I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2617 (2021), the Security Council directs CTED to enhance sharing of its findings with Member States and relevant counterterrorism partners, as appropriate and in consultation with the CTC, through inter alia open briefings. Organizing an open briefing of the Counter-Terrorism Committee on Central Asia is envisaged in the Committee’s approved annual list of thematic and regional briefings for 2022.

2. In 2018, the Committee held an open briefing on Central Asia, which focused on the counter-terrorism situation in the region, the progress achieved by the five States, and the remaining challenges and priorities. It also took stock of the efforts of Central Asian States (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) to strengthen their overall counter-terrorism capacities and identified priority areas of focus for future initiatives of the Committee and CTED in the region.

II. Background

3. The updated version of the Global Implementation Survey of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and other relevant resolutions by Member States updated by Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate in 2021, notes that although there have been a relatively limited number of terrorism-related attacks or incidents in Central Asia in recent years, the terrorist threat to the region should not be underestimated. Thousands of individuals from Central Asia travelled to the conflict zones of the Middle East to join the ranks of terrorist groups, where they acquired the skills necessary to carry out terrorist attacks, and to incite and recruit others to commit terrorist acts.

4. Central Asia continues to face significant security challenges, including because of its immediate proximity to regions marked by active terrorist activity, illicit drugs and arms trafficking, vulnerability to recruitment and radicalization to terrorism, and risks associated with widespread reliance on alternative money remittances. Border protection and management in Central Asia continues to be hampered by insufficient resources, poor infrastructure difficult terrain, and unresolved disputes, which also undermine regional and international cooperation. At the same time, the fifteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat issued in July 2022, underlines that notable progress has been made in Central Asia in strengthening international and regional counter-terrorism cooperation and coordination. For example, in October 2022, Tajikistan will host, with UNOCT and OSCE, the
International High-Level Conference on “International and Regional Border Security and Management Cooperation to Counter Terrorism and Prevent the Movement of Terrorists”.

5. As reflected in, inter alia, the 2019 Dushanbe Declaration, the States of the region are committed to countering terrorism and its financing through organized crime and have continued to deepen their understanding of the links and synergies between efforts to counter terrorism financing and those to counter illicit drug trafficking and organized crime, such as illicit trade in natural resources, cultural property, and weapons, as well as trafficking in human beings. In June 2022, on the margins of the plenary meeting of the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism (EAG) Central Asian States exchanged views, experience and best practices on current trends and challenges in countering money-laundering and financing of terrorism.

6. Developments in neighbouring Afghanistan have raised global concerns about the possibility of it becoming a safe haven for Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups with ties to the Central Asian region and beyond. According to the 1267/1988 Sanctions Committee’s Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, ISIL-Khorasan Province (ISIL-K) has increased its presence in northern and eastern Afghanistan and the terrorist group includes fighters from Central Asia, who have reportedly increased activities in the north (see S/2022/547). There are also concerns that Afghanistan could become a potential magnet for terrorists from other regions to travel to the country. The Central Asian foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) remaining in Afghanistan have already embraced the Taliban takeover. Security Council-listed terrorist groups with links to Central Asia are reported to be experiencing greater freedom of movement in Afghanistan. The increase of the ISIL-K activity in neighboring Afghanistan also presents risks of a spill-over of violence into Central Asia. ISIL-K’s propaganda is actively targeting the growing humanitarian cooperation between Tashkent and Kabul.

III. Objectives

7. The proposed open briefing would provide an opportunity to re-evaluate the evolution of the terrorist threat to the region and to update Committee members regarding the measures taken by the Member States of Central Asia to counter terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, considering the current threat level.

8. Taking into account the international and regional cooperation mechanisms in place among the States of the region, especially to support Member States in the region, the open briefing would also provide an opportunity to map these efforts and strengthen collaboration among all these partners; in particular the United Nations bodies and relevant international and regional organizations, and other relevant partners, including members of civil society.

9. It is expected that the open briefing will enable entities and organizations which are currently providing and/or planning to provide counter-terrorism technical assistance in the region
to align their respective projects, as appropriate, with the threats and challenges identified by Member States in the region and in light of the relevant United Nations resolutions, so that they are implemented in a coordinated manner, based on a results-driven and risk-based approach.

IV. Format

10. The open briefing will take place at United Nations Headquarters with the possibility of remote participation by Government representatives, regional organizations, academic experts and civil society actors from Central Asia.

The open briefing will be structured into three panels respectively focusing on:

(i) the evolving terrorism threat in the sub-region and its reflection in the national strategies for countering terrorism recently adopted or currently under development in Member States;
(ii) Efforts taken by Central Asian States at the national and regional levels in response to terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism;
(iii) Activities of the United Nations and other international and regional organizations in the area of providing technical assistance to Central Asian states on countering terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

Panelists will include:

- Government representatives from Member States in Central Asia;
- Experts from CTED and other United Nations entities, including the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC);
- Regional organizations active in Central Asia;
- Academic experts and civil society actors from Central Asia.

V. Communications

11. The open briefing will be promoted through the appropriate channels. A press release may be issued following the open briefing.

12. The agenda and documentation will be posted on the Counter-Terrorism Committee’s website (http://www.un.org/securitycouncil/cte/).