



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Foreign Terrorist Fighters and OSCE Counter-terrorism Strategic Priorities

Remarks

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Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be among you today and I would like to thank the Ukrainian Chair of the Asian Contact Group for inviting me to today's meeting. I also would like to welcome the remarks on this subject by our Australian Ambassador, H.E. David Stuart. Let me take this opportunity to reiterate our appreciation for the support of Australia and its participation in OSCE counter-terrorism activities.

The terrorist threat continues to evolve rapidly. A number of groups have gained in prominence over the past 2 years; Boko Haram in northern Nigeria; ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Recently Al Qaeda announced the creation of a new franchise in South Asia. These developments, as well as growing tactics trends such as hostage-taking and the recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters, are a

constant reminder that terrorism remains a serious cause for concern. Thwarting terrorist attacks is a complex and challenging task for the International Community, and even more so for one country alone, since terrorist operations are carried out easily and come relatively cheap.

The topic of foreign terrorist fighters is a very important for two reasons. First, terrorists operate without any respect of national borders, without any consideration for national sovereignty. There still are extensive difficulties for States to bring to justice suspected terrorist perpetrators located outside their jurisdiction. Full investigation and prosecution of a terrorist offence requires co-operation across borders using tools such as effective law enforcement and judicial co-operation including exchange of information, extradition and mutual legal assistance on the basis of international, regional and bilateral agreements and commitments. Collecting and securing evidence about the possible activities of suspected foreign terrorist fighters abroad is very challenging, especially where this unfolds in ungoverned spaces and theatres of active armed conflicts. Thus, it is understood that recent events have only heightened our collective concern, particularly among some of the Asian Partners for Co-operation.

Second, the surge in the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters highlights the challenge of countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism – the challenge of early prevention and intervention to prevent departures. Preventive efforts are often portrayed as a *soft* approach, but they are not easy to design and implement effectively. Indeed, as the experience of many OSCE participating States shows, prevention is a very *hard* approach to follow. In the face of a seemingly intractable challenge, your commitment to share your experiences and practices in combating terrorism is essential. Our co-operation with our Asian Partners can only be strengthened and we have actively invited or participated in several fora over the past 12 months with

almost all the Partners. I myself have been to Asia recently, albeit not directly related to foreign terrorist fighters – first in Seoul to support a dialogue with the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS) and later Southeast Asia as part of an ASEAN meeting organized through the Japan -- ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF). States already have at their disposal a range of international instruments and are of course not left on their own. International and regional organizations are at your service to address these issues; they offer important platforms to promote common perceptions, concerted action and capacity, including at both the political and practical levels. I am proud that the OSCE has an active and well-developed “tool kit” for collaboration, particularly in counter-terrorism.

The OSCE as the world’s largest regional security arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter has been working closely with the United Nations for a long time and actively we support the process of implementing the United Nation’s Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

I would like to highlight here the key OSCE document -- the “OSCE Consolidated Framework for the Fight against Terrorism”, adopted by OSCE participating States in December 2012. This Consolidated Framework builds on previously adopted decisions, commitments and mandates over the past ten years. The document constitutes an important milestone as it provides a clear blueprint for the OSCE's contribution to global efforts against terrorism.

In particular, the Consolidated Framework identifies strategic focus areas. One strategic area is to promote the implementation of the international legal framework against terrorism (in particular the 19 universal anti-terrorism conventions and protocols) and to enhance international legal co-operation in criminal matters related to terrorism. In practical terms, that means that upon the request of participating States, and in partnership with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate and the United Nations Office on

Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the OSCE organizes regional and national workshops and training seminars for law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges, with the aim of building political support for international co-operation in criminal matters related to terrorism; supporting the sharing of information on legal developments and practical experiences in the implementation of counter-terrorism investigative and co-operation tools; promoting respect for human rights in the fight against terrorism and efficient criminal justice processes based on the rule of law.

