

Statement by Ambassador Dr Palitha Kohona

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UN

**Sixth Committee, Agenda item 107 “Measures to eliminate international
terrorism”**

7-8 October, 2014

Mr. Chairman,

Since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time, let me congratulate His Excellency Mr Tuvako Manongi on his assumption of the Chair of the Sixth Committee.

My delegation aligns itself with the Statement delivered by Iran on behalf of the Non Aligned Movement.

Mr. Chairman,

Terrorism has once again become the burning focus of the United Nations Agenda, including in the Security Council. The inhumanity and barbarity of the Islamic

State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has jolted terrorism back to the sharp centre of our attention. The slaughter of children, beheadings and mass executions have shocked the Sri Lankan people, along with the rest of the international community.

However we must note that the horrendous methods of the ISIL are not novel. They did not invent terrorist violence and brutality. They have copied existing models. Their methods, in fact, are borrowed from the tool kits of other terrorist groups of which communities have been victims previously. Sri Lanka knows only too well, having experienced the ruthlessness of the terrorist group, the LTTE, for three decades which refined suicide technology, including the use of the suicide vest and engaged in mass executions and killing of civilians. It is imperative, therefore, that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purpose be condemned with equal vehemence. There can be no good terrorists. Terrorism and its apologists should not be provided with excuses.

Confronting terrorism effectively is by no means an easy task, especially with the rapid developments in technology and communications. The challenge has become only tougher. Terrorist organizations, today, rely on the mass media, on the print and social media, to achieve their goals. In fact, any impression that ISIL alone has

been successful in this respect is a clear misunderstanding. They have copied the techniques of other terrorist groups which so effectively used the media to meet their objectives, both political and financial. This includes everything from inflicting terror on civilians, seducing the impressionable to join their ranks and seeking funding. States should work together, pooling their resources and sharing intelligence, to address this phenomenon. Part of this strategy should entail the better use of the media to counter and discredit the narrative propagated by terror groups.

Attempts by any terror group to associate itself with a particular religion should also be rejected. Such cynical efforts only polarize communities further and generate hatred. States must work with credible partners who wield influence within religious groups, that they claim to associate with, to discredit the terror narrative. Attempts by these terror groups to foster animosity amongst religious groups should be confronted with ecumenical initiatives that highlight the commitment of all the world's religions to respect fundamental tenets of human dignity and the right to life. The media has a significant role to play in this respect. We must also address the socio-economic factors that create a sense of hopelessness that spawn terrorist sympathisers.

The expanding transcontinental reach of terror groups should further strengthen the call on multilateralism to challenge this hydra headed monster. Terror groups today rely on international networks spanning continents to propagate their ideology, raise funds and purchase weaponry. Terrorism is funded by vast illicit enterprises that encompass trafficking in drugs, humans, weapons, and money laundering. Without these networks, terror groups simply would not be able to sustain themselves for too long. One primary factor that assisted Sri Lanka's victory over terrorism in 2009, was the assistance we received from our friends in dismantling key nodal points of the international network of the LTTE that provided the organization with the necessary finances and weaponry.

Sri Lanka believes that the finalization of a UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism is urgently required given that such a legal framework would give clarity to a unified strategy to confront global terrorism. This would significantly reinforce and advance the norm setting process that has been taking place within the UN system. It is essential that compromises be found to overcome the deadlock in the Ad-Hoc Committee on Measures to Eliminating Terrorism to move forward in the finalization of a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. The recent upsurge in terrorist attacks around the world should only reinforce the need for such a framework.

Sri Lanka reaffirms its commitment to the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy that consolidates the activities of the Member States and presents a common strategic and operational framework to fight terrorism and protect the right to life. We also fully endorse the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate. Our victory over terrorism gave us insights which we would be happy to share with the international community. Sri Lanka is party to 13 multilateral conventions on terrorism, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) instruments; The Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters which supplements the SAARC Regional Convention on Terrorism and the Additional Protocol. Sri Lanka is an active participant in the global efforts to counter the illegal movement of funds. We support the General Assembly's coordination of counter-terrorism efforts and legal norm-setting work. We note that the Security Council has also addressed this issue through a range of decisions and by establishing several subsidiary bodies.

Mr. Chairman.

We continue to support the United Nations as the primary body to spearhead the global campaign against terror.

I thank you.