



**Towards the Implementation of the Joint Plan of Action for the  
United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia  
Engaging the Media in Countering Terrorism in Central Asia  
July 9-11<sup>th</sup>, 2014  
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan  
Summary Report<sup>1</sup>**

***Disclaimer***

**This report summarizes discussions by participants of the Bishkek Workshop, and in no way represents the views or analysis of either UNRCCA, CTITF or any other participating organization. Examples mentioned in the report were provided by participants during their discussions or speeches.**

In the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) for the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism (CT) Strategy in Central Asia adopted in November 2011, Central Asian countries identified the need for support “to boost the capacity of the media with knowledge, new tools and technologies to help them engage positively and proactively in the fight against terrorism, including in developing effective counter narratives and counter incitement, launching public debates on counter-terrorism policies, highlighting the plight of victims and compliance with international counter-terrorism instruments.” To this end, they encouraged “CTITF entities and regional organizations to organize a public conference for civil society, the media and research institutions in Central Asia, as well as regional training for the media on international legal instruments, conventions and standards in the fight against terrorism.”

These commitments were the basis of a regional workshop organized on July 9-11<sup>th</sup> 2014 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, as part of Phase II of the CTITF and UNRCCA project “Towards a Comprehensive Implementation of the Joint Plan of Action for Central Asia Under the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2013-2016).”

**Objectives, participants, modality**

The objectives of the regional workshop were:

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- To raise awareness of the media's role in counter-terrorism and to build the skills of representatives of Central Asian media and government communications offices in engaging in the fight against terrorism, including in developing effective counter narratives and counter incitement, and
- To raise awareness among representatives of the media and government communications offices about the importance of cooperation between government and media/civil society organizations in countering the appeal of terrorism and practical and ethical means for such cooperation.

A total of 48 people participated in the workshop, including:

- *From CA countries:* representatives from the security establishments, state press or communication bodies and members of the media: 11 from host country Kyrgyzstan: 4 from Kazakhstan, 5 from Tajikistan, and 2 representing international press agencies in Turkmenistan.
- *From observer countries:* 2 journalists from Afghanistan, 1 representative of the embassy of the United States, 1 from the Russian Embassy, and 1 Regional Conflict Advisor from the British Embassy.
- *From regional organizations:* representatives from CIS, NATO, OSCE (Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media) and from the Regional Counter Terrorism Structure of (RCTS) of the SCO.
- *From international organizations:* representatives of OHCHR, UNDP, UN RC, UN DPI, UN WOMEN, ISESCO and the host organization UNRCCA.
- Experts/trainers from the United Kingdom and Moldova.

The 2.5 days workshop emphasized interaction and discussion between representatives of the media and government (including security) officials, with additional expert input by regional and international organizations. It also provided an opportunity for cross-regional experience sharing with the presence of two experienced Afghan journalists.

It consisted of three parts:

- For the first part, country representatives **shared relevant experiences**, challenges and good practices in engaging the media in the fight against terrorism. Some also provided an update on the implementation of the JPoA in their country.
- The second part was devoted to **dialogue and exchanging views and practices** on a selection of themes, with a view to elaborating a set of concrete recommendations. These included: 1) Media strategies used by terrorists; 2) Choices and responsibilities of the media; 3) Political and legal responses and 4) Options for cooperation.
- The third part included a formal **skills building** training, delivered by Simon Haselock of Albany Associates, with focus on the following topics:
  - Recognizing conditions conducive to terrorism and radical narratives
  - Developing counter narratives
  - Reporting on victims
  - Preparing for and dealing with the stress and trauma of reporting on terrorism
  - International legal instruments and standards in the fight against terrorism
    - Elements for a Code of Conduct for the media on reporting on terrorism and terrorist acts.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

After discussing the specific motivations and means that terrorists make use of the media for their narratives, recruitment and propaganda purposes, participants concluded that sustained cooperation was necessary between the governments (including security officials) of the region and representatives of the media in order to counter this usage. This relationship however should be voluntary and not compromise the principles of a free and objective media, since this would undermine its credibility and could be counterproductive.

