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Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Statement by Mr. Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik
First Secretary, Norway

Mr. Chair,

Terrorism continues to be a grave threat to international peace and security. The situation facing us today in Syria and Iraq should make this clear to everyone. Syria's bloody civil war has killed over 200 000 people, and set the region on fire. Hundreds of thousands of civilians are fleeing and looking for refuge, including in Norway.

The unprecedented brutality of ISIL, a group with both political and territorial ambitions, clearly demonstrates the ability of terrorist organisations to adapt and pose fundamental threats not only to the immediate region, but also to the international community as a whole. Yet again, we are reminded of our global responsibility to take decisive steps to contain and eventually defeat such terrorist organisations.

(Check against delivery)

ISIL and other terrorists groups are attracting thousands of foreign terrorist fighters from all areas of the world, and Norway is not immune to this trend. Over the course of the last few years, close to one hundred Norwegians have joined various violent extremist groups that are engaged in mass atrocities.

Individuals joining terrorist groups abroad cause devastating damage to local populations. They also represent a serious threat when they return to their home countries. This means that we have to act both nationally and collectively.

As stated on numerous occasions, Norway opposes terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Preventing terrorism requires a comprehensive and long-term approach. We must make use of a broad range of measures, including political, legal, economic and – as a last resort – military means. Norway is fully committed to the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We will continue to work for its full and effective implementation, and we urge others to do the same.

In order to put a stop to terrorism, violent extremism must be defeated. We must work together to eradicate the root causes of extremist attitudes. In June, Norway hosted one of the regional follow-on conferences to the Washington Summit on Countering Violent Extremism. The concrete deliverables from the conference include a network for European youth leaders, establishing a global alliance of women's organisations working on Countering Violent Extremism, and facilitating the Strong Cities initiative.

Mr. Chair,

Norway believes in multilateralism and a strong UN leadership in a broad range of areas. The unanimous adoption of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in 2006 gives the UN a strong and broad base to be a strategic leader on counterterrorism issues, both at the normative level and through the coordination of multilateral efforts.

However, if the UN is to fulfil this leadership role, all member states must give their full support. We also welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to draw up a new action plan on the prevention of violent extremism.

Norway supports the important role of the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force in coordinating UN efforts to assist Member States in implementing all four pillars of the Global Strategy.

Mr. Chair,

Norway attaches great importance to countering terrorism while fully respecting human rights and the rule of law. We have implemented all 13 UN counter-terrorism conventions and related protocols, and we encourage all states to ratify and implement the UN counter-terrorism instruments.

However, the ratification and implementation of the existing sectoral conventions is not sufficient. An overarching and comprehensive instrument is needed to provide the necessary legal guidance and predictability if we are to succeed in our joint endeavour to eradicate international terrorism.

We were encouraged to see that the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2178 on foreign terrorist fighters with the co-sponsorship of more than 100 states, including Norway. In our view, this illustrates the joint resolve of the international community to combat the threat posed by ISIL and other terrorist groups. We also believe that this common resolve provides us with an opportunity to finally agree on an international definition of terrorism.

A Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism would express the United Nation's commitment and ability to combat terrorism, while fully upholding international law, including human rights law and humanitarian law. It would also enhance international cooperation in this field. Moreover, agreeing on the Comprehensive Convention within the parameters of the UN would make it unequivocally clear that the General Assembly is the principle organ for international treaty making and norm setting, including in the area of countering terrorism.

On 19 May 2015, the Council of Europe adopted an additional protocol to the 2005 Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism. The protocol implements resolution 2178 by stipulating that certain acts shall be criminalised in the domestic law of member states. These acts include traveling abroad for the purpose of committing terrorist acts, funding and organising such travel, participation in an association or group for the purpose of committing terrorist acts, and receiving terrorism training.

We believe that the additional protocol will serve as an important tool for preventing people from traveling to join ISIL or other terrorist groups abroad. Norway is ready to sign the additional protocol in Riga on 22 October.

Despite important efforts such as these, regional instruments will be unable to reach their full potential without an internationally agreed definition of terrorism. Only the United Nations with its status as universal creator of norms and legal standards can resolve this issue.

Mr. Chair,

Norway considers sanctions to be an important tool for countering the financing of terrorism and restricting the travel of individuals responsible for terrorist crimes. Norway has frozen several accounts belonging to Norwegian citizens participating in terrorist organisations and persons designated by the 1267/1989 sanctions committee.

We commend the important work of the Office of the Ombudsperson in upholding human rights standards in the 1267 al-Qaeda sanctions regime. We believe that the role of the Ombudsperson is essential for an effective UN sanctions system.

We look forward to working with Ms. Catherine Marchi-Uhel in her new capacity as Ombudsperson and we take this opportunity to ensure her of our delegation's readiness to work with her to overcome the challenges that lie ahead.

Thank you.