

**Opening Statement
of the Chairperson-in-Office
H.E. Federal Minister for Europe, Integration, Foreign Affairs
Sebastian Kurz**

**Counter-Terrorism Conference
Vienna, 23 May 2017**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is another day with terrible news.

Another day that begins with the question how people can commit such barbaric act.

I am sure; I speak in the name of all of us when I say: our thoughts are with the families and friends of the victims. And we have to do everything possible to fight terrorism with all the means that we have.

Not only in the UK, all around the globe, radicalisation and violent extremism leading to terrorism are an increasing threat to our societies.

No country in the OSCE region is immune from radicalization and terrorism.

Therefore, it is necessary to have these discussions in the OSCE.

And this is why I am very grateful to all high-level speakers for being here today.

I want to especially thank Ms. Nadia Murad. She is a Yazidi woman who suffered the most horrifying and brutal experiences. As a UN Goodwill Ambassador she will tell her story so that we can better understand where hatred and radicalization can lead to.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We all have to realize that acts of religious extremism do not only happen in areas of conflict, but that there are extremists who radicalise our youth even in the heart of our societies.

More than 10,000 people from the OSCE area, among them 300 people from Austria, joined the so-called Islamic State in order to rape and kill in Syria, Iraq and Libya.

And these fighters not only cause terrible suffering in these countries, they also pose a threat to the security of the OSCE countries when they return.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Radicalization and terrorism target and affect the internal stability of States. The rule of law and our basic freedoms, such as freedom of expression and the freedom of religion or belief.

In the OSCE region we face different dynamics of radicalisation. But what they all have in common is that the most affected group are young people.

Therefore, our focus needs to be on stopping those young people from being misled by radicals.

Over the past months we held four regional workshops with more than 50 young experts. They looked at the specific situations in Western Europe, the Black Sea Area, the Western Balkans and Central Asia.

Let me just mention three common concerns that came out of the discussions: First, young people want and need to be included in strategies on countering violent extremism.

Second, we need to develop measures to eliminate terrorist propaganda from social media.

And third, there is a need for credible voices and stories as warning where radicalization can lead to.

Professor Peter Neumann, my Special Representative against Radicalization, is also preparing his recommendations on the fight against radicalisation and violent extremism.

We will have the opportunity to discuss this matter further at the Informal Meeting of Foreign Ministers on 11 July.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Besides these new forms of terrorism we also still face old threats from terrorist organizations. For example, acts of terrorism by the PKK and the fight against them have claimed thousands of lives.

Here we cannot leave any room for doubt. We have to be clear in our rejection of these organizations and step up our efforts on an international and also national level.

In order to combat terrorism effectively, we need to enhance regional and international cooperation.

We need to work hard **to prevent** acts of terrorism through the fight against radicalisation, but also by stopping the financing of terrorism.

We need **to protect** our societies through police measures, exchange of relevant information and better control of our borders.

We need to ensure that **we bring those responsible** for terrorism **to justice**.

And we must ensure that we have an affective crisis response in place when terrorist acts happen.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today's conference is an opportunity to listen and learn from each other's experiences. We all have to join forces in the fight against radicalization and terrorism.

Thank you for your attention.