Specific means of this cooperation could include:

- The establishment of specific mechanisms in advance, before crisis hits,
- Continuous dialogue, round tables, including with leaders,
- Creation of special Joint Commissions, etc..
- Drawing up Action Plans and guidelines.

Areas that require additional efforts:

Knowledge, information and understanding

- Understanding the root causes of extremism, radicalization and terrorism.
- Media to disseminate credible analytical reports in addition to the news.
- Governments should allow for critical media coverage of important and sensitive issues analysing the root causes for extremism, radicalization and terrorism.
- Training for the media on CT laws, tactics, strategies of the Government.
- Training for government officials on how to cooperate with the media.
- Pro-active information policies and expanded presence of the Governments on the net and the creation of public information sites, resource centres and websites for journalists.
- The development of joint knowledge base, databases etc.

Improving legislation and regulation policies

- Promote the unification and harmonization of existing instruments;
- Clarifying legal provisions about the access to information rights regarding the issue of terrorism.
- Developing guidelines and instructions for government press services in order to clarify tasks and responsibilities and ensure the implementation of a pro-active and timely (crisis-) information policy.

New bodies

- Operative Press centers need to multiply and be made user friendly.
- Governments to consider organizing press centers in case of attacks.
- Resources/information centres at the subnational level.
- Establishment of independent and efficient media regulatory and self-regulatory bodies.

Capacity building and specialization

- Creation of a pool of specialized journalists working on peace and security.
- Facilitation of post-graduation education of journalists through grants.
- Training for representatives of law enforcement structures.
- Enhanced capacity for press officers of state institutions.
- Establishment of contests, prizes, certificates etc. to encourage journalists' preventive

reporting on terrorism issues.

- Enhancing the professional standards of journalists in general for a better coverage of issues related to security and terrorism.

*Cross regional cooperation*

- More interaction and experience sharing between CA countries and journalists and officials from regions with experience.

*Support from international and regional organizations*

- Funding new bodies and structures for cooperation, supporting specialized training, advising on legislative support, facilitating dialogue and coordination; acting as mediators; facilitating the analysis of information on sources of radicalization, provision of special awards, sponsoring special portals dealing with terrorism etc..

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Setting the Scene

Working in environments prone to terrorism, radicalization and conflicts present specific challenges for not only security officials but also representatives of the media, whether independent or state-run. Such environments are ripe with confusion and violence, but at the same time, they forge linkages, cooperation and a rethink of existing strategies. As a participant mentioned, it is time when narratives are contested and they each compete together.

Participants discussed the different and often competing perspectives of terrorists, governments and journalists and how each use the mass media for their own ends. Terrorists seek publicity for their acts in order to gain attention, respect or even sympathy or legitimacy for their ideology. Government authorities need the media to depict terrorists as criminals and seek cooperation and support from the public for their actions against them. Journalists seek to serve public interests by keeping people informed, but also would like to gain advantage over other media outlets in being the first to break stories or the ones able to provide the most dramatic coverage of terrorist acts. Participants argued that in such a tense environment of interests and narratives, the challenge is how to explore cooperation between the media and the government in a way that ensures that counter terrorism efforts do not erode the freedom of the press. The task at hand is to strike the right balance between ensuring the principles of freedom of media and guarantees for free public access to information on the one hand, and, on the other hand, curbing the use of media for terrorist propaganda.

### Why and how and terrorists use the media

Participants expressed concerns about the growing use of narratives that appeal to the emotions of young people who idealize the breakdown of frontiers, freedom and heroism. Terrorists in Central Asia, as elsewhere, use the media, especially social media for the following purposes:

- For propaganda, recruitment, incitement, radicalization, fundraising, training, planning and information gathering.
- To garner support, publicity, recognition, and legitimacy for their cause.
- To conduct recruitment and propaganda through the Internet, including *Daavat* (invitation) to violent extremism and terrorism. Examples were provided from Kazakhstan when in October 2013 local media outlets broadcasted a video posted on the Internet by the Mujahidin of Kazakhstan in Syria. It was perceived by some as an unintended propaganda of jihadist ideology.
- To spread fear, panic and scare their enemies, and create damage to their opponents such as scaring away investments, tourism etc..

