

Regional Conference on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)

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Speech by SRSg Draganov (on behalf of the UN)

Title: The UN efforts to prevent violent extremism

Excellencies, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to express a word of gratitude to the Kazakh authorities for hosting this important gathering in Astana. The Government of Kazakhstan has long been a strong partner in the global effort to combat and prevent violent extremism and that is highly appreciated by the United Nations. I recently accompanied the SG here in Astana when he attended the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, a visionary initiative by President Nazarbayev to promote much needed dialogue between religious and political leaders from around the world. Today's event is very much in line with the same approach of enhancing understanding and building a culture of cooperation and mutual respect.

It is important for the international community to recognize that violent extremism is not only to be *combated*, but it also can be *prevented*. I am confident that the contributions from this Regional Conference will allow us to speak as one against violent extremism and terrorism.

The UN is uniquely placed to lead efforts to prevent violent extremism, based on ongoing initiatives and the comprehensive framework that the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy offers for addressing the conditions leading to the spread of terrorism. UN Security Council Resolution 2178 on its part underlines the role of communities in countering violent extremism.

In this context, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon will present a United Nations Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism at the forthcoming 70th session of the General Assembly. This Plan will highlight the negative impact of violent extremism on all four pillars of the United Nations work, namely peace and security, sustainable development, human rights and humanitarian actions. He will

outline how the UN system can best respond in each of these areas, in support of Members States' efforts to prevent terrorism.

Sending a strong message that 'violent extremism *has never been, is not at present, nor will ever be* an acceptable means to engage the international community is important. And even more importantly, such a message should be backed by commitments and actions.

In today's world, the urgency of preventing violent extremism is readily apparent. Violent extremist ideology like the one espoused by Daesh represents a core threat to international peace and security, including in the Central and South Asian regions'. To this end, the UN is working relentlessly with world leaders to propagate the countering message of tolerance, solidarity and reconciliation.

Last April, the President of the UN General Assembly held an inter-faith High-Level Thematic Debate, focused on Promoting Tolerance and Reconciliation; not the Security Council followed up with a meeting focused on the Role of Youth in Countering Violent Extremism and in Promoting Peace. These momentous events reaffirmed that "a whole of society" approach is needed to address violent extremism.

We need to take a hard look at the root causes of the phenomenon and acknowledge that no small amount of young men and women are drawn towards organizations that espouse violent extremism. They are attracted to such radical organizations due to unfulfilled socio-psychological needs. A society's inability to provide meaningful engagement and individual fulfillment opportunities creates gaps in young people's lives that violent-ideology organizations seek to fill and exploit.

An integral part of this "whole of society" approach, as the Secretary General noted during February's summit in Washington, is the acknowledgement that "preventing violent extremism and promoting human rights go hand-in-hand." Without meaningful recognition and implementation of core human rights, states aiming to protect their people from extremism are at risk of pushing the youth into the arms of violent predatory groups, which offer compelling competing narratives.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me take this opportunity to highlight the efforts that the UN has supported in crafting a comprehensive response to preventing violent extremism in Central Asia. Most recently, under Phase II of the regional project to implement the Joint Plan of Action for Central Asia under the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the UN Counter Terrorism Implementation task Force and UNRCCA have completed the following activities.

In November 2013, we organized an event in Almaty that focused on fostering dialogue and understanding among religious leaders, institutions, government officials and civil society. Discussions centered on strengthening cooperation in countering extremism, and promoting better understanding of the theory and practice of conflict resolution.

Similarly, in July 2014, we organized an event in Bishkek to enhance the capacity of media and government institutions in Central Asia to counter terrorist narratives. Activities within this regional project were designed to support the implementation of a Joint plan of Action for Central Asia adopted by countries in the region back in 2011. Let me once again underline the importance of this regional document, the first of its kind, and encourage central Asian states to further take ownership and implement it, exploiting the opportunities it provides for a deeper regional cooperation on a range of counter terrorism issues.

Most recently, in May of this year, and in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the CTITF, UNRCCA organized the workshop “Sharing of Experiences on Implementing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia for the Heart of Asia Countries”. The workshop took place in Dushanbe and explored possible areas of cooperation and cross-fertilization between the Joint Plan of Action (JPoA) in Central Asia and the dedicated Counter Terrorism Confidence Building Measure of the Istanbul Process. We believe that building such bridges can bring about positive outcomes.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

To effectively prevent radicalization and violent extremism, and to enhance the fight against extremist propaganda, it is essential that we not only foster regional and international cooperation, but also promote dialogue with religious organizations, youth, families, marginalized community members, local governments. We need more inclusive societies.

Central Asia is increasingly becoming a region targeted by the recruiters of foreign terrorist groups: as the conflicts in Iraq and Syria continue, serious vulnerabilities emerge. In particular, a number of active terrorist organizations in the region, including in Afghanistan and its neighbors have been listed by the Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee. In this context, the theme of preventing violent extremism acquires a particular resonance in Central Asia.

Dear Colleagues, Friends:

The first pillar of the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy helps envision a future free of violent extremism. It is essential to remember that none of the four pillars of the strategy stand alone: each is integral to the continued success of the others.

Likewise, countries represented here today rely on each other and on the greater global community to implement the four pillars of the strategy not only at home, but throughout the whole region, and across the world.

On behalf of the UN, let me ask you all to work towards a more secure, just and humane world for all: for us, for the younger people who depend on us, and for the generations yet to come.

I look forward to our continued collaboration. Preventing violent extremism by no means a simple task, is one we cannot afford to neglect.

Thank you.