



Opening Statement by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism

**High-Level International Conference
“Countering Terrorism and Preventing Violent Extremism”**

Dushanbe, 4 May 2018

Your Excellency President Emomali Rahmon,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking President, Government and people of the Republic of Tajikistan for their warm welcome and hospitality. It is my first visit to Tajikistan and I am amazed by the beauty of the country and its hardworking and decent people.

I am grateful for the opportunity to co-host and participate in this High-Level International Conference on Countering Terrorism and Preventing Violent Extremism.

I welcome you all here for what I know will be practical and informative exchanges involving senior representatives of governments, civil society, research institutions, and international and regional organizations.

I bring you the warm greetings of the United Nations Secretary-General A.Guterres, who has made countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism one of his top priorities.

His first reform initiative was to create the Office of Counter-Terrorism to provide strategic leadership to United Nations counter-terrorism efforts.

We are now at a crucial point in the global fight against terrorism. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Al-Qaida and their affiliates continue to pose a significant and evolving threat around the world.

ISIL suffered a series of devastating military setbacks in Iraq, Syria and the southern Philippines last year, but now is not the time for complacency.

ISIL is continuing to adapt from a terrorist group with a territorial base to a virtual organization, exploiting the Internet and social media platforms to inspire and direct its supporters to carry out heinous attacks.

This region is all too aware of the evolving threat from ISIL and its affiliates. An estimated 4,000 nationals from Central Asian countries may have travelled to Iraq and Syria to fight for terrorists.

Many foreign terrorist fighters died on the battlefield or remain in Iraq and Syria; others relocated to countries such as Afghanistan, Libya, Somalia and Yemen, which has fuelled existing conflicts and further destabilized fragile regions; others have returned home and remain determined to carry out attacks in their own countries.

We all need to remain vigilant to prevent ISIL taking root in other countries and regions around the world, including Central Asia. We know that ISIL is actively seeking to recruit and radicalize