In terms of how terrorists tend to use the media, participants noted the following strategies:

- Using social media to spread their narrative and conduct recruitment. Participants noted the widespread disinformation and narrative on ethnic and religious intolerance in the Internet in the region created by people with fake accounts. A number of terrorist organizations have their own websites where they post propaganda, training videos, etc.. They make heavy use of online blogs to spread their ideas and recruit, including for fighting in international wars. Some of the Jihadi/terrorist groups are now media savvy and have media wings: The Az-Zahir Baibars Brigades claimed

responsibility for the Atyrau bombings on November 1, 2011 in Kazakhstan, through Jund al-Khilafa's media wing, Minbar Media. The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) also has its media wing. Groups such as the Ansar Din, the Jund al-Khilafah and others use online media to recruit and carry out propaganda.

- The direct use of the media also involves beaming propaganda through the radio, distributing video and audiocassettes, and sending messages through mobile phones. The Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT) regularly disseminates pamphlets and digital media that promotes its ideology. Extremists also create short compelling video and clips to be distributed by mobile phones. Those who get radicalized often use the audio clip as their ringtone.
- Participants noted that detailed information on how to build bombs, IEDs etc. are widely available on the Internet.
- Indirect use includes courting specific members of the press, funding broadcasts, or, simply using modern media strategies in particular the news value of violent attacks to attract mainstream media attention and coverage with the intent to raise their public profile.
- Participants argued that a full blockage of social media and websites is problematic and ineffective. If sites are closed, they would simply move to other sites, making it harder to trace and monitor their activities.

### **Motivations and methods of covering terrorism by the media**

Participants argued that in special circumstances, such as during conflicts or when covering terrorism or radicalization, the media can play both a positive constructive role and a negative one. Some participants urged the media to play a credible, third party role in the conflict between the state and terrorists. Some participants said the media should report for public interest and avoid to become used in the conflict.

The media, argued participants, have specific interests. Among them,

- To get attention and resources, to find audiences and clients which then translate into additional attention and resources, i.e. profit.
- In a highly competitive environment, journalists are under pressure to break a story, to be the first to report a news item, etc. a pressure that sometimes leads them to make hasty decisions.
- In order to gain attention, journalists also seek dramatic stories that make them visible and give them an added advantage on the market.
- These interests increase when the media operates as a private entity requiring to raise its own revenues from the public.
- State controlled media on the other hand are often more hesitant to report on sensitive topics related to terrorism or violent attacks, which leaves room for the terrorists to push their own narratives.

But the media also has a responsibility to inform, to help shape minds, and to defend and serve public interests. In order to be able to fulfil these responsibilities, participants argued for specific preconditions:

- The media has to be free in order to be credible. If it is seen as a mere mouthpiece of an institution, the public would withhold its trust.
- It has to be objective, give different viewpoints, provide accurate information and not disseminate propaganda in order to be credible and trustworthy. Journalists should act responsible, avoid a lurid reporting and not exaggerate events.

- It also has to be impartial: That includes not giving terrorists a tribune, but also refraining from judging them or providing so-called expert analysis on the spot without full accurate information. One participant, with experience from Afghanistan, mentioned that journalists need to give interviews to so-called terrorists but they should also challenge their views and ideologies and provide alternative opinions through other informers and make the public aware of the debates, help them form informed opinions on what to follow and what to reject.
- The media has to be professional, in terms of cross-checking for facts, providing accurate information, and being carefully not to propagate false information, and/or mainstream views because they are easy access or fashionable.
- It has to have or build capacity: There are too few journalists in the region with a specialization to cover conflicts, radicalization, extremism, terrorism etc. It is important for the media to seek and build more capacity.
- The media has to be well informed of all international commitments as well as relevant national laws, etc. It should be knowledgeable about which organizations are on banned.
- Overall, participants mentioned that the media community should develop and abide by professional ethics and think about creating responsible self-regulatory bodies.

