

Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier at the opening of
the OSCE Counter-Terrorism Conference

**“Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation that
lead to Terrorism”**

in Berlin
on 31 May 2016

Ladies and gentlemen,

Crises, conflicts, violence and terrorism – we are living in turbulent times. We were all well aware that this was the case when we took over the OSCE Chairmanship at the beginning of this year. Yet perhaps we didn't quite envisage just how violently these tempests would manifest themselves in the very first few days of our Chairmanship.

On 12 January, just hours before we were officially due to launch our Chairmanship, a deadly terrorist attack in the centre of Istanbul claimed the lives of many people, including several Germans. Since then we have seen other attacks: in Ankara, Brussels, Stavropol in Russia. This list is by no means complete, even if we restrict it to the OSCE area.

We all realise that global terrorism is one of our biggest challenges.

And it is a challenge we must all tackle together. For terrorism perpetrated by groups such as the so-called Islamic State targets all those who want to live in freedom without state or religious oppression – whether in the OSCE area or the Middle East. Whether in Brussels, Paris, Istanbul, Tunis or Beirut. It targets Christians and atheists, Jews and Muslims. It has fundamental and fanatic dimensions.

And for us it is clear that the more fundamental and all-encompassing this terror seeks to be, the more comprehensive must be our response.

Ladies and gentlemen, we can only manage to do that if we cooperate on an international scale. And we will only succeed if our fight against terrorism focuses on all levels: from law enforcement, through funding and recruitment, to – and this is the issue we are considering today – the causes of radicalisation.

I'm convinced that we need this comprehensive approach.

– That is why we are active in the anti-ISIS coalition. And not just in a military capacity – that, too, is necessary – but also politically, for example by stabilising territory liberated from ISIS terrorist rule.

– That is why we are working to implement important UN resolutions aiming to combat the organisation and funding of terrorist groups.

– That is why we are doing everything in our power to prevent terrorists and extremists from entering our countries. For example, by improving the exchange of air passenger information. The so-called Advanced Passenger Information (API) tool is an effective instrument which we intend to develop further. Unfortunately it is not yet used by all OSCE countries. That is something we want to change. I am delighted to welcome an expert from the International Air Transport Association here today, who will field questions on this project.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are working intensively in all these areas. But I'll be quite frank with you – I'm afraid that in itself will not be sufficient.

To prevent terrorism in the long term, we need to tackle the political, social and economic causes of radicalisation and extremism. And to this end we have to draw on preventive measures.

I'm convinced that prevention is the key. Prevention means focusing on those areas where the threat of radicalisation is particularly great. Where people lack prospects and a system of fundamental principles for peaceful co-existence. Where young people in particular come into contact with terrorist propaganda, where they can be recruited and won over for extremist ends.

Those are the areas in which we need to help improve living and education prospects and encourage people to participate more actively in society. But prevention also means counteracting the barbaric propaganda of terrorist organisations with our own values.

The OSCE plays an important role in this process. For the meaning behind the conference abbreviation VERLT – fighting violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism – has been a focus of the OSCE for many years. We reiterated this in the 2015 ministerial declaration.

The OSCE is also adopting a comprehensive approach on this issue. The goal is to strengthen the capacities of the member States in the area of counter-terrorism – and at the same time to promote rule-of-law structures. It is a multidimensional approach in which prevention plays a crucial role!

In Tajikistan, for example, OSCE experts are helping parents to recognise at an early stage whether their child is being exposed to radical influences. A few weeks ago I met these

experts during a visit to Central Asia. Their work is impressive. And their accounts reveal how important this form of prevention is! For in many cases the radicalisation of young people begins at home, unnoticed, at the computer, far away from friends, but also far away from their parents.

Social media are a major factor in this development. That is why we also have to make use of these forums as tools – in our fight against extremism! The OSCE is doing just this. The campaign “United in Countering Violent Extremism”, for example, has already reached more than six million people! This is a good and important approach that we need to develop further.

And that is one of the aims today. We want to exchange views on how best to reach young people. We also want to consider the radicalisation of women – a relatively new phenomenon. To this end we probably need new and specific approaches with which we have no experience to date.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I’m convinced that in the fight against terrorism and extremism we will be successful if we act with unity of purpose, for example, in implementing the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. I strongly believe that the OSCE can play a key role in this as the largest UN regional organisation. For the OSCE is a unique forum for dialogue and exchange.

Yet we also realise that this fight cannot be won at national level alone. Prevention can only succeed if all levels of society are on board – from civil society associations, through local policymakers to religious communities. I am therefore delighted to see so many non-governmental organisations here today. We look forward to exchanging ideas with you!

Yet we all know that we will only be successful if the Muslim societies in the Middle East and North Africa also take the necessary steps. Not only in our interests, but also for their own protection.

Ladies and gentlemen,

when Frenchman Antoine Leiris lost his wife in the attacks in Paris in November, he sent a clear message to the terrorists, a message that touched the hearts of thousands of people. He wrote, “You stole the life of an exceptional person, the love of my life, the mother of my son. But you will not have my hatred.”

Leiris is right. The terrorists must not be given our hatred!

But we will not allow terrorism to destroy the values that define us: freedom and democracy. And we must not allow terrorism to ride roughshod through our capital cities randomly killing

people, like those in the Paris attacks, who had their whole lives ahead of them. The power of our response must be stronger than hate! Whether it succeeds depends on the strength of our will to present a united front and work together. Let us send out a clear signal of our desire to do so from Berlin today.

Thank you very much!