This year's annual Chairmanship OSCE-wide Counter-Terrorism Conference, which was held in April in Interlaken, Switzerland, is a good practical example of information sharing, co-operation and exchange among experts translated into capacity building.

In relation to the Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) problem, the Conference's recommendations summarized by the Swiss Chairmanship ranged from developing a better understanding of this phenomenon, to the need to adapt strategies, action plans and pertinent legislation to the specific challenges of the "foreign terrorist fighters" issue. In this regard, the Conference identified accessible tools and procedures for countering terrorism, how to use available international tools more effectively, and stressed the importance of social media and the Internet, when dealing with the "foreign terrorist fighters" issue.

The Conference recommended to the OSCE and its executive structures to consider, in partnership with international and regional actors, organizing thematic discussions in order to improve the understanding of the phenomenon and to exchange experiences, as well as to test international legal and operational co-operation mechanisms through table-top exercises. We are actively pursuing many of these ideas at the moment and welcome ideas or invitations from our Asian Partners.

As noted by Ambassador Stuart, the recently adopted UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2178 requires UN Member States to “prevent and suppress the recruiting, organizing, transporting or equipping” of foreign terrorist fighters, as well as the financing of their travel or activities. In addition, states must “prevent the movement of terrorists or terrorist groups” through their territory, and ensure that their domestic laws allow for the prosecution of those who attempt to do so. Our OSCE framework will support the implementation of these tasks.

Based on this resolution, and following recommendations from the Interlaken Counter-Terrorism Conference, the Swiss Chairmanship has recently circulated a Draft Declaration on “**THE OSCE ROLE IN COUNTERING THE PHENOMENON OF FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS IN THE CONTEXT OF UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS 2170 (2014) AND 2178 (2014)**” that is currently subject of discussions and it is expected to be adopted at the Ministerial Council meeting in Basel next month.

Here are some potential activities and projects the OSCE can consider in the FTF field, inviting other organizations to consider doing jointly or in co-operation:

The OSCE could consider drawing on existing open source analytical capacity with the objective of promoting implementation of UNSCR 2178 in the OSCE area.

Similarly, the OSCE could examine the interest for contributing to partners’ best practices guides that collect compelling counter-narratives to the current terrorist propaganda, in consultations with civil society.

To these ends, the OSCE could build on its established platform and network among national experts dealing with counter-terrorism, in co-operation with, but not limited to, agencies such as Interpol.

The OSCE could moreover organize table-top exercises in co-operation with the UN, Interpol, and others, to test existing measures at the national and international level to anticipate and prevent the movement of FTFs. This would allow identifying potential weaknesses as well as fostering better cooperation and coordination, nationally and internationally.

The OSCE could also expand its existing programme on countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT) to incorporate the prevention of departures and the re-integration of returnees. We should also continue promoting the use of the guidebook on VERLT and Community Policing that was published this year by the OSCE Transnational Threats Department and the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

Overall, the OSCE would make use of many its existing programmes and mandates, for example in the area of travel document security or in the area of legal co-operation in criminal matters, facilitating discussions on prosecutorial, judicial and police co-operation, for example on jurisdictional or evidence-related issues in offenses related to FTF. The OSCE can also use its other strategic counter-terrorism tools, such as enhancing public-private partnerships to combat the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes.

Through its cross-dimensional, multi-stakeholder approach outlined in the ‘Consolidated Framework for the Fight against Terrorism’, the OSCE is particularly well-placed to serve as a platform to launch region-specific initiatives that complement the global objectives outlined in UNSCR 2178 and the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) Hague-Marrakech Memorandum on FTF. The OSCE framework allows sufficient flexibility to address new and emerging trends.

In conclusion,

OSCE colleagues, as you have heard today, the OSCE has a long history of close co-operation with the Asian Partners and we can strengthen these efforts in counter-terrorism issues regarding FTF. We remain available to your comments and guidance to continue being a substantive contributor in generating political will, raising awareness and building capacity in the OSCE area and with its Partners. Thank you.