The fulfilment of these responsibilities and pre-conditions is not without its fair share of difficulties. In Central Asia, participants argued that the challenges are both endogenous to the profession as well as exogenous and circumstantial:

- Journalists are often caught between the imperatives of sensation, information and national security. They have to strike the right balance between the public's right to know and the State's efficient fight against terrorism. The problem, as some participants argued, is the lack of precise definition of what constitutes extremism at the national and international levels, leading to cases when journalists have been blamed for helping extremists in the region following information gathering or reporting on terrorist groups. Journalists are therefore often avoiding the topics terrorism and extremism, because there are often different perceptions by authorities about the line between objective reporting in public interest and "promoting" extremist ideology. The example of Tajikistan was raised when a BBC journalist was arrested and sentenced for not reporting his contact with a member of Hizb-ut-Tahrir which is prohibited in CA, but not in another countries. In Kazakhstan, extremism has a broad definition in practice, and a magazine currently faces a trial because Hitler has been described in one article as not a fascist but a national socialist.
- Within the region, the media is still largely focused on providing news and has not developed enough its capacity to provide accurate analysis of root causes, roles etc. A Study commissioned by the NGO International Media Support in 2008 showed that in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, most cases of political extremism and terrorism were only covered when incidents occurred, and that the source of the information mostly came from official statements. There are almost no sound local analytical reports on environments conducive to terrorism and extremism in Central Asia or if there are, they are very weak
- Journalists do not have enough information and specialization on terrorism and there is a lack of reliable and easily accessible information and resources. Two problems are posed: One is the lack of cooperation by Government institutions to provide access to information on the ground that this would violate their national security. The other problem is that there is not enough investment into training media professionals on

demanding issues such as extremism. Journalists are not aware of relevant laws and legal norms regulating their work in the field of fight against terrorism and extremism. Legal provisions also often remain vague about rights and responsibilities of journalists working on this topic and can be broadly interpreted which leads to legal insecurity.

- For cooperation to work ideally there should also be unity of journalists about professional and ethical standards that are agreed on within their community. A challenge in this regards exists with the rise of new media (such as social media) whose content is generated by various communities of users and amateurs and therefore not sticking to journalistic ethical / professional standards.
- Media outlets do not have enough resources to be able to cover everything. Dedicated Internet portals, archives, platforms for exchanges among experts and similar resources cannot exist without regular funding, which is missing in the region.
- Media representatives and journalists living at the sub-national level have even less access to information than those covering events from large cities and capitals. As such, they have to rely on sketchy information and evidence and second hand sources.
- Safety also matters. Journalists need to be safe, protected from threats, assaults, murder and retaliation by terrorists. Fear of threats and real threats could prevent objective coverage. In Kyrgyzstan, during the Batken events of 1999-2000, the IMU called Jihad against the newspaper Slovo Kyrgyzstana and its reporters after local journalists became active in disseminating information about the events.
- Social media, such as Facebook can also support the fight against terrorism, when users condemn terrorists, mobilize against them, demand the government take measures. They can also use social media to honour victims, those killed by insurgent.
- One of the effective ways to leverage terrorist narratives is to report on debates, conflicts and splits within terrorist organizations and sympathizers to expose contradictions and the lack of consent on their goals and methods.
- Special care is necessary when reporting on victims. The stories should be informed by ethical deliberations and respect for the victims and their families. Children should be protected from cruel displays of violence. Privacy is also very important, identity of victims should not be compromised, since they can have severe consequences for the family
- Journalists should also try to inform the public of the hidden motives and objectives of the terrorist organizations as these are usually not reflected in mainstream reporting on these groups and organizations. Informing the public of hidden agendas is an important duty of journalists, as people's knowledge usually does not go beyond the self-justifying narrative of the groups.

