let me express my gratitude to the Government of Turkmenistan for organizing this important High-Level Meeting and for hosting the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventative Diplomacy for Central Asia, which marks its eleventh anniversary later this year and is headed by an experienced politician and diplomat Ms. Natalia Gherman.

In November 2011, the four out five countries of this region adopted the Joint Plan of Action for the Implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia.

This was a landmark moment for this region and beyond.

It was the first regional initiative of its kind. It has since become an example to other regions about what can be achieved with collective action, leadership and political will.

Regional cooperation guided by the Joint Plan of Action has enabled you to make good progress on cross-border issues such as countering the financing of terrorism, enhancing border security, fostering dialogue with religious institutions and leaders, and highlighting the role of the media in addressing terrorism and violent extremism.

So today's meeting is both an opportunity to look back on what has been achieved and look ahead to how we can enhance our cooperation.

I am delighted that the countries of this region, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventative Diplomacy for Central Asia and my own Office will now work together on a new third phase, entitled "Towards a Comprehensive Implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia" - within the framework of the Joint Plan of Action.

This ambitious third phase will take counter-terrorism cooperation in this region to a new level.

It is broader in scope and consists of targeted capacity building activities in common priority areas identified by the Central Asian Member States and the United Nations at a High-

Level Dialogue on Counter-Terrorism that took place in June 2017 in Ashgabat, in presence of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. It embraces preventive measures against terrorist threats faced in the region. It also places emphasis on information and best practice sharing as well as the regional partnerships. Moreover, the new initiative will work to mainstream human rights into its implementation.

Excellencies,

We are now at a crucial point in the global fight against terrorism. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Al-Qaida and their affiliates continue to pose a significant and evolving threat around the world. The threat they pose is increasingly complex and transnational. No country is immune. No country has all the answers.

This region is well aware of the evolving threat from ISIL and its affiliates. An estimated 4,000 nationals from Central Asian countries may have travelled to Iraq and Syria to fight for ISIL.

We need to remain vigilant to prevent ISIL taking root in other countries and regions around the world, including Central Asia.

So it is vital that we strengthen international counter-terrorism cooperation at the global, regional and national levels, while respecting human rights and complying with international law.

The Joint Plan of Action for Central Asia clearly demonstrates the benefits of regions coming together as one and creating new partnerships to tackle the scourge of terrorism.

To reinforce the importance of international and regional cooperation to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism, Secretary-General Guterres will convene a High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States in New York on 28 and 29 June.

This important conference will focus on sharing information, preventing the misuse of new technologies, including cyberspace, addressing the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon, and the role of the United Nations in promoting international and regional cooperation.

I hope that the countries of this region will share examples of how you are working together through the Joint Plan of Action at this High-level Conference, so other regions can benefit from your experience.

Just ahead of the High-level Conference in June, Member States will undertake the sixth review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which I hope will culminate in the adoption of a strong consensus resolution setting a clear direction for our common efforts over the next two years.

Excellencies,

I look forward to listening to your priorities and learning about some of your good practices today. I can assure you of the full support of my office for our continuing joint efforts to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism in Central Asia.

Thank you.