



Statement of H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza
Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations
Sixth Committee of the 70th Session of the General Assembly
Agenda item 108: Measures to eliminate international terrorism

New York, 14 October 2015

Mr. Chair,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you and the bureau on your election and assure you of my delegation's firm commitment to engage constructively in the work of the Sixth Committee of the 70th Session of the General Assembly.

While there remain some substantive disagreements on a "comprehensive definition of terrorism," Article 2, paragraph 1.b, of the *International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism*, adopted by this Committee, offers us a useful definition of this crime, that is: acts "intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian, or to any other person not taking an active part in the hostilities in a situation of armed conflict, when the purpose of such act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act." This definition, which has already been accepted by the 187 States Parties to the Convention, has enabled the international community to adopt a host of welcome measure to contrast and prevent all forms of terrorism.

The Holy See welcomes this cooperation as an expression of international solidarity to promote peace and security for all, especially for persons and groups who are under direct terrorist threats, such as those who promote fundamental human rights and those belonging to religious and ethnic minorities.

The Holy See supports the crucial role that the United Nations as a leader in the efforts to prevent and contrast international terrorism. As a nonpartisan consensus builder, the United Nations is thus in a unique position to play an effective role in negotiating the adoption of multilateral policies and strategies to combat international terrorism.

Mr. Chair,

In the last year, we have witnessed a dramatic evolution of terrorist activities into forms of utter savagery never seen before, such as beheadings, crucifixions and the destruction of places of high historic and symbolic value, all transmitted live to the horror of us all, as well as by atrocities directed against entire communities and, indeed, against entire countries. Pope Francis referred to this in his Address to the General Assembly on September 25, when he affirmed, "I must renew my repeated appeals regarding the painful situation of the entire Middle East, North Africa and other African countries, where Christians, together with other

cultural or ethnic groups, and even members of the majority religion, who have no desire to be caught up in hatred and folly, have been forced to witness the destruction of their places of worship, their cultural and religious heritage, their houses and property, and have faced the alternative either of fleeing or of paying for their adhesion to good and to peace by their own lives, or by enslavement.” Then he added, “These realities should serve as a grave summons to an examination of conscience on the part of those charged with the conduct of international affairs.”

The Holy See is convinced that the fight against international and all forms of terrorism cannot be won solely by recourse to the most sophisticated weapons. In any policy and measure against international terrorism, it is essential to uphold the rule of law, adhere strictly to the UN Charter and to international law, and respect fundamental human rights. An arbitrary application of unilateral measures, a selective approach to human rights and a disregard for cultures and religions cannot win hearts and minds. Such actions come across as brazen demonstrations of superiority and deliberate acts of provocation, thereby increasing feelings of victimization among populations, especially among young people.

We must also address the underlying causes of terrorism. We must dry up the swamps where terrorism breeds: by education and mutual respect, by perseverance in dialogue at all levels, by the rule of law and good governance, by engaging entire local communities most at risk of radicalization and achieving their satisfactory social integration, by creating job opportunities especially for the young who are susceptible to terrorist propaganda. We must strengthen preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts to promote peaceful societies and inclusive institutions.

The Holy See expresses its concern for the manipulation of religious faith to promote terrorist activities. Genuine religious faith is in fact a source of unity and strength against fundamentalist terrorism and encourages individuals and societies to opt for non-violent means to air their grievances and to obtain justice. Pope Francis has called repeatedly on all religious communities and leaders never to use religion as a pretext for committing acts of violence.

Mr. Chair,

A world free of terrorism will go a long way in fostering what President Franklin Roosevelt defined as the “four freedoms”: the freedom of speech, the freedom of worship, the freedom from want, and, particularly in the case of terrorism, the freedom from fear.

These are the fundamental freedoms that terrorists abhor. These are fundamental freedoms that we must uphold.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.