



High-Level UN-Central Asian Dialogue on Implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia

13 June 2017

Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

Concept Note

I. Rationale and background

The United Nations, in cooperation with the Government of Turkmenistan, will convene a “High Level UN-Central Asian Dialogue on Implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia,” in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on 13 June 2017. The High-Level UN-Central Asia Dialogue will be chaired by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Antonio Guterres.

The purpose of this meeting will be to review progress on the implementation of the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) in Central Asia, which is the first of its kind on regional implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/60/288). The meeting will also define future strategic priorities for the implementation of the JPOA.

This event comes at the conclusion of the second phase of the project “*Towards the Implementation of the Joint Plan of Action for the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia*,” which is being jointly implemented by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) of the Counter Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) Office and the United Nations Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA).

The project, funded by the European Union (EU) and Norway, has consisted of several phases:

1. The first phase (2010-2011) was devoted to the preparation of the JPOA, which was adopted at a high level meeting in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan on November 2011.
2. The second phase (2013-June 2017) has supported Central Asian States to implement the JPOA through a series of capacity-building workshops on its different thematic pillars.
3. Further to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 70/291 of 1 July 2016, CTITF-UNCCT and UNRCCA will propose elements for a third phase of the project, during the High Level UN-Central Asian Dialogue.

Since its adoption in November 2011, the JPoA has made some important contributions towards strengthening regional counter-terrorism efforts in Central Asia. This includes providing an important platform for policymakers and practitioners to share their experiences and perspectives on specific thematic areas, as well as to draw on the expertise of various CTITF entities.

This event comes at an opportune time to showcase the JPoA as a successful example of a preventive approach to countering terrorism in Central Asia. It will also be an opportunity for Central Asian States to take stock of their achievements and challenges in implementing the JPoA, as well as deliberate on how to enhance its implementation, in light of the evolving terrorist threats in the region, including the situation in Afghanistan.

The proximity of Central Asian States to countries affected by prolonged and unresolved conflicts has heightened the acute and growing threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) to the region, including returnees keen to radicalize others into violent extremism. The High-Level Dialogue will therefore give political impetus to the need for Central Asian States to adopt a mutually reinforcing and coordinated strategic approach to address terrorism and the underlying conditions conducive to it, as outlined in the United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism and in the context of the balanced implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

II. Meeting Organization

Objectives:

The objectives of the High-Level Dialogue are the following:

- To take stock of the achievements and challenges of Central Asian States in implementing the JPoA, and by extension the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia (A/RES/60/288);
- To review progress under the first and second phases of the joint UNCCT-UNRCCA project *“Towards the Implementation of the Joint Plan of Action for the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia;*
- To update Central Asian States on the outcomes of the Fifth Review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/70/291); reinforce the importance of an integrated and balanced approach to the implementation of all four pillars of the Global Strategy; and brief Central Asian Member States on the Secretary-General’s initiative to restructure the United Nations counter-terrorism architecture by establishing a new Office of Counter-Terrorism;
- To familiarize Central Asian States with the “All-of-UN” approach in supporting Member States to implement the recommendations of the United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/RES/70/674), which gives content to the measures aimed at addressing the conditions conducive to terrorism under Pillars I and IV of the Global Strategy;

- To provide Ministers from Central Asian States with a platform to present their ongoing work in countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism, including best practices and lessons learned;
- To prioritize the needs of Central Asian States in light of the evolving threats pertaining to terrorism and violent extremism in the region, including in the area of capacity-building;
- To identify opportunities to further strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and Central Asian States with the aim of effectively addressing terrorism at the regional and national level, including where it is fueled by violent extremism; and
- To discuss the main elements of the proposed third and final phase of the joint UNCCT-UNRCCA project *“Towards the Implementation of the Joint Plan of Action for the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia.”*

Format:

The High-Level Dialogue will be opened and chaired by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

It will consist of a high-level thematic session and a working dinner:

- After the Secretary General’s key note speech, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs from each of the five Central Asian States will present their respective country’s challenges in countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism. They will also have an opportunity to review their respective country’s achievements and challenges in implementing the JPoA. This will be followed by a focus on the support of the United Nations to the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/60/288) and of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. It will include a discussion on the first and second phase of the joint UNCCT-UNRCCA project *“Towards the Implementation of the Joint Plan of Action for the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia,”* as well as a on possible elements of a third and final phase of this joint initiative.
- **The Secretary General of the United Nations and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Central Asia will then host a dinner for Central Asia States,** which will be devoted to informal discussions on key challenges faced by the region, including those related to the management of common natural resources and ways in which to strengthen regional cooperation, including with the support of United Nations/UNRCCA.

Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in English and Russian.

Participants:

The United Nations and the Government of Turkmenistan will invite Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to participate at the High-Level Dialogue at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, accompanied by the Head(s) of counter-terrorism agencies structures and/or national security organs.

CTITF-UNCCT will bear the cost of travel of up to three (3) delegates per Member State.

The EU, which is the main donor of the joint UNCCT-UNRCCA project, and Afghanistan will also participate in the meeting as observers.

Expected Outcomes:

The High-Level Dialogue is expected to bring greater visibility to the evolving terrorist and violent extremist threats and challenges affecting the diverse region of Central Asia, as well as highlight the JPoA's successful contribution to countering terrorism in the region.

It is also expected that each of the five Central Asian States will use this occasion to re-commit to the implementation of the JPoA, and by extension the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

It is further expected that Central Asian States will identify opportunities to further strengthen their cooperation, as well as agree on the way forward with regard to the specific capacity-building initiatives that CTITF-UNCCT and UNRCCA intend to pursue in the region, through a third and final phase of the joint UNCCT-UNRCCA project "*Towards the Implementation of the Joint Plan of Action for the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia.*"

A declaration will be circulated in advance and the adoption of this document is foreseen during the event.