

Mr. Ybáñez (Spain) (spoke in Spanish):

Let me begin by thanking Minister Selim and Egypt, as president of the Security Council for this month, for their initiative to organize this meeting devoted to the action of the international community to counter the narratives and ideologies of terrorism.

As occurred on Sunday with Cairo, Today we woke up to the news of new attacks in Baghdad, which have caused more than 70 fatalities. Most of the victims were women who were going to do their daily shopping. Once again, the daily lives of citizens have been tragically cut short. I offer my most heartfelt condolences to the people and the authorities of Iraq, and its Ambassador here present.

Throughout history, it is has been noted that for evil to triumph it is sufficient for good men to do nothing. That is not an option. We have acted and will continue to do so. And we will act together. I therefore wish to congratulate the Egyptian Presidency for presidential statement S/ /PRST/2016/6, which we have just adopted. With it, we move from words to deeds. Today we are taking a step forward to address the perverse narrative of terror. Today we also begin to take concerted measures that will allow us, as we agreed a few moments ago, to present a proposal by 30 April 2017 for a “comprehensive international framework”, with recommended guidelines and good practices that will endow the international community with an effective tool for presenting a common front. As skilful as terrorists have shown themselves to be, we cannot send a more attractive message than if we act together. To that end, we need to act on several fronts.

First, with respect to terrorism, States have an obligation to prevent their propaganda and self-aggrandizement, starting by criminalizing justifications of incitement to terrorism. In that context, it is necessary to monitor and prevent the action of those engaged in justifying and inciting terrorism within social organizations, schools or religious centres. We must also prevent such action in the new information technologies, the Internet and social networks. To do so, we will need both appropriate legislation and the decisive action and support of social partners. In the case of new information technologies, it is essential to ensure the cooperation of suppliers of services in removing contents of a criminal nature. Today, we have made specific commitments to that end.

Secondly, it is clear that the international community must also engage and win the battle of ideas. In this context, we must address both the dissemination of proposals that directly serve and support terrorism and the narratives of violent extremism that, at least sometimes, do not qualify in themselves as criminal. In this case, the action that we must undertake is of a different character; we need to challenge ideas and counter them with a positive narrative.

It is necessary to counteract and destroy the image that terrorists seek to depict of themselves and their sympathizers. In the case of terrorists and violent extremists who cite religious belief as the foundation of their activities, it is necessary to counter them with the testimony of true religious leaders. The aim is to point out the falsity of the arguments of those terrorist groups, their lack of a genuine religious basis and the fact that they distort the messages of religion to serve their purposes and objectives of totalitarian political domination.

Along with this, the international community must promote the positive values that underpin it: peaceful coexistence, pluralism, the freedom of each person to choose the ideas and principles that to guide his or her life, the freedom of belief and ideas, and the freedom of opinion. These are the values that most humans cherish. It is important to put them on the front line of the defence of our societies and to set them against the intolerance and hate propaganda of terrorists and violent extremist groups.

In that respect, our task remains mainly in the context of combating and preventing violent extremism. The question is to counter false ideas with the concepts of coexistence and pluralism championed by our citizens and our societies. This is therefore a long-term objective whose results will be seen after a lengthy process, but we need to start today. In undertaking this task, we need to rely on the support of community leaders, religious leaders, teachers and educators, opinion-makers, human rights activists and the media, as well as families.

We know that in society itself — in civil society — there are moral forces and authoritative voices that rise against terrorism and violent extremism, and we must identify those voices. Besides having leaders and credible and authoritative voices, it is important to integrate the groups and communities that understand the problems and wish to contribute their proposals: young people, women, students and civil society organizations. Governments should not only consult each other, but also provide to social agents that promote peace and understanding with the support and platforms they need.

Here I wish to make special mention of the important role that victims of terrorism can play in the development and implementation of an effective counter-narrative through a threefold approach: ending the suffering; stopping the cycle of hatred by renouncing revenge; and giving moral force to the rule of law and its institutions, in which they place their trust for justice. On the basis of the national experience of my own country, Spain, I would like to present some concrete proposals towards that end.

In the field of prevention, Spain as sponsor of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and a founding member of the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, attaches great importance to intercultural and interfaith dialogue as a tool for the prevention of violent radicalization and for countering the narrative of extremism violence and terrorism. In this sense, the recent Global Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations, held in Baku, the Foreign Minister of Spain presented several proposals in this area, of which I would highlight three.

The first is the creation of a committee for tolerance and positive messages on the Internet as a public-private supranational collegiate body of the major Internet companies, which would serve for the effective and rapid dissemination of images, videos and games promoting tolerance and respect between cultures and religions. The voices of peace must be heard louder than hatred. The second is the development of guidelines for good practices in education and diversity for social integration so that they can be known and developed by all countries. The third is a platform of religious leaders for peace, especially in conflict zones.

There is also great potential for actions within the framework of United Nations and various regional structures. In this regard, I stress that it would be very valuable to proceed to strengthening the United Nations Victims of Terrorism Support Portal, which is already widely known and, with the necessary support, could be a useful tool in the fields of education, schools and teaching academies for the purpose we are discussing today.

I believe that this debate cannot be completely separated from initiatives being promoted and negotiated almost in parallel, such as the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism and the forthcoming review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Moreover, this goal is also being sought in the efforts resulting from the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism and the Global Leaders' Summit on Countering the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Violent Extremism.

In this process, the international community has come together forcefully on the goals we must achieve and the most important measures we must take. Those proposals for the fight against violent extremism also have direct relevance to the development of narratives to counter the narratives and ideologies of terrorism and violent extremism. It is true that there have been differences over the interpretation of the phenomenon of violent extremism and the conditions that may fuel and drive its development driving, but I believe that even as we continue discussing these differences of interpretation, it is also important that we focus on the points of agreement on practical actions. In that regard, I think it would be important to pursue this joint effort of reflection through regional conferences, which may be more fruitful in finding a way to agree on action programmes on the basis of the broad agreement within the international community.

It would also be important to convene a dialogue among neighbouring regions that share the problem of countering the narratives and ideologies of terrorism — a dialogue to exchange views on common challenges. In that regard, as a representative of a European country and a member of the European Union, I think that Europe would have a great interest in holding such a dialogue and serious exchange of proposals with our neighbours in the southern Mediterranean and other regions, such as the Sahel, the countries of sub-Saharan Africa or Asia.

At the same time, similar dialogues and exchanges in this field could be launched in other regional and interregional spaces. In Spain, and through our Casa Arabe, we have begun a special experiment, inviting Arab countries to present their strategies against violent radicalism. The first such case was that of Mauritania, which informed us of the experience of that country, which has been especially successful in reintegrating former terrorists through its prison programmes. Other cases will follow. This process would benefit from United Nations participation to unify proposals and follow up on the agreements reached. As noted in similar contexts, the appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General to counter and prevent violent extremism would strengthen the international community's response capacities.

I believed that this procedural approach — based on a simple agreement of the international community, as reflected in today's meeting, to launch a practical discussion aimed at developing effective programmes in a broader regional context — could be the basis for drafting a comprehensive international strategy with which to counter the narratives and ideologies of terrorist groups. In this sense, if the desired results are obtained, the Security Council could meet again within a year to finalize and adopt such a strategy.

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