



Statement by H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza
Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See
Seventy-fourth Session of the United Nations General Assembly
Sixth Committee, Item 109: Measures to eliminate international terrorism
New York, 10 October 2019

Mr. Chair,

Committing terrorism acts to harm innocent people is utterly unjustifiable and unacceptable. The terrorists' sheer disdain for life and the brutality of their acts cannot leave us indifferent. There can be no ideological, political, philosophical, racial, ethnic, or religious justification for its use. The sufferings of the victims bring a renewed sense of urgency to the important work of all those who are involved in the development of national and international solutions to fight and eradicate such a deplorable phenomenon.

Terrorism and the efforts to combat it draw attention to the four pillars of the United Nations, namely, peace and security, human rights, the rule of law, and human development. By its very nature, terrorism threatens each of these pillars.¹ It is a fundamental violation of human dignity and of everything that the United Nations stands for.

As all are threatened, all must respond. The international community as a whole must deny financial support and access to weapons to those who would employ the tactics of terrorism. Particular attention must be given to preclude the radicalization of youth through the media and cyber technologies. Terrorism is a crime that must be fought taking full advantage of the well-honed mechanisms of criminal law and international mutual assistance among police and judicial authorities. In particular, those who abet violent extremism or shelter members of terrorist groups must be held accountable before courts of law. Similarly, violations of international humanitarian law and crimes against humanity must be pursued vigorously. Measures to combat terrorism, to be effective and not counterproductive, must respect scrupulously the due process of law, human rights and the dignity of all those involved. In fact, combating terrorism can never justify policies and practices that sacrifice due process and human dignity.

Counter-terrorism efforts must also involve local populations, local governments and grassroots organizations, including faith-based organization and religious leaders. These

¹ G.A. Res. 49/60, Annex, U.N. Doc. A/RES/49/60 (Feb. 17, 1995).

groups provide education and employment to support strategies that may keep youth from being radicalized by terrorist propaganda. All States are called upon to work together with local authorities, local civil society, and local faith communities in order to promote development, foster education, protect human rights, and prevent the spread of terrorist propaganda.

Mr. Chair,

My Delegation wishes to underline in particular seven points the respect and fostering of which could have a fundamental impact in stemming and eradicating terrorism:

First, respect for freedom of conscience, religion, and belief;

Second, the equality of all citizens before the law;

Third, a positive and respectful distinction between the political sphere and that of religion, so as to preserve both the religious freedom of all persons and the irreplaceable role of religion for the formation of consciences and the creation of a basic ethical consensus in society;²

Fourth, a categorical condemnation of the abuse and manipulation of religion and religious belief to incite hatred and violence;

Fifth, an authentic commitment to intercultural and interreligious dialogue; and

Sixth, effective educational efforts to form responsible and peace-loving citizens.

In their joint document entitled *Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, signed in Abu Dhabi on 4 February this year, Pope Francis and the Grand Imam Ahmed Al-Tayyeb appealed to religious, political, civil, educational and cultural leaders to promote a culture of dialogue, mutual cooperation, reciprocal understanding, tolerance, acceptance of others and peaceful living together. Such an approach ~~commitment~~ can contribute greatly to reducing the root causes of terrorism.

In these regard, my Delegation is convinced that no matter how grave the threats that terrorism poses to our collective security, any lasting response to this evil cannot be achieved solely through law enforcement or security means, but rather by nurturing a culture of encounter that fosters mutual acceptance and promotes peaceful and inclusive societies.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

² Cfr. Pope Benedict XVI, Address, Elysée Palace, Paris, 12 September 2008.