#### *Self regulation and code of conduct*

- Participants discussed the need for ethical codes of conduct. Some were pro and others did not see a need for new codes of conduct. They all agreed that self-regulation, integrity and professionalism should to be observed.
- Journalists from Afghanistan recounted the dilemma they were faced with. The recent killing of an AFP journalist in Kabul (Serena hotel) and his family created fury in the journalist community which decided to boycott the coverage of Taliban activities in the pre-electoral period.
- In Kyrgyzstan, a national code of conduct was created and many amendments were introduced subsequently. The code outlined principles and references to international experiences. The challenge is the lack of an implementing mechanism / weak self-regulatory body.



- In Kazakhstan, while a code of conduct is not adopted, journalists working on the internet (bloggers) are quite united and adhere by commonly agreed principles.
- In Tajikistan a media self-regulatory body, the Tajik Media Council has been established in 2009 based on professional ethical norms for journalists that the vast majority of media have been signed up to. The ethical code also contains norms on inciting materials, protection of minors and accuracy.
- The state should work with journalists to create a framework and establish a monitoring mechanism run by prominent and well-respected journalists, and journalists should regulate themselves through professional, ethical standards. The balance between legal frameworks and professional demands need to be maintained in an ethical, professional way. Besides a proper education, ethics and legal frameworks, there are also personal responsibility
- It was also suggested to strengthen the responsibility of chief editors in order to relieve pressure from journalists.

### **Responses by Governments**

Participants noted that the Governments of Central Asia have adopted a number of strategies to combat terrorisms, ranging from strengthening law and order capability to adopting measures such as curbing the financing of terrorism, etc.. Increasingly, counter-terrorism approaches are being informed by a comprehensive approach, as prescribed in the Joint Plan of Action for Central Asia. While priorities have been given to clarifying and strengthening laws, Governments understand that prevention requires more than elaborating/amending criminal codes. Laws and administrative acts to suppress political extremism and terrorism are in place in all CA countries. Yet, despite the abundance of legislation, political extremism and terrorism have fluid political definitions.

The case of terrorists using the media, including social media presents a special dilemma for authorities, claimed participants. In these special circumstances, security and law and order officials want to work in a way that is fast and effective, controlling information that could prove harmful and premature. At the same time, they need information that the public and media can provide. If they go after websites which promote terrorism and close them, for example, they also might lose the possibility to track terrorists. Participants argued that if the accounts used by extremists and terrorists are aggressive and call for violence and inciting hatred – then it is important to close them immediately. If the accounts are oriented on promoting ideology – then it is better for government bodies to keep them open, engage and develop counter narratives.

Government authorities have responsibility to protect people in the long term while also empowering them. This opens them up to the need for cooperation with the media for long-term preventive work. The interests of Government officials in working with the media, according to participants include:

- To give information about terrorist activities to warn the public, and to help make the case of terrorists as criminals by showing the consequences of violent acts on people's lives. Good relations with editors and journalists are important to be able to provide objective information to the public.
- To monitor and counter narrative disseminated by terrorists in order to prevent the spread of disinformation. The media in Central Asia is regularly monitored by the National Security Agencies. In Kazakhstan for example, the Kazakh Agency for Religious Affairs scrutinizes websites for violent extremist content and shuts down

those that promote violent extremism. The Association of Internet providers works with the government to analyse the content of websites, increasing number of which are in Kazakh language. Kazakhstan also has a Hotline to report on illegal content in the Internet, including terrorist/extremist activities, child pornography, cyber crime etc.. The problem however is the lack of awareness among blogger communities needed to efficiently counter terrorist ideologies.

- During operations, the Government may wish to withhold key information in order to prevent harm and keep the public calm and not alarmed. They also try to control the information that terrorists get. After operations, they may also not want the media to reveal their tactics. It was however also mentioned that information blockades create a vacuum and rumor prone environment that might be counterproductive. Terrorists often fill the void with their view on the incidents.
- The Government may also partner with the media in order to create and convey counter-narratives. A number of CA Governments commission the state media to produce documentaries, news articles and books about the dangers of extremism and terrorist organizations, often targeting the youth.

