



MALAYSIA

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS



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STATEMENT BY
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SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE: THREATS TO INTERNATIONAL
PEACE AND SECURITY CAUSED BY TERRORIST ACTS

“COUNTERING THE NARRATIVES AND IDEOLOGIES OF TERRORISM”

NEW YORK, 11 MAY 2016

Your Excellency, Mr. Sameh Shoukry,
Foreign Minister of Egypt and President of the Security Council,

Excellencies,

Colleagues,

I join earlier speakers in thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this timely debate and on such a critically important topic. The concept note shared in advance also provided useful guidance.

2. I wish to also thank the briefers whose respective presentations have brought keen insights and added much value to the discussion today.

3. At this stage, my delegation aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by Thailand and Kuwait on behalf of ASEAN and the OIC, respectively.

Mr. President,

4. For the past quarter century or so to date, the United Nations and this Security Council have been at the forefront of international efforts in countering the scourge of terrorism and violent extremism. Alongside the necessary targeted military action and intelligence operations on the ground, we established norms, networks, structures, strategies and action plans to counter the spreading influence of the terrorists on a number of critical fronts notably on their movement, on financing and on recruitment.

5. These have recorded varying degrees of success. However, we **CAN** do more. And we **MUST** do more.

6. This is why today's discussion has particular resonance for us, as it seeks to address the **narrative or ideological aspect** of terrorism, and one of the main drivers of the phenomenon.

7. As such, we are pleased to join consensus on the draft Presidential Statement just adopted, which we fully support and we thank the Egyptian delegation for initiating it.

Mr. President,

8. Terrorism and violent extremism are global threats that transcend cultures, religions and geo-political boundaries. They have no religion.

9. In past decades, we engaged in long-standing struggles against various terrorist groups worldwide, from the IRA to the Tamil Tigers and Aum Shinrikyo. We thus reject any association of terrorism and violent extremism with any one religion, nationality or ethnic group.

10. However, as Muslims, we should not be in denial. We should be honest with ourselves and acknowledge – whether we like it or not – that there is a critical need for us to address the exploitation of Islam by terrorist groups, that led to the perceived link between terrorism and Islam or Muslims.

11. As we are all aware, among the most heinous and nefarious perpetrators of terrorism and violent extremism today include Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, Al-Nusra Front, Al-Shabab, Boko Haram and Da'esh/ISIL. They all have one thing in common – they rely on Islam, or more accurately, their twisted interpretation of Islam, to legitimise their causes, justify their criminal actions, and attract followers.

12. Thus, for the purpose of today's debate, I wish to focus my statement on this disturbing phenomenon, notwithstanding our long-held position to disassociate terrorism from any particular religion.

Mr. President,

13. It has been said that in order to understand a religion, one must study its scriptures. Throughout the Holy Qur'an, the message of peace, justice and honourable conduct features prominently and constitutes the very essence of Islam. Indeed, the very definition of Islam is peace.

14. To illustrate, allow me to quote from **verse 224** of Chapter Two (Surah Al-Baqarah) in the Quran, where Allah says:

“And *make not Allah's (name) an excuse* in your oaths against doing good, or acting rightly, or making peace”

between persons; for Allah is One Who heareth and knoweth all things.”

15. Meanwhile, on justice, Allah says, in **verse 8** from Chapter Five (Surah Al-Maidah):

*“O ye who believe! stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to **fair dealing**, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and **depart from justice**. **Be just**: that is next to piety: and fear Allah. For Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.”*

16. In light of such clear commands in the Qur’an, we strongly denounce the terrorists’ claims that their barbarity is sanctioned by Islam.

Mr. President,

17. The concept of “the end justifies the means” has no place in Islam. So even if you have good intentions or you are fighting a just cause, you are still not allowed to achieve it via wrongful means or to commit transgressions against others.

18. Long before the Geneva Conventions existed, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and subsequent scholars instituted a “just war doctrine”. Among others, during the conduct of war, Muslims are forbidden from harming non-combatants, particularly women, children, the elderly and the sick, as well as envoys and diplomats, and those praying in houses of worship. They are even prohibited from harming civilian objects, including water wells, trees, crops and livestock. This is the true and right teaching of Islam.

19. True Muslims do not accept ideologies that espouse hatred, wanton violence and destruction. We must make absolutely clear that the extremists **ARE** the blasphemers. It is **THEY** who insult and pervert the teaching of the Holy Qur’an and the *Sunnah*.

Mr. President,

20. It is abundantly clear to my delegation that to successfully counter the terrorist narrative, we cannot limit the response to merely denouncing violence or stating why their approach is wrong; it must cut through their rhetoric and seductive approaches.

21. An ideology does not exist in a vacuum. For those who are marginalised, disenchanted or frustrated, an ideology can be a powerful thing. It provides a sense of purpose, a sense of direction, and a sense of belonging, especially when faced with deep underlying socio-political grievances.

22. Based on investigations on the motivations of foreign terrorist fighters in Malaysia, their main motivation was found to be political in nature, be it prolonged and

grievous injustice, gross violations of human rights, foreign occupation, and systematic discrimination against people whom they identify with, due to shared religion, values or ethnicity. Beyond this motivation, they share little similarities, whether academic background, social status, or geographical origin.

23. Thus, in countering the terrorists' narrative, it is crucial to remove these underlying root causes to expose the fallacy of their arguments. This will diminish the "soft power" of the terrorists in manipulating socio-political grievances to gain sympathy among impressionable youths and to recruit foreign terrorist fighters worldwide.

24. Part of Malaysia's efforts in countering the extremist narrative is to engage with religious and community leaders to spread accurate messages about Islam. We believe there is a need to encourage more IT and media-savvy Muslim public figures to reach out to the youths via the social media to provide a counter narrative, including to clarify the concept of *jihad* that had been twisted to serve the terrorists' agenda.

25. At times, the promise of heavenly reward and spiritual salvation has led some to become misguided and fall for the terrorists' narrative. Thus, in our response, we incorporated rehabilitation programme as part of our counter-terrorism measures.

26. This is consistent with our belief in long-term rehabilitation and not just punitive action in dealing with terrorists. Under this program, experts from various religious departments, clerics and police counsellors actively engage with the detainees and provide guidance, with the aim of eventually returning them as useful members of the society.

Mr. President,

27. Malaysia remains steadfast in the belief that terrorism and violent extremism are twin cancers which require our collective and concerted effort to address. We thus, reaffirm our commitment to continue our close cooperation with the UN and relevant international organisations towards this end.

28. On a final note, I wish to stress that terrorist attacks do not discriminate between women and children, between young and old, between black and white, Muslims, Jews or Christians, the rich or the poor. All of us are possible victims of terrorism. In our response to this threat, let us not allow the terrorists to divide us.

29. Therefore, hysterical responses to terrorism, including by discriminating against a group of people for their peaceful religious beliefs, or branding the whole group of people as terrorists, will merely perpetuate terror and paranoia, and further serve the terrorists' narrative.

With that, I thank you Mr. President.