

Brother Carroll (Holy See):

The Holy See thanks the presidency of Egypt for bringing the topic of countering the narratives and ideologies of terrorism to the attention of the Security Council and the international community. The theme of this open debate is extremely important, because it calls us to strike terrorism at its very roots and where it must primarily be fought, namely, in the hearts and minds of men and women, in particular of those who are most at risk of radicalization and recruitment by terrorist groups.

The narratives and ideologies of present-day terrorist groups are well known. They do not attempt to conceal their purportedly religiously inspired beliefs, values and principles. Terrorist groups identify multiple enemies, so that those who respond to their propaganda can legitimately attack those enemies wherever they may be, whether in Paris or in Brussels, in Istanbul, in Aleppo, in Baghdad, or elsewhere.

Countering the narratives and ideologies of terrorist groups is a grave responsibility of all of us. It should be recalled, however, that by building their ideological narratives that justify their horrendous acts of violence with tendentious interpretations and an abusive use of scripture texts, terrorists groups are throwing down the gauntlet principally to religious leaders, in particular for them to refute the falsehoods and condemn the blasphemies and narratives of those ideologies. Religious leaders and people of faith must be at the forefront in delegitimizing the manipulation of faith and the distortion of sacred texts as a justification for violence. Anyone who considers himself or herself a believer while planning and carrying out actions against the fundamental rights and dignity of every man and woman must be condemned.

The fight to unmask the lies behind the narratives and ideologies of present-day terrorist groups summons all religions to unite in confronting not only the unacceptable misuse of religion by these groups, but also all forms of religious bigotry, stereotyping and disrespect for what people hold sacred. Religious leaders must be the first to demonstrate what the fourth meeting of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies of Amman, held in the Vatican on 7 May, called the humanizing and civilizing role of our religions.

That brings us to the fundamental importance of education in countering narratives and ideologies of terrorism. Much of terrorist groups' success in recruiting is based on misinformation and the distortion both of history and the meaning of sacred texts. Objective education can counter such false narratives. We commend the Marrakesh Declaration on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Predominantly Muslim Majority Communities for urging Muslim educational institutions and authorities to conduct a courageous review of educational curricula that addresses honestly and effectively any material that instigates aggression and extremism, leads to war and chaos and results in the destruction of our shared societies.

My delegation believes that the more religion is manipulated to justify acts of terror and violence, the more religious leaders must be engaged in the overall effort to defeat the terrorism that hijacks it. Spurious religious fervour must be countered by authentic religious instruction and the example of authentic communities of faith. There is a strong nexus between religion and diplomacy and between faith-based informal diplomacy and the formal diplomacy of States. Strengthening that nexus would be wise diplomacy, given its enormous potential for confronting terrorism at its roots.

Measures to counter the narratives and ideologies of terrorism must address the root causes on which it feeds, and which make even the most outrageous claims of terrorist groups sound credible. Young people who join the ranks of terrorist organizations often come from poor immigrant families disillusioned by the lack of integration and values in some societies. Those who feel excluded from

such societies or live on their fringes are immediately attracted to terrorists proclaiming themselves to be freedom fighters. Governments should engage with civil society to address the problems of communities that are most at risk of radicalization and recruitment and to achieve such communities' satisfactory social integration.

Certain terrorist groups have excelled in the art of cyber recruitment, giving them transnational and borderless reach. Their access to cyberspace must be denied in order to prevent their narratives and ideologies from poisoning the hearts and minds of millions everywhere, cut off their financing activities and disrupt their coordination of terrorist attacks.

The Holy See is convinced that if we are to win the minds and hearts of our children and young people and prevent them from joining terrorist groups, we must build inclusive societies and prevent illicit trafficking in arms. We must build bridges rather than walls, and engage in dialogue rather than in mutual isolation.

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