

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. DMITRY BALAKIN, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 2016 ANNUAL
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Countering terrorism – transnational threats in the OSCE area**

Mr. Chairperson,

The Russian Federation shares the global community's concern in connection with the increasing prominence of new threats and challenges to international security – first and foremost, the unprecedented rise in terrorism and extremism. The horrific terrorist attacks at Istanbul airport and yesterday's terrorist attack in Kabul deserve the strongest condemnation. However, condemnation of terrorism alone is not enough to combat it; concrete action is needed to pool the efforts of all States to combat this evil. Despite this pressing task, some countries continue to apply double standards with respect to terrorists and extremists, frequently doing so to safeguard opportunistic interests.

The consequences of such a policy are plain for all to see. It needs to be recognized that the "genesis" of the current crisis in the Middle East is largely a direct result of certain countries having "flirted" with extremist and terrorist forces. The practice of external interference with a view to the dismantling of government structures, up to the point of provoking coup d'états, has already led to the formation of a power vacuum in Iraq, Libya and Syria. The leaders of the "terrorist international" represented by the notorious Al-Qaida and the so-called Islamic State are successfully exploiting this situation.

There is no doubt that there are also some home-grown forces from within that are not reliant on external support or connivance behind modern-day terrorism. Meanwhile, the terrorist threat continues to evolve rapidly and dangerously, confronting individual countries and the entire global community with unprecedented tasks, the newness, complexity and seriousness of which bears no comparison in some cases to the situation five or even ten years ago.

For example, countries today are required much more to deal with the political, ideological, religious and ethnic radicalization overwhelming the world, to combat the ideology of violent extremism and terrorism spreading via the Internet and social media, to seek ways of neutralizing the financial basis of terrorism in previously unidentified areas (the

illicit trade in oil and cultural objects), or, for example, to put a stop to the combat and propaganda activities of so-called foreign terrorist fighters, who have now become the main personification of modern-day terrorism and evidence of its unique danger and comprehensive scale. This is well illustrated by the map of Islamic State sleeper cells around the world published on the Internet.

Lastly, an important and also extremely worrying aspect of the current situation is that with the advent of a kind of “new terrorism” represented by the so-called Islamic State it is no longer a question just of overcoming terrorist threats of earlier “traditional” types. In addition to North and West Africa and the Middle East, where Islamic State mainly operates today, Afghanistan and the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region (the territory that saw the birth and consolidation of Al-Qaida) unfortunately still remain one of the epicentres of terrorist activity.

Russia is aware better than anyone else of the danger posed by the manifestations of international terrorism and the spread of violent terrorist ideology. In the 1990s and 2000s we fought against a terrorist threat that was based on the same inhumane extremist ideology as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and enjoyed powerful support from abroad. I am referring to the terrorist hotspot in the Russian North Caucasus, which our country eliminated virtually single-handedly.

Unlike some international players, we do not take advantage of chaos and destabilization. Furthermore, in objective terms, the approaches consistently put forward by Russia (a firm basis on the Charter of the United Nations, collective efforts for resolving international problems, the right of peoples to determine their future themselves without external interference, cultural diversity of the modern world) are becoming increasingly relevant in international relations.

Russia urges all its foreign partners to form a genuine global coalition and a united front against international terrorism, with the United Nations playing the key co-ordinating role.

It is important to understand that putting off the solution of the problems and conflicts that have accumulated at a global and regional level and an unwillingness to deal with common tasks through joint efforts is fraught with the most serious and long-term consequences for the entire international system.

In that connection, we all understand that if we are to combat international terrorism not only military methods are needed, but also a means of discrediting terrorist ideology and undermining its material support.

It is impossible to counter terrorism effectively without reliably cutting off its sources of financing, as called for in UN Security Council resolutions and in the standards of the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering.

Combating the financial support of the so-called Islamic State and other terrorist groups in the Middle East and North Africa is the most pressing task at this stage. Successful work in this area is possible only on the basis of real international partnership.

Russia has consistently called for the preventive aspects of counter-terrorism to be dealt with – combating incitement to terrorist crimes and the spread of terrorist ideology. Indeed, we see a link between the prevention of terrorism and the question of countering extremism in its violent manifestations, which requires ever more attention from the international community.

