

**Statement by
Delegation of Sri Lanka
Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations
Before the Sixth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly 73rd Session
Agenda Item 111: Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism
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Mr. Chairperson

Let me begin on behalf of my delegation, by warmly congratulating you and the bureau on your election. Be assured Mr. Chairperson, of Sri Lanka's full support as you steer this Committee to the successful conclusion of its work.

At the outset we extend our most sincere condolences to the victims and their families of all terror attacks that continue unabated, in a world where violence is becoming increasingly the new normal.

We take this opportunity to thank the Office of Counter Terrorism (UNOCT) for its work. We are confident the Office will help strengthen the capability of the United Nations system, and enhance coordination and coherence across the 38 Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force entities, to ensure the balanced implementation of the four pillars of the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy.

Sri Lanka is committed to cooperate with the UNOCT in its key functions and welcomes the focus on capacity-building assistance to Member States and we actively participated in the first ever High Level Conference of Heads of Counter Terrorism Agencies of Member States held in June this year. The Conference was a launching pad for member states to create networks and partnerships and share information and strategies in order to strengthen cooperation and give practical expression to the objectives of the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy.

In this regard it is important that media - especially with the rise in social media tools - helps disseminate the values that will foster a culture of peace and a forum for dialogue and understanding rather than a platform for hate and bigotry. We must actively seek to prevent the abuse of social media to promote the culture of racism, hate and intolerance.

As a country that suffered under the yoke of terrorism for nearly thirty years, we condemn unequivocally and in the strongest possible terms, terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. All acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, and wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed. All such attacks are an attack on *all of us*, and it is indeed time for *all of us* to show solidarity and unity of purpose in combating this scourge.

International networks with linkages to organized crime are a critical lifeline for terrorist groups. These networks enable terrorists to propagate their ideologies, raise funds and acquire arms. They are funded by profits siphoned from drugs, arms and human trafficking, wildlife and forest crime, money laundering and cyber-crimes. It is therefore imperative for all member states to pool their resources and share intelligence, data bases and expertise to counter this issue. Transnational organized crime is increasingly a part of the arsenal of terrorists, and directly related to financing of terrorism.

Groups such as ISIL/Da'esh continue to erase human history through the deliberate destruction of irreplaceable cultural heritage sites. Indeed our wildlife and forests, our flora and fauna are being ravaged due to transnational organized crime, impacting vulnerable communities and our fragile environment. These are not phenomena that a single state or a few states could deal with, but rather it demands a concerted global effort. It is therefore imperative for all member states to pool their resources and share intelligence so as to counter this problem in the manner it deserves.

Sri Lanka reaffirms its commitment to the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy, which serves as a rallying call to action, and presents a common strategic and operational framework to fight terrorism and protect the right to life.

Today we encounter many challenges as a result of the changing face of terrorism and violent extremism, not least of all due to the rapid advancement of technology, porous borders and large movements of humanity due to violence. Therefore, we have also to look at new and innovative ways to counter this growing threat.

Terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism is not exclusive to any one country or region, but spreads across national borders. This rising transnational phenomenon challenges existing borders, and threatens the very fabric of the principle of sovereign states upon which the international legal order is based.

We continue to be deeply concerned over the acute and growing threat of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs). With tens of thousands of such fighters hailing from over 100 States, it is imperative to harness global support and respond more aggressively to these threats.

However, while terrorists have dehumanized us in every way, the international community should not embrace the lawlessness of the terrorist and must never abandon *its* common humanity, which is what binds us together and gives us strength in our fight against terror.

At the same time, terrorism and violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism, cannot, must not, and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group.

Chairperson,

In many parts of the world, violent extremism targets vulnerable and marginalized communities, children, minorities, women and girls. It is therefore imperative, that we proactively include and engage those entities of

the United Nations System that deal with Children, Minorities, Women and Girls.

While we must make every effort to prevent refugee and asylum status from being abused for purposes of perpetrating terror. We should not fail to protect the poor, weak and marginalized among us. We must at all times in this collective fight against terror, continue to fulfill our obligations under the UN charter, international law, international human rights law, and humanitarian law.

As noble as these objectives are, we must also avoid lapsing into bureaucratic and cyclical practices. States must demonstrate a requisite political will and commitment to close ranks, and make a determined and singular effort to overcome this challenge.

Sri Lanka is party to 13 Counter-Terrorism Conventions, and to the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism. We remain an active participant in global efforts to counter the illegal movement of funds for terrorist purposes, and will continue to support the work of the General Assembly and the Security Council in coordinating counter-terrorism efforts and establishing legal norms.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism established by the General Assembly has made a vital contribution to strengthen the international legal framework against terrorism.

We must recognize that the building blocks for a normative framework in enhancing international cooperation in these areas, are contained in the efforts undertaken by the General Assembly;

Despite broad support for the Draft Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT), a positive conclusion to negotiations has eluded us for over a decade. Sri Lanka wishes to stress the importance of finalizing these negotiations as a vital step.

It is pertinent at this time to recall that the conclusion of a CCIT was one of the key components of the 2006 Plan of Action to combat Terrorism.

Surely as we move into the seventy third session of the General Assembly it must be seen as the ideal and decisive opportunity for Member States to summon the requisite political will necessary to bring these negotiations to a successful conclusion. To that end, Sri Lanka urges Member States to resolve the outstanding differences without delay. It is imperative that we send a clear message on the resolve of the international community to combat this phenomenon, for the sake of all victims of terrorism and for the future of our world as we know it. Given the threats we face today, there is no time more urgent than now to make this happen.

Mr. Chairperson,

As a country which comprehensively eradicated terrorism from its soil following a violent and tragic era that spanned almost three decades, Sri Lanka places great importance on international cooperation in the effort to combat terrorism. We look forward to a more constructive dialogue with all countries and will continue to advocate tirelessly against the scourge of terrorism.

Thank you