These interests, noted participants, come with certain type of responsibilities of Government official:

- Guarantees for the freedom of the media is not only an issue of rights but a pragmatic approach in the fight against terrorism. There is no trade off between security or human rights, argued participants. CA governments should not use the threat of violent extremism to justify limitations on political opposition and independent media outlets. In some countries, the Government has during some special operations blamed independent media for helping terrorists. Sometimes authorities use the pretext of terrorism and extremism to limit the work of media outlets not loyal to them, argued a participant. Journalists are being arrested for inciting inter-ethnic disputes, but sometimes, other interests are at play, including those related to business etc.
- Legislation in most Central Asian countries require that media outlets assist state bodies in counter-terrorism efforts. Yet, as participants argued, while the Government should work with the media, it should not seek to forcedly use it (or employ it) in its fight against terrorism, such as for example by making it its mouthpiece, as that could put the credibility, objectivity and trust in the media under question for the public.
- Another important precondition is the readiness and the capability of public authorities to provide fast and reliable information through the mass media to the general public.
- In terms of tools for responses, participants argued against the full control of the media and especially the Internet. The Internet is beneficial to inform the population despite the use of Internet by terrorist groups. Countering terrorist use of the Internet can be challenging, as it requires cooperation with private companies, and involves the contention of sovereign control over a global good for national security. It can also be challenging from a legal perspective and contravene fundamental rights. Participants from Afghanistan recounted that forbidding Facebook was discussed at the National Security Council recently, but it was decided that the ban on social media itself would bring more instability.
- As one participant noted, while the Government works from top to below, some terrorists work from bottom to top, highlighting issues at the local level. To counter them, regional media should be strengthened and the Government be encouraged to further engage with actors at the local level.
- Participants also noted the low number of private media companies in Central Asia, with the capacity and funding of private media much lower than that of the larger

Government supported media. Government control of the media increases strains in the profession.

## **Options for Cooperation: Recommendations**

### *Commitment and mechanisms for cooperation*

Cooperation was stressed by all participants regularly. States should talk to media on a permanent basis in order not to provide space for speculations. But this relationship should be based on a win-win modality, a positive co-dependency, based on common interests.

Commitment for cooperation and sharing is necessary.

- Governments should work in close cooperation with media without compromising the principles of a free and objective media. Using the media as a mouthpiece endangers credibility.
- Clarity of information is necessary. Journalists should be provided with legal certainty as to what can or cannot be done and why. For example, if they are punished for interviewing the head of an insurgency group, the Government has a role in ensuring that they are adequately informed about their roles, responsibilities, laws and the precise terrorist/extremist groups on terror lists.
- Mechanisms for cooperation should be created in advance, in a timely manner before a crisis occurs, and strengthened with experiences and lessons learned. This relationship should include both regular measures and punctual ones in times of crisis. It can also be informally cultivated.
- A culture and mechanism for information sharing requires commitment, continuous dialogue, round tables, including not only with government specialists and experts but also at the leadership levels, as well as the creation of special Joint Commissions, etc..
- Action Plans should be created by Governments in order to overcome the barriers between public authorities and the media.
- Guidelines could be created for Governments on how to prepare for events, cooperate with journalists, etc..

### *Knowledge, information and understanding*

- It is not the Internet that radicalizes people, it is only a tool. The root causes of extremism, radicalization and terrorism, such as political exclusion and social marginalization, need to be better understood, analyzed, and the public informed. Media in the region should be encouraged to disseminate credible analytical reports in addition to the news they regularly cover.
- Governments may place orders on the coverage of important and sensitive issues, while maintaining the independence of the media. Funding should be provided as a result of tenders.
- Governments should allow for critical media coverage of important and sensitive issues analysing the root causes for extremism, radicalization and terrorism.
- The media should be trained regularly on laws, tactics and strategies of the Government for countering terrorism. Government officials should also be regularly trained on how to cooperate with the media. Training is also needed for press centres and spokespersons in particular for the law enforcement and security sectors.
- Governments may want to expand their presence on the net, by creating public information sites, where they could post lists and information on what is prohibited,

laws, etc. They could create resource centres and websites for journalists on extremist organization, legal fields and norms for their operations, etc.. Governments could also be encouraged to make more and better use of the social media: Facebook and Twitter and actively engage with the public on this topic.

