



United States Mission to the OSCE

OSCE Annual Security Review Conference Working Session IV: Countering Terrorism–Transnational Threats in the OSCE Area

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
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Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to all of our speakers for their presentations.

As the tragic attack that occurred in Istanbul this week demonstrated, the scourge of terrorism is a deplorable reality that affects far too many of us, tears at the fabric of our societies, and causes the suffering of our citizens. We take solace in the fortitude of the people of Istanbul, as well as those of Paris, Brussels, Orlando, and other places that have suffered acts of terror, as they recapture a sense of normal life, and demonstrate to the terrorists that they cannot undermine our societies and the values upon which they are built.

I want to sound a note of appreciation to our speakers today for focusing on some of the practical steps that we can take together. I think that Mr. Davidson had it right in the sense that there are two prongs that we might look for in taking our work forward, one being a political statement that would endorse UN Security Council Resolution 2178, or other practical aspects that are reflected in existing standards that we should all aspire to implement, and then, separately, more practical work to help drive forward that implementation, including training, capacity-building, et cetera. One of the questions that I have is whether the UN has thought about putting together a kind of self-assessment tool that would take the aspects of Security Council Resolution 2178 and reframe the standards in the form of questions such as: “do you have in place this, do you have in place that,” so that participating States might use that as a way of assessing how we are doing for ourselves, and then identifying the areas that are most needed in terms of exchanges and forward work. This is a perfect example of a space where it makes sense, and it would indeed be impossible not to partner with industry, because of the multi-stakeholder set of activities that are necessary to implement these objectives.

I want to say a few things more broadly about countering terrorism and countering violent extremism. We have witnessed the spread of violent extremism that puts every corner of the globe at risk - no country is immune. While we have seen tactical successes that have disrupted terrorist planning, fundraising, travel, and recruitment, a successful strategic approach to counterterrorism requires the uniting power of peaceful communities.

Strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism are most successful when government and community leaders – around the globe – work in partnership to support innovative programs that address drivers of violent extremism. Although there are no excuses or justifications for terrorism, efforts to counter violent extremism will only succeed if citizens can address legitimate grievances through the democratic process and express themselves through strong, vibrant civil societies. These efforts must be matched by prevention efforts,

such as economic, educational, and entrepreneurial development, that allow people the prospect of a life of dignity.

We recognize that countering violent extremism is a long-term effort. Trust between communities and security forces take years to build. As we work to counter terrorism, governments, civil society, and the private sector should strive to provide these fundamental elements of healthy communities. We should, at the same time, be careful that in countering terrorism we do not undermine the very values upon which healthy, just, and open democratic societies are based, and which violent extremist groups seek to discredit.

Promoting good governance and ensuring the protection of human rights should remain cornerstones of our counterterrorism efforts. It is not only the right thing to do, but is a smart and effective approach. Several weeks ago, at the OSCE Counterterrorism Conference, participants acknowledged that violations of human rights and the absence of rule of law are conducive to the growth of violent extremism. It is imperative to: implement criminal justice sector reform, promote tolerance and non-discrimination, invest in civil society, guarantee full equality before the courts with fair trial guarantees, and safeguard our civil liberties.

The United States plays a leading role in the global partnership against violent extremism. Last year, we were pleased to host the White House Summit to Counter Violent Extremism (CVE), which convened a diverse set of stakeholders from government, civil society, and the private sector to discuss drivers of violent extremism and outline an action-oriented agenda to address them. This year, we enacted structural changes within our government to institutionalize and enhance CVE efforts. The U.S. Department of State also launched a joint comprehensive strategy with the U.S. Agency for International Development, which recognizes the need to foster and empower a broad-based coalition of government and non-governmental actors to address violent extremism. This joint strategy provides a roadmap for mobilizing the full range of America's diplomatic and development tools to meet this significant challenge.

The United States appreciates the OSCE's active role in promoting the CVE Summit agenda and has contributed resources to the OSCE's CVE programs. We encourage other participating States and OSCE Partners for Cooperation to consider pledging funds to support OSCE initiatives to counter terrorism and counter violent extremism. We also continue to support efforts to make OSCE support available to Partners for Cooperation. We would also like to see the OSCE follow-up on capacity-building requests identified through the various regional CVE summits, including by developing whole-of-society tabletop exercises upon participating States' request.

Colleagues, protecting and advancing human rights and fundamental freedoms in our fight against terrorism does not cause vulnerability and insecurity. To the contrary, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is our greatest reservoir of strength and stability. We look forward to working with the OSCE to craft and promote CVE initiatives that promote these values and help build resilient communities that can confront the scourge of terrorism.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.