Suggested Talking Points for Mr. Feltman
CTITF Retreat (16-17 December 2012)

Opening Session and Session I on the Sahel

Opening Session:

- I would like to extend a warm welcome to all CTITF entities present, and I thank you all for your participation.

- This is the first time that I am chairing a CTITF Inter-Agency Coordination Meeting. It is therefore my pleasure to meet you in person and discuss some important and interesting ideas with you as we carry the Task Force’s work forward.

- It is also an honour for me to welcome Nigeria’s National Security Advisor, His Excellency Colonel Sambo Dasuki, at this session of the meeting. I have been informed that last night during the dinner Mr. Dasuki shared some very useful insights with you on the terrorist threat that exists in Nigeria and the broader Sahel region.

- Over the last year, we have seen some important shifts on the terrorism landscape, both in terms of geography and strategy. Clearly, the Sahel is now a key focus area. The unrest in Mali and the separatism that has afflicted that country has taken a clearly dangerous tone as intolerance spreads in the broader region. In North Africa, militants are looking for successes in isolated pockets of Libya. The Arab Spring has also complicated the picture as the fighting spreads to Syria. Yemen continues to slide into greater instability, especially around Abyan province where the Government and militants struggle for control. Some countries continue to reel in a cycle of terrorist violence that is rooted in a variety of factors, including sectarianism and extremism.

- At the same time, we have also seen some improvements. We saw the Philippines reach an important agreement in their domestic political process which addresses some key local grievances. Colombia has opened negotiations with FARC rebels. In Somalia, we have seen measurable progress against Al-Shabaab forces through the concerted military and political action of the regional States. This is a noteworthy development, and one in which the UN and DPA has provided important political and the strategic support within Somalia.

- In evaluating these positive trajectories, we can see the value of the United Nations system, which has played a key role in filling gaps, offering guidance and building institutional capacity piece-by-piece against terrorism.

- In the counter-terrorism context, CTITF provides an important platform for collaborative activities of the United Nations system entities, INTERPOL and the
World Customs Organization (31 in total). It has a challenging task of "facilitating and promoting coordination and coherence in the implementation" of the UN Counter-Terrorism Strategy at the national, regional and global levels and "in providing assistance, upon request by Member States, especially in the area of capacity-building".

- During the last two years CTITF Office has succeeded to strengthen the political support for the CTITF work and increased its financial resources by about 14 times (from $750,000 to $14 million, including written commitments). CTITF projects, old and new, are almost fully funded. The acute staff shortage to support CTITF activities has been addressed (from 5 staff members in January 2011 to 14 now). The CTITF projects, including on promoting in-depth knowledge of the Strategy, countering the financing of terrorism, regional strategy work in Central Asia, activities in support of victims of terrorism, law enforcement capacity building, counter radicalization, misuse of internet and establishment of the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) are viewed positively by Member States.

- The third review of the Strategy was completed in June this year. Member States adopted an important resolution that for the first time recognized the importance of assisting victims of terrorism by overcoming the contentious legal divide over this important issue. The resolution also emphasized the growing need for national and regional counter-terrorism strategies, a call on which CTITF and CTED have worked constructively. The review resolution reinforced the conviction in the membership that the United Nations can play a positive, constructive and a much-needed role in countering terrorism, oftentimes more effectively than mere bilateral cooperation.

- The United Nations High-Level Meeting on Countering Nuclear Terrorism in September this year was also an important CTITF achievement carried in partnership with ODA, OLA, IAEA and UNODC. The High-Level Meeting included nearly 40 ministers, which serves as a testimony to the importance Member States attach to the topic, but also to the Task Force’s activities.

- Capacity-building is another key area where CTITF’s efforts are growing. In the coming months, two CTITF working groups – on human rights and on combating the financing of terrorism – will launch global capacity-building projects that will help countries, upon their requests, on human rights and anti-money laundering and counter-financing of terrorism matters.

- Since the last inter-agency meeting, the I-ACT initiative (Integrated Assistance for Countering Terrorism) has made good progress in Nigeria and Burkina Faso. It is now a functional and methodical framework. Its chief advantages, such as multi-stakeholder participation, integrated interventions, gap analysis, capacity-building, and field-based support and follow up are exactly what the need is in light of the challenges faced. We look forward to hear more about I-ACT from His Excellency Colonel Sambo Dasuki.
• The work that the Task Force entities do is extremely valuable in the long-term struggle against terrorism. From CTED’s works on implementing Security Council resolutions 1373 and 1624 to UNODC’s training activities on the ratification and implementation of the international conventions and on domestic legislation, the UN counter-terrorism architecture has been dynamic and it is making an impact. More broadly, the work of the 1267 Monitoring Team, OHCHR, UNESCO, INTERPOL, WCO, UNDP and several other specialized agencies and international partners is equally pertinent in helping States acquire the expertise and the capacity to address key shortcomings that terrorists like to exploit.

• Therefore, before we move to our focused discussion on the Sahel, I would like to set three key goals for the CTITF for the next year to take our collective counter-terrorism work forward. The purpose is to bring coherence to the United Nations counter-terrorism work and consolidate our collective efforts and Member States support for them:

1. One, over the years we have seen occasional duplication of similar work in some counter-terrorism areas. The tendency to invest in popular themes is natural, but it leads to wastage of precious resources and undermines the political support for the UN counter-terrorism work. On the basis of the General Assembly’s call to “avoid duplication” and “strengthen coordination and coherence” CTITF should play a more proactive role in identifying and reducing the overlaps. The lead entities of CTITF Working Groups and CTITF Office should pay special attention to this matter;

2. Two, we need to reorient our capacity building efforts in a way that they have lasting and trendsetting impact. I have noted that UN seldom gets sufficient resources to change the complete landscape. It should therefore carefully select its activities and promote the symbolism of its work. I would also encourage more focus on capacity building “training” and “training of the trainers”; and

3. Three, CTITF Office should develop a reliable system to measure the impact of its projects. This effort should be based on the feedback received from project participants and through implementation analysis, and should be an integral part of each project. This will help build institutional legacy of CTITF activities and strengthen Member State support for our work.

• Before I close my opening remarks I would like underscore the Secretary-General’s enduring support for the efficient implementation of the United Nations counter-terrorism agenda. I also assure you of my full support for the implementation the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force work and request your continued commitment to CTITF collaborative work.