- The media and the State could develop joint knowledge bases and best practices in the activities of Counter terrorism. Joint databases could help provide better gathering, analysis and sharing of information.
- Incentives for cooperation should be rewarded. A good example is the initiative in Kazakhstan to develop indicators for incentives to give out information.

#### Improving legislation and regulation:

- Lack of clear legal provisions leads to misunderstanding and conflict between State institutions and media about the way information has to be conveyed to the public. Laws on access to information should be adopted, respected, clarified.
- Existing international legal documents are not sufficient to address the issue of media engagement in fighting terrorism in CA countries. Drafting new legal instruments is essential at the national level, and the unification and harmonization of the national legislation of governments.
- Developing guidelines and instructions for government press services in order to clarify tasks and responsibilities and ensure the implementation of a pro-active and timely (crisis-) information policy.

#### New bodies:

- Mechanisms for information sharing need to be created and strengthened. Operative Press centers need to multiply and be populated with people willing and capable to work with the media.
- It was suggested that Governments should organize press centers in the case of terrorist attacks to streamline information and ease the work of journalists who have a difficult time collecting information. One option to consider would be establishment of a standing government Terrorist Information Response Center (TIRC). Such a centre, by agreement with the media, could have on call (through communication links) a rapid reaction terrorism reporting pool composed of senior network, wire-service, and print media representatives.
- Resources/information centres would also be good to have at the subnational level. At the regional level, these centres could also help give out information on the regional broader regional context.
- Independent efficient media regulatory and self-regulatory bodies should also be established. Task forces and coordination bodies are also necessary among authorities to deal with journalists.
- Some examples from the region include:
  - In Kazakhstan, there are plans to establish a Public Council that would include representatives of all media covering religious issues. This body will elaborate guidelines for journalists. Relevant state institutions will provide experts' analytical support.
  - In Kyrgyzstan, Media Resource Centers were created in Jalalabad and Osh in order to better coordinate information, based on lessons learnt from the events in Osh in 2010 and in Batken in 2006 when a vacuum of information resulted in rumors on the Internet becoming primary information source for the public.

Different media outlets provided conflicting information about the events and the government responses in the absence of precise accurate information. The creation of the Media Resource Centers was to deal with this inefficiency.

#### Capacity building and specialization

- A pool of specialized and professional journalists knowledgeable about security issues, peace journalism and conflict sensitivity should be created through investments in training and capacity building. The pool should start with a list of journalists already working in the field of security in the region. Maximum emphasis should be placed on training on Conflict Sensitive Journalism.
- Post-graduation education of journalists on the subjects of security, peace, conflict resolution etc. should be facilitated through government grants or support by international organizations.
- Training should not only be conducted for journalists but also for representatives of law enforcement structures, including on how to work with journalists during special operations and difficult circumstances.
- The capacity of press officers of state institutions needs to be enhanced. Specialized training should be organized by international and regional organizations.
- Contests could be organized for journalists reporting on preventing anti-terrorist activities, followed by promotion (prizes, certificates ...);

#### Cross-regional cooperation

- More interaction and experience sharing between CA countries and journalists and officials from regions with experience should be encouraged.
- More cooperation is necessary between the media in Afghanistan and CA countries.

#### Support from international and regional organizations

- International organizations can support these processes through: Funding new bodies and structures for cooperation, supporting specialized training, advising on legislative support, facilitating dialogue and coordination; acting as mediators; facilitating the analysis of information on sources of radicalization, etc.
- To raise public awareness, with special focus on young people, on the active use of social media as important for countering terrorism. This could also include support to the development of special applications for smartphones to provide free access to official information about actual threats and trends and how to properly address and prevent terrorism.
- International organizations can also consider giving a special award to journalists that best cover extremism/terrorism in the region.
- International media assistance in Central Asia should continue. The focus should be on support for the improvement of professional performance of media workers through education and international co-operation.
- Sponsoring special portals dealing with political extremism and terrorism and ensuring their sustainability.
- They can also draw the attention of the public and of authorities to the need for such a cooperation.