We insist on the paramount importance of joint efforts by the global community to combat violent extremism being firmly based on international law, first and foremost the UN Charter. In view of the absence of an agreed definition of the term “violent extremism”, such work should be framed by the basic UN counter-terrorism decisions, in particular UN Security Council resolutions and the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

I should also like to point out that this is consistent with the Russian experience of countering and preventing extremism: only States and their competent authorities should be given a decisive role in countering violent extremism and, accordingly, in any international co-operation in this area.

We emphasize that as a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional country Russia has truly unique historical experience in ensuring inter-ethnic and interreligious peace and harmony. We are proactively sharing this experience, including here at the OSCE.

Regarding the international initiatives currently being proposed to combat violent extremism, including the well-known initiative by the United States of America launched at the Washington Summit on Countering Violent Extremism in February 2015 and the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism presented in January 2016 by the United Nations Secretary-General, we remain concerned at the absence in them of a clear reflection of the importance of support for any anti-extremist co-operation being based on international law and the UN Charter. It is perfectly clear that attempts within the framework of such initiatives to promote goals for combating extremism “over the heads” of legitimate governments in support of some kind of “independent” or even more “international” civil society, will only encourage radicalization and extremism.

We firmly believe that under the current circumstances the OSCE participating States should show the political will to step up their joint efforts to counter new threats and challenges. Terrorists have thrown down the most serious challenge to us all, specifically manifested in the proliferation of the dangerous phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters and home-grown lone terrorists – vehicles for radical ideology and the direct threat of terrorist activity.

This also applies to the danger of terrorists entering European countries under the guise of refugees and migrants. As a result of these processes, a number of countries in the OSCE area have already suffered terrorist attacks.

We have no doubt that under the current circumstance combating the global terrorist threat should be an absolute priority for all responsible members of the international community.

It is encouraging to see that in recent years the OSCE has been able to focus on the truly priority tasks of counter-terrorism, particularly the problem of foreign terrorist fighters,

and also on the tasks of countering the proliferation of terrorist and extremist ideas and promoting co-operation with civil society in this framework.

We attach no less importance to the task of reaching agreement on weighty and relevant documents on countering terrorism in time for the OSCE Ministerial Council meetings, which would confirm and supplement many of the most important parameters for effective international co-operation in combating the threat of terrorism and extremism.

For example, in Belgrade in December 2015, important documents were agreed upon, primarily in the area of counter-terrorism, including a detailed declaration on the need to step up and co-ordinate joint efforts to combat terrorism in the context of unprecedented terrorist threats, as well as a declaration on countering violent extremism that leads to terrorism. We agree with the proposals by the German Chairmanship on the OSCE's inclusion in the International Civil Aviation Organization initiative on the exchange of expanded information on airline passengers to prevent the movement of foreign terrorist fighters and to promote the provisions of UN Security Council resolution 2178.

We should like to draw attention to the draft OSCE Parliamentary Assembly resolution on the introduction of video monitoring on civilian aircraft for security purposes.

We consider the OSCE's work to promote international co-operation in countering terrorism and associated threats to security to be a highly important contribution by the Organization to European and global stability. It is important that such work by the OSCE supplements and fits in "seamlessly" with international counter-terrorism efforts within the main specialist platform – the United Nations.

In that connection, it is no less urgent to find joint responses to other pressing transnational challenges, including the drug problem, on which a separate document was adopted at the Ministerial Council meeting in Belgrade. We believe that more active use should be made of the OSCE's capacities to combat this evil.

In connection with the contrived accusations against Russia that we have heard from the distinguished representative of the Ukraine regarding deliveries of foreign terrorist fighters for the conflict in south-eastern Ukraine, we should like to remind you that this topic was already discussed at the Permanent Council on 26 May 2016. On that occasion we provided exhaustive clarification that there are no signs of terrorist activity in Ukraine in connection with the conflict in Donbas – no terrorist ideology, no terrorist groups, no politically motivated terrorist acts against civilians, no publicizing results (as compared with the methods of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaida).

Attempts to label the People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk (DPR and LPR) as terrorist organizations are absurd. Neither Ukraine nor any other State can decide to classify particular organizations as "international terrorist organizations" and designate the DPR and LPR as such. The specialist committee of the UN Security Council is the only universally recognized international competent authority capable of recognizing individuals and organizations as terrorists.

It should also be noted that representatives of certain areas of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions are signatories to the Minsk agreements, as is the second President of

Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, and that according to the Minsk agreements they consider themselves part of Ukraine.

Distortions like this by Ukraine create a significant threat that undermines the possibilities of the international community for combating the genuine terrorist threat, including the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters.

Thank you for your attention.