Opening remarks by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)

High–Level Briefing to Member States on the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism's Programmes and Projects in Central Asia: Achievements and Way Forward

> Conference Room 3, UN Headquarters 23 January 2024

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to this joint briefing organized by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, and the United Nations Counter-

For more than a decade, Central Asian Member States have shown their common commitment in the implementation of the Gobal Counter-Terrorism Strategy, in partnership with the United Nations and other regional and international organizations.

In this context, since 2010, UNOCT and UNROCA have worked with Member States of the Central Asian region to implement the Joint Plan of Action to advance the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, in alignment with the needs identified by CTED.

The Joint Plan of Action continues to serve as a pioneering initiative and a model for other regions, demonstrating to the world how to address terrorism and violent extremism through regional and international cooperation and national initiatives.

In response to the priority areas of the Joint Plan of Action, my Office is implementing fifteen thematic programmes in Central Asia across all four pillars of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. These activities are offered in collaboration with UNRCCA, CTED and other partners of the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, including on important issues such as:

Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Foreign Terrorist Fighters and their family members Small Arms and Light Weapons Cybersecurity and New Technologies Countering the Financing of Terrorism Countering Terrorist Travel through the use of API and PNR; and Border Security and Management

As a result of this comprehensive and strategic engagement, my Office has already addressed, to various degrees, 36 of the 78 technical assistance recommendations for Central Asian Member States shared since 2019 by CTED which are applicable to UNOCT programmes and projects.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

While this progress is noteworthy, a lot more needs to be done. The challenging development in the region reminds us that terrorism and violent extremism poses a grave threat to regional and international peace and security.

The continued presence and activities of terrorist groups remain a concern beyond Afghanistan<sup>1</sup>.

In this regard, the recently published Fourteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2665 (2022), concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace stability and security of Afghanistan [S'2023/370], highlighted that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan continues to pose a significant threat within Afghanistan, and Member States are concerned about its potential to develop external operations capability and to project a threat into the region and beyond<sup>2</sup>.

To address these challenges, Central Asian Member states have called for more coordinated and collaborative efforts to contribute to the stabilization of Afghanistan, as well as to counter the threat of terrorism and violent extremism in the wider region.

Responding to these concerns, the Counter Terrorism Early Warning Network for Central Asia (EWN) was launched in 2022 as a collaborative effort between UNOCT and UNROCA. Representatives from all five Central Asian States, UN agencies, international and regional organizations, as well as independent experts have joined the Network, aimed to bolster regional cooperation in sharing vital information related to security challenges and peacebuilding efforts.

In light of the evolving global and regional security landscape, Member States have expressed keen interest in integrating elements of artificial intelligence, new technologies, and community engagement into the EWN's framework to ensure its effectiveness in addressing emerging security threats.

## Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

To fully realize the potential of the EWN and other ongoing UNOCT initiatives in Central Asia, we need strong donor engagement, and financial and in-kind support from across the international community.