

**Sri Lanka Statement**  
**By Mrs. Sonali Samarasinghe, Minister**  
**Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in New York**  
**Before the Sixth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly 74th Session**  
**Agenda Item 109: Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism**  
**9 October 2019**

Mr. Chairperson

On behalf of my delegation, I warmly congratulate you and the bureau on your election. Be assured of Sri Lanka's full support as you steer this Committee to its successful conclusion.

At the outset, our most sincere condolences are extended to the victims and their families of all terror attacks that continue unabated even as violent extremism, hate speech, intolerance and pugilistic nationalism keep on the rise.

Chairperson,

2019 would, *but* for the events of Easter Sunday, have marked a decade of peace in Sri Lanka, following a thirty-year civil conflict, where Sri Lanka suffered under the yoke of terrorism, and the very fabric of our nation was torn apart. It is a testament to the unity and collective identity of the people of Sri Lanka, hailing from multi ethnic and multi religious backgrounds, that during this decade of peace, we were able to forge ahead *towards* a path of reconciliation, transitional justice, development and sustained peace.

The events of Easter Sunday rocked our nation as terrorists, inspired and indoctrinated by such extremist organizations as ISIL (Da'esh), specifically targeted churches and luxury hotels, wreaking havoc on the holiest of days for Christians.

Even though Sri Lanka responded swiftly and effectively to successfully restore normalcy, it was the country's first experience of international terrorism and demonstrated the pervasive nature of this scourge.

Attacks on religious sites are particularly debased in their cruelty, striking when victims have closed their eyes in prayer with their backs to the door. Terrorists attack soft targets because they are easily accessible, low risk and high impact. It gives such attacks an added dimension of cowardice and inhumanity.

It is for these reasons that Sri Lanka was happy to welcome the UN Plan of Action to safeguard religious sites launched recently. It is also crucial for the UN and Member States to draw from the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, and the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy and other related Resolutions in addressing this cross-cutting issue. It is worthy to report that Sri Lanka is currently exploring the possibility of drafting a whole of government strategic plan to prevent and counter violent extremism and build community resilience throughout the country.

Chairperson,

Sri Lanka reiterates that media - especially social media platforms - must seek to disseminate the values that will foster a culture of peace rather than hate and bigotry. It is important to note that the Easter Sunday attacks were not carried out by marginalized members of society but by affluent, foreign educated local actors who were radicalized abroad *and* on the internet.

Therefore today, we encounter many challenges as a result of the changing face of terrorism and violent extremism. As a result, we have to find new and innovative ways to counter this threat. As we have seen, terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism are not exclusive to any one country or region, but spreads across national borders, and is a transnational phenomenon that threatens the very basis of the principle of sovereign states upon which the international legal order is based.

Chairperson,

Sri Lanka is pleased to cooperate with the UNOCT in its key functions and welcomes the focus on capacity-building assistance to Member States. Sri Lanka acknowledges with thanks the assistance and close engagement with UNOCT and

CTED especially following the Easter Sunday attacks. We thank the Executive Director of CTED for her timely visit to Sri Lanka which provided an excellent opportunity for her to meet with high-level Sri Lankan officials. We Appreciate the UNOCT led Missions to explore the establishment of a Countering Terrorist Travel Programme and to hold capacity building training programs with relevant agencies on countering financing of Terrorism.

We welcome the second High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter Terrorism Agencies to be held next year. This will allow Member States to establish networks and partnerships and share information and strategies in order to strengthen cooperation and give practical expression to the common objectives of the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy to fight terrorism and protect the right to life.

The acute and growing threat of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) is of deep concern as well. International networks with linkages to organized crime are a critical lifeline for terrorist groups. They are funded by profits siphoned from drugs, arms and human trafficking, wildlife and forest crime, money laundering and cyber-crimes.

To this end it is important to strengthen the sharing of financial intelligence and information among, inter alia, Financial Intelligence Units, law-enforcement and intelligence agencies, the private sector, and regional and international counterparts, and expand the scope of activities and transactions monitored by FIUs to facilitate the tracking of transactions to fund terrorist activities that may have legitimate sources.

Chairperson,

The building blocks for a normative framework in enhancing international cooperation in all these areas, are contained in the efforts undertaken by the General Assembly; in particular, the Ad Hoc Committee on the Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism which has already resulted in sectorial conventions on the suppression of terrorism being adopted. These include the 1997 Terrorist Bombings Convention, the 1999 Terrorist Financing convention and the 2005 Nuclear Terrorism Convention.

The Terrorist Financing Convention is specifically designed to criminalize actions that finance terrorism. The convention also seeks to promote police and judicial cooperation to prevent, investigate and punish the financing of such acts. The landmark Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1373 of 2001, drew from the Terrorist Financing Convention for its content.

In this regard following the Easter Sunday attacks, Sri Lanka proscribed the following organizations connected thereto, namely (i) National Thowheed Jama'ath (NTJ) (ii) Jama'athe Milla'athe Ibrahim (JMI) and (iii) Willayath As Seylani under domestic Prevention of Terrorism laws and also designated the said three organisations under the terms of UNSCR 1373 along with a further 26 individuals suspected of terrorism/terrorist financing activities.

However, while terrorists seek to dehumanize us, the international community should never abandon *its* common humanity, to fight against terror in a spirit of respect, responsibility, dialogue and solidarity. In a richly diverse world it is surely our common humanity that must serve as the guarantee of a unified response to such despicable acts. 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,

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.

It is unfortunate that despite broad support for the Draft Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT), a positive conclusion to negotiations has eluded us for over a decade.

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.

Finally, as we celebrate 75 years of multilateral cooperation next year, it must be seen as the ideal and decisive opportunity for Member States to summon the requisite political will 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. Given the threats we face today, there is no time more urgent than now to make this happen.

Thank you