

# The UN focuses on the experience of Central Asian countries

On 25 September, an international video conference was held on the theme “Experience of Central Asian countries in working with people returning from Syria and Iraq: successes, problems and lessons learned”. The event was organized by the UN Counter-Terrorism Office in cooperation with the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA).

The dialogue, which was held as a side event of the 75th anniversary session of the UN General Assembly, brought together more than 200 experts and specialists from 35 countries of the world, including representatives of the UN specialized agencies - UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, UNODC, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The countries of Central Asia were represented by the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, diplomats, and research centers.

The moderator of the international online forum was Eldor Aripov, director of the Institute for Strategic and Interregional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (ISMI).

During the event, the participants discussed the issues of countering terrorism and extremism, considered the experience of the Central Asian countries in deradicalization of supporters of extremist views, social reintegration and rehabilitation of persons returning from zones of armed conflict, got acquainted with international practice in this area.

Opening the online forum, Eldor Aripov noted that the threats of extremism and terrorism remain relevant on the international agenda. In this regard, he pointed to the timeliness and relevance of the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan Sh.Mirziyoyev to hold an international conference dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Joint Action Plan for the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia, put forward at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly.

According to the director of the ISMI, the conference will allow not only to get acquainted with the unique experience of the Central Asian countries in the regionalization of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, but also to summarize the results of interaction between the states of the region over the past ten years within the framework of the Joint Action Plan, and to determine priorities for the future.

UN Deputy Secretary General, Head of the UN Counter-Terrorism Office Vladimir Voronkov stressed that the Central Asian countries were the first to respond to the call of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres for the repatriation of women and children from the war zones.

Expressing readiness to support in every possible way the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan Sh.Mirziyoyev to hold an international conference dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Joint Action Plan for the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the head of the UN Counter-Terrorism Office stated that the Central Asian states are an example for all countries of the world to fulfill international obligations and the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council in the field of combating terrorism, and their experience is in great demand for the international community.

UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Central Asia, Head of UNRCCA Natalya Gherman, sharing her experience of UN cooperation with the countries of Central Asia on the implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, stressed that the states of the region have made significant progress in resolving the issues of repatriation of their citizens who are in Syria and Iraq, especially women and children.

Noting the formation in the Central Asian region of an integrated approach to the repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters and their families, N. Gherman stated the commitment of the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central and further support the countries of the region as in the broad context of the fight against terrorism, and in specific areas, in

particular in the field of confronting foreign fighters.

Natalya Gherman supported the initiative of Uzbekistan to revise, together with the Central Asian states, the Joint Action Plan for the implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, its adaptation to new realities, including taking into account the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters.

Ashita Mittal, UNODC Regional Representative for Central Asia, also supported the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev to hold an international conference in 2021 dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Joint Action Plan for the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

She noted that this forum can serve as a good platform for discussing rehabilitation and reintegration issues, sharing experiences and developing consolidated proposals. According to her, repatriation complies with universally recognized humanitarian principles, meets the protection needs of children and adults, contributes to ensuring security and asserting responsibility in society. At the same time, A. Mittal stressed the need to pay attention to the issues of protecting human rights and freedoms, eliminating the root causes that contribute to terrorism.

The representative of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime especially emphasized the successful experience of Uzbekistan in organizing cooperation between civil society institutions, citizens' self-government bodies with state bodies in this area.

During the event, representatives of the countries of Central Asia and other specialized UN agencies also made presentations, an animated video about the experience of the states of the region in the field of repatriation of terrorists and their families, based on real events, was presented to the participants.

The dialogue participants stated that the regional authorities provided comprehensive social, legal and material assistance to repatriates for their social adaptation and reintegration. It was emphasized that deradicalization is a complex set of measures that requires the involvement of public organizations, educational institutions, the media, and is feasible only under the condition of state guardianship at the highest level.

The representatives of the UN specialized agencies, experts and specialists who took part in the videoconference were unanimous in the opinion that the experience of Central Asia would provide valuable lessons and could be useful for other UN member states.

In conclusion, the participants noted that the countries of Central Asia are leading in international efforts to repatriate, they show solidarity and responsibility for their citizens who find themselves in hot spots by the will of fate.

### **Source**