

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ARTUR LYUKMANOV,
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
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Working session IV: Transnational threats – current and future trends

Distinguished Conference participants,

However timely and serious the measures taken at the national level, the threat of global terrorism continues to grow, fostered to a considerable degree by the spread of terrorist and extremist ideologies beyond all borders and legal or ethical constraints.

At the same time, the fragmentation in the policies and counter-terrorist activities of the international community means that even when terrorism and its leaders in the form of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and all of its Al-Qaida clones are retreating in the face of the military strikes in Syria, “terrorist metastases” not only continue to multiply in South, Central and South-East Asia, but are also penetrating the countries of Europe and the entire OSCE area.

We place some hope in the success of international counter-terrorism activities, particularly under the aegis of the OSCE. But we have doubts. We are obliged to note that strengthening international efforts to counter terrorism and extremism is not a real priority for all OSCE participating States. We constantly hear loud statements, but sometimes that is all there is to them.

Behind loud pronouncements like this, there is a subtext of ideas being systematically pursued that erode anti-terror policies through the introduction of vague or secondary subjects such as the ambiguous concept of “countering violent extremism”. In some cases, the notorious double standards come through quite clearly – particularly in attempts to justify the actions of terrorists in the Middle East in terms of their “usefulness” in combating “undesirable” regimes and to describe combatants as “victims” rather than “executioners”.

All this merely distracts us from what is without doubt our most important common goal – that of creating a global anti-terrorist coalition, the need for which the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin spoke about at the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

For any initiatives to counter terrorism and extremism to be successful, the principal standards governing such work must be observed: reliance on the counter-terrorism framework established under international law; confirmation of the leading role of States and their specialist bodies in the organization of efforts to combat terrorism and extremism at the national and international levels; and the inadmissibility of double standards and the exploitation of the problem of countering terrorism and extremism – especially the terrorist and extremist groups themselves – as a geopolitical instrument and a means of interfering in the internal affairs of States.

We believe that the OSCE's anti-terrorist activities should be guided by the work of the United Nations, where, notably, the Security Council recently adopted resolution 2354 in support of a "comprehensive international framework to counter terrorist narratives". This marks a serious step towards the creation of the necessary political and legal framework to consolidate international efforts to stop the spread of terrorist ideas. We urge the OSCE to study this document carefully and to help with its implementation, above all with a view to preventing radicalization leading to terrorism.

In countering the spread of terrorist ideology and propaganda, we are willing to share our best practices, based again on the leading role of States and their specialist bodies, with the assistance of civil society institutions, particularly religious leaders. We intend to continue our work in this area and to mobilize both our closest partners and the international community as a whole.

One successful example of co-operation by like-minded States in countering extremism is the new Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Convention on Countering Extremism, which we see as an important and timely step towards strengthening the security of all SCO Member States, improving the effectiveness of their specialist co-operation on the most pressing anti-extremist measures and also counteracting the destabilization of domestic situations and coups d'état, inspired in particular by external forces. The Convention is also open to accession by countries that do not belong to the SCO. We invite the OSCE participating States and the Organization itself to turn their attention to this document, which is something novel in terms of international anti-extremism co-operation.

As for human rights and anti-terrorism, many speakers have already stressed that the tasks of defending society from terrorism and observing human rights are not at odds with one another but, on the contrary, are complementary. At the same time, "freedom of speech" should not serve as a cover for justifying terrorist acts. Russia is developing an initiative to strengthen the concept of "voluntary counter-terrorism restrictions" in international practice, which would include a "self-imposed ban" and refraining from fear-mongering by the media, which could encourage radicalization leading to terrorism. A code of conduct of this nature is relevant not only for representatives of the media and public figures but also for officials and politicians, who have to demonstrate the highest standards in their work when it comes to formulating public positions, particularly with regard to countering terrorism.

Russia has a similar successful example. International attention should be drawn to the Anti-Terrorism Convention on the Rules of Conduct for the Media in the Event of a Terrorist Act and Counter-terrorist Operations adopted by the Russian media in 2003. We are planning to invite civil society and the media to update and strengthen this Convention to incorporate best practices in combating terrorist propaganda and help to win the "hearts and minds" of people more effectively.

We support the OSCE's practice of holding annual counter-terrorism conferences. We welcome the intense and committed discussion on the problem of preventing terrorist radicalization at the last OSCE Counter-Terrorism Conference in Vienna on 23 and 24 May 2017. We hope that its results will provide the basis for the drafting of significant documents for the upcoming OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in December.

We note the work of parliamentarians in the OSCE participating States. We draw attention to the Russian initiative to create a committee within the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to counter terrorism, which could help to consolidate the different approaches by participating States to combating the terrorist threat and co-ordinate their activities in this sphere.

Unfortunately, we are forced to note a sharp deterioration in the situation in the international information space. There has been an increase in the number of cases of the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in crimes and terrorist acts. In this situation, the total mistrust and unfounded accusations by certain countries only exacerbate tensions between States.

For our part, we are open to dialogue. Our priority is the elaboration and adoption of universal rules of responsible conduct by States in the information space. At a time when fundamental differences prevent the conclusion of a universal international agreement, the elaboration of voluntary rules of conduct would help towards achieving widespread political accord regarding the non-confrontational status of the information space.

We also believe in the effectiveness of co-operation in safeguarding international information security at the regional level. We are in favour of strengthening the OSCE's role in preventing incidents in the ICT sphere. We think that the Organization could provide a platform for direct dialogue and prevent incidents from becoming confrontational. The confidence- and security-building measures adopted by the OSCE to reduce the risks of conflict stemming from the use of information and communication technologies could also play a particular role in this regard. The fact that this agreement was reached shows that it is possible to achieve a broad consensus on fundamental questions concerning international information security regardless of the political situation.

Moreover, we see a need to make the problem of drug control, one of the key challenges to European security, a permanent feature of the OSCE's agenda. We are strongly opposed to the growing calls today to review the current international drug control system and to legalize certain types of narcotic substances. We urge that the provisions of the three basic United Nations anti-drug conventions be observed and that serious discussion be conducted on the new psychoactive substances, whose spread could fundamentally change the entire drug control landscape in Europe, at the OSCE Conference in July 2017 in Vienna on the subject of illicit drug trafficking as a source of financing of illegal activities.

In the fight against transnational threats to security, much depends on the ability to improve trust. Russia endeavours to pursue dialogue with all responsible members of the international community interested in meeting common challenges together. We recognize the fact that the potential for co-operation is not being fulfilled because some Western colleagues tend to place their own geopolitical ambitions above the task of parrying global

threats. It must be evident to all of us that bloc thinking is more harmful than ever to our professional co-operation, which has become almost non-existent today.

Russia is open to dialogue and possible joint initiatives. The only way for us to deal with modern transnational threats – be they terrorism and the spread of its destructive criminal ideology, organized crime and drug trafficking, or international cybercrime – is by showing a united front.

Thank you for your attention.