

# United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Statements

## Deputy Secretary-General: Statements

### **New York , 11 May 2016 - Deputy Secretary-General's Remarks at Security Council Open Debate on Countering the Narratives and Ideologies of Terrorism [As delivered]**

I thank the Egyptian Presidency for convening today's open debate. This is an opportunity to discuss how we best counter terrorist narratives and ideologies as well as an opportunity to recall the fundamental interests and values connected to this pursuit.

This Council is all too aware of the volatile mix of protracted conflicts, terrorism and violent extremism in today's world. You have mourned fallen soldiers, police and peacekeepers as well as tragically great numbers of civilian victims of atrocities committed by terrorists.

You have used sanctions and other measures of the Council to stop their activities. You have understood the serious threat posed by terrorist groups, who control territories and population centres and attempt to blur borders between sovereign States.

We all know that terrorist groups are exploiting religious beliefs in order to incite hatred and violence and to cause division and polarization in our societies. We see it all around the world today. Terrorists and violent extremists blatantly challenge the values enshrined in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as our shared pursuit of peace, justice and human dignity.

We must be aware that terrorist bombs are targeted to devastate more than human lives. They target our common values. They aim to spread fear. We have a responsibility to shield people from harm and from fear and to protect universal values from erosion.

When we fulfil this responsibility, we gain both a moral and a strategic advantage. Faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, and the primacy of global solidarity represent the greatest force in our hands to counter terrorist narratives and ideologies.

Mr. President,  
Members of the Council,

There is a great deal of legitimate concern around the world about young people falling prey to terrorist narratives and ideologies. We know that youth may be vulnerable to the lure of terrorists, who offer them a sense of belonging, a salary and a promise of glory, even paradise.

We know that their promises are patently false. But we also know that young people are capable of discerning the truth and recognizing siren songs. I believe, in fact, that the vast majority of youth are

naturally inclined towards building a good life for themselves and for others. I am confident that they are eager to make contributions to peaceful and thriving societies for all.

The Security Council recognized the value and role of young people and young peacebuilders in its historic resolution 2250 of December last year. This resolution will be the youth equivalent of resolution 1325 for women and security.

If young people are considered good enough to fight wars they certainly deserve the chance to make peace.

I call on Council Members and all Member States to translate this resolution into practice. We must do more than repeat general statements about youth being the “leaders of the future” as we often say.

We must invest in youth today – with material resources and meaningful political empowerment. We must not only work for youth - we must work with youth. Instead of viewing young people as part of the problem, we must harness their immense potential to be part of the solutions.

In today’s world, young people have superior communications skills, extensive social media networks and often more influential voices than their elders. If we are to counter terrorist narratives, we have to motivate and mobilize this generation of youth – the largest in history – to amplify our messages of common humanity.

Young people are thirsty for visionary ideas. Good governance, respect of human rights and the rule of law should be central components of any inspiring vision.

When we give young people avenues and arenas for engagement and for action, they will see hope and they will be ready to build peaceful societies to the benefit of generations to come.

Mr. President,  
Members of the Security Council,

The Secretary-General has often stressed that terrorism and violent extremism are not related to any single ethnic group, nationality or religion.

Terrorists are united in their nihilistic and anti-humanistic beliefs. We must respond by uniting as one human family which defends our shared values and embraces diversity. The United Nations is a platform for such mobilization.

Incitement and recruitment of terrorists as well as conditions conducive to terrorism have been addressed in several Security Council resolutions, the General Assembly’s Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the Secretary-General’s Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

The Secretary-General has called for a comprehensive approach to respond to the complex factors which drive people to violent extremism.

It is necessary to now counter and refute false and nefarious narratives. Such narratives must also be replaced with compelling alternative visions, backed by tangible opportunities for meaningful and constructive engagement.

When we are to address terrorist threats, security and military responses remain important – but, let's state this clearly, they are not enough. Not enough.

The Secretary-General strongly focuses on a preventive approach in his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. We need to convey positive messages and take pre-emptive actions. Such messages and actions should address conditions that are conducive to terrorism and violent extremism.

We also need to listen carefully to affected communities. We need to engage at the grassroots level. We need to partner with faith leaders, with women and young people. They are the ones on the frontlines, standing up to violent extremists – and they know best how to respond on the local and individual level.

The Internet is a powerful tool that violent extremists have used to spread their messages of hate. We should encourage more of study and research on how violent extremists are using the Internet and social media.

At the same time, it is important to uphold freedom of speech, expression and assembly. Efforts should be redoubled to protect pluralism and diversity, also in media.

The protection of free media can be a defence against terrorist narratives. There must be no arbitrary or excessive punishment against people who are simply expressing their opinions. Space for civil society and non-governmental organizations to operate freely is essential. And journalists and human rights defenders deserve safety and support.

Terrorists are aiming to create a climate of fear and hysteria where human rights are suppressed. We must answer by adamantly preserving our common values, amplifying moderate voices and enabling individual freedom.

The fight against terrorism must not be carried out in such a way that we infringe upon basic freedoms. Violations of human rights in the name of countering violent extremism will give terrorists their best recruitment tools.

Marginalizing or demonizing certain groups – whoever they may be – feed the 'us against them' syndrome and mentality which is one of the gravest threats in our world today.

In a deeper sense, the best narrative to counter violent extremism may perhaps not be a narrative. This whole discussion is not about a story. It is about action to build peace, development and human rights.

It is about standing together in global solidarity against forces which want to divide and scare us,

which want us to forget the beauty of diversity and the tremendous power of fundamental and universal values and principles.

Thank you.