

# Representatives of the Regional Expert Council discussed work plans for 2024-2025



On July 26 this year, the First Meeting of the Working Groups of the Central Asia Regional Expert Council on the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Returnees from armed conflict zones was held online.

The event was organized by the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the State Security Service of the Republic of Uzbekistan jointly with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia.

The meeting was held to implement the Roadmap for cooperation between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism for 2024-2025.

The event was attended by representatives of Central Asian countries, members of the Regional Expert Council, as well as more than 10 international and regional organizations, including UNICEF, UNODC, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the OSCE, the EU, the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund.

During the work, the results of the First Meeting of the Regional Expert Council, held on May 14 this year in Tashkent, were presented. Preliminary plans of the working groups for 2024-2025 and issues of developing an informal regional network of practitioners in rehabilitation and reintegration were also discussed.

Participants also reiterated the effectiveness of the initiative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan to establish the REC to strengthen international and regional cooperation in prosecution, repatriation, and reintegration.

It was noted that the Council has become a unique platform for exchanging experience between Central

Asian countries in returning their citizens from conflict zones, discussing new challenges and threats to counter terrorism and increasing the effectiveness of regional cooperation in this area.

The speakers noted that during the UN Security Council meeting on July 23, states also highly praised the establishment of the Regional Expert Council, noting its relevance in the current conditions.

The experience of the countries of the region in counter-terrorism was also recognized as a unique approach by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres during his tour of Central Asia.

According to the speakers, the establishment of the Council demonstrates the commitment of the Central Asian countries to international obligations and multilateral cooperation in countering terrorism. It complies with all the recommendations and four primary areas of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, including eliminating conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and ensuring universal respect for human rights and the rule of law as a fundamental basis for combating terrorism.

The participants agreed that the Regional Expert Council is a reliable mechanism for interaction in the rehabilitation and reintegration of repatriates and can be considered an exemplary model for other regions.

The activities of the Central Asia Regional Expert Council on the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Returnees from armed conflict zones were launched on May 14 this year in Tashkent.

The Regional Expert Council is structured as an Executive Committee and four working groups - (a) accountability, legal and judicial issues; (b) psychosocial support, health, and education; (c) countering terrorist narratives; (d) civil society, including women's and youth groups, which meet regularly to provide recommendations and proposed solutions based on consensus.

#### **Source**