



# MALAYSIA

## PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**STATEMENT BY  
THE HON. MR. HAMZAH ZAINUDIN  
DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER OF MALAYSIA  
AT THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE  
ON THE ROLE OF YOUTH  
IN COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND PROMOTING PEACE**

**NEW YORK, 23 APRIL 2015**

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Mr. President,

At the outset, my delegation warmly welcomes Your Royal Highness Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, to the Council.

2. My delegation highly appreciates the unique opportunity provided by the participation of Your Royal Highness to share your perspective on the important and timely topic of today's open debate.
3. We also wish to thank Professor Peter Neumann and Dr. Scott Atran for their comprehensive and illuminating briefings.

Mr. President,

4. The international community is witnessing an increasing trend towards radicalisation and violent extremism among the youths, perpetrated by terrorist groups who are manipulating grievances and religion to achieve their political aims.

5. Unfortunately, their calls for violent extremism have attracted supporters and sympathisers worldwide, in the developing and developed countries, particularly among the young. The youths are our future and thus, we cannot afford to stand aside as they are increasingly affected by extremism and violence, whether as victims or as perpetrators.

Mr. President,

6. Based on various studies conducted in Malaysia and the Southeast Asian region on factors that contribute towards radicalisation of the youths, socio-economic aspects such as poverty, unemployment, lack of education and deprivation are not the only contributing factors that gave rise to extremism among the youths. This is evident

from the fact that large numbers of militants in the Southeast Asian region who joined terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and Da'esh in the Middle East are professionals and from the middle-class group, including academicians, engineers or students.

7. The main motivation seems to be political in nature, be it prolonged and grievous injustice, gross violations of human rights, foreign occupation, and systematic discrimination. Their despair and anger are exploited effectively by terrorist groups, who instilled a sense of purpose and identity to the impressionable youths. While these youths may not suffer personal trauma and sufferings first-hand from the grievous injustice or violation of human rights, they strongly identify with others who do, especially those sharing the same religion, ethnicity or ideology, the so-called secondary trauma symptom.

8. In this context, religion or ideology becomes a convenient tool to justify and legitimise their violent actions. Meanwhile, the advent of the ICT and the internet brings sufferings from far-flung regions of the world to the youths as never before, and makes it easier for the extremists to reach out globally to propagate their cause, gain sympathisers and spread terror.

Mr. President,

9. We must acknowledge that terrorists groups and extremists wield not only hard power, that is, ability to use force to pursue their agenda, but also considerable soft power, in terms of ideology or narrative that is attractive to the impressionable youth.

10. In addressing youth radicalisation, the international community has developed comprehensive counter-terrorism strategies, which largely focused on military, strategic, and financial aspects in countering terrorism. However, unless we address the appeal of soft power of the extremists, we will not be able to effectively stem the problem of youth radicalisation in the long run.

11. Malaysia strongly believes on the need for the international community to develop a comprehensive counter-narrative that would address the extremists' ideology, counter their violent propaganda and win the hearts and minds of the people. The counter-narrative must be able to provide a substantive, convincing and feasible concept that could be used by the youths when confronted with the realities of injustice, discrimination and suffering in the world today.

12. We have to create awareness among the youths that violence is not the answer in addressing injustice and sufferings, and is contrary to the basic tenet of every religion. Instead of resorting to aggression, the counter-narrative could focus on nonviolent yet powerful means to affect change, such as peaceful protest, persuasion, diplomatic and political pressure, as well as boycott or sanctions.

Mr. President,

13. As part of Malaysia's efforts to provide a counter-narrative to challenge the soft power of the extremists, the Malaysian Prime Minister had initiated the Global Movement of Moderates (GMM) five years ago at this august organisation. The idea was to provide a platform for the silent majority to counter extremism in all its forms.

14. Central to the initiative is the value of moderation as an approach and a guide for action which strongly emphasizes tolerance, understanding, dialogue, mutual respect and inclusiveness. With these key values and objectives, moderation is undoubtedly an important tool and approach to bridge differences and resolve disputes.

Mr. President,

15. We also believe in rehabilitation and not just punitive action in dealing with youths who, whether due to their sense of adventure, idealism, or frustration, had fallen for the narrative of the extremists. For instance, as part of the efforts to win the hearts and minds of the misled youths, the Royal Malaysian Police plays a critical role in engaging with detained terrorists, with the aim of rehabilitating and returning them as useful members of the society.

16. Malaysia also implemented enabling policies including the National Youth Development Policy, since young people are assets that should be nurtured and empowered to realise their full potential and contribute to nation building. Through the policy, Malaysia aims to produce a holistic and harmonious Malaysia youth force, imbued with strong spiritual and moral values. It is our hope that this Policy would mould a generation of youths who are educated, progressive, competitive, as well as tolerant, with a deep sense of responsibility, drive and vision.

17. In this regard, there is an urgent need to conduct research on the 'drivers' and 'trigger' factors that lead young people to extremism and terrorism. Unless solid base-line data is obtained, there is a danger that we will craft policy based on anecdotal evidences, which will subsequently be the basis of designing and implementing intervention programmes that do not address the root problems. Therefore, Malaysia has conducted qualitative studies in the region with regard to reaching out to the youth and countering the terrorist narrative, which we have published and disseminated.

18. We are also in the process of looking into undergraduate radicalisation in our region with the aim of understanding the pathway that university undergraduates take before they are being indoctrinated and radicalised. On another level, realising the tremendous potential and creative energy of the youth, we are also designing a peer-to-peer module that will be used by young people to reach out to other young people. The purpose of this module would be to encourage young people to critically analyse the rhetoric and propaganda spread by the extremists and terrorists. Subsequently, this would build a 'mental firewall' that negates and nullifies the claim that indiscriminate violence practised by terrorists is an effective method to resolve conflict.

Mr. President,

19. Last but not least, in order for the counter-narrative to work, it has to be based on facts on the ground. Thus, in the long run, the international community must strive to remove the grievances and injustice that constitute great motivations for the young people to turn radical.

20. We should also focus on building sustainable and inclusive economies that provide opportunities for the young people. We must give them hope for their future. We need to propagate in a relentless manner, the right path. They must understand that violence and brutality committed in the name of religion are abhorrent and unacceptable in any civilised society.

21. While addressing such grievances might not resolve the problem of extremism overnight, it will go a long way in removing the motive manipulated by the terrorists to gain sympathy among impressionable youths and to recruit foreign terrorist fighters worldwide.

22. Let us all not forget that, while young people make up approximately 50% of the world's population, they make up 100% of our future.

I thank you, Mr. President.