

Security Council Meeting on Peace and Security – Terrorist Acts
Monday, September 27, 2010

Statement by Ambassador H.E. Mr. Nawaf Salam, Permanent Representative of the Lebanon to the United Nations

At the outset, I would like to welcome Minister Davutoğlu and to thank the Turkish presidency for having organized this important and substantive meeting, as the United Nations has a central role to play in fighting terrorism. I should also like to thank the Secretary- General for his valuable briefing. We support the draft presidential statement before the Council for adoption at this meeting.

Lebanon strongly condemns all acts of terrorism in all its forms and considers them to be a dangerous threat to international peace and security and basic human rights, especially the right to life. Modern history has seen several forms of terrorism, to which innocent people of different religions, nationalities and cultures have fallen victim. The attacks of 11 September 2001 in New York were among its worst examples, as noted by the Lebanese President before this Council last Thursday (see S/PV.6389).

Terrorism has afflicted many parts of the globe quite indiscriminately — from Japan and Sri Lanka to Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, and from India, Pakistan, Uganda and Kenya to Britain, Russia, Spain and other countries. While we have endeavoured for years to define a unified concept of terrorism, innocent people fall victim every day, many of them present by coincidence at the moment terrorists strike. Condemning terrorism, killing and destruction is no longer sufficient, as it does not change the situation or protect the innocent.

Lebanon strongly rejects conflating terrorism with any religion, especially Islam. Islam is not a religion of extremism. The Koran says “And thus We have made you a just nation” (The Holy Koran, II:143). Islam is a religion of dialogue. The Koran also says “and have disputations with them in the best manner” (ibid., XVI:125).

Terrorism has not spared Muslims or Islam. Many Muslims fell victim to the horrific attacks of 11 September 2001. Today, many Muslims continue to fall victim to bombings in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen and Somalia — some even in mosques. There are consistent attempts to distort this divine religion, which calls for tolerance and acceptance of others. A campaign is afoot — a culture of intellectual terrorism — to spread horrors about Islam, which has led to Islamophobia. We would like to sound a note of caution that taking these provocative acts lightly — the desecration of religious sites and ignoring the feelings of believers — may be extremely dangerous. While we completely respect the freedom of expression, such acts do not fall within the purview of freedom; they are nothing more than provocations that undoubtedly fan the flames of terrorism.

Lebanon distinguishes between terrorism and the legitimate right of people to resist foreign occupation, which has been enshrined in all international resolutions, instruments and norms. The best example of this is that no one applied the label of “terrorism” to the resistance mounted by the French against the Nazis during the Second World War. You, Mr. President, are the best person to confirm that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk became a symbol of Turkish independence when he led the resistance to the foreign presence in Turkey. Lebanon appreciates the efforts of the United Nations and all its organs and agencies to combat terrorism. We reaffirm our resolve to cooperate with all of them, including the Committees established pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1373 (2001) and 1540 (2004).

We encourage States to strengthen their institutions and legal capacities to combat terrorism. In that context, we call for respect for human rights and the rule of law in all measures to combat terrorism. We have to pay attention to the relationship between all the tools of terrorism, such as transboundary organized crime, trafficking in persons, weapons and drugs, and money-laundering.

Lebanon believes that terrorism cannot be combated by military means, exchange of intelligence, financing or borders alone. It should be done by dealing with the root causes of terrorism and removing the factors that feed it, through the elimination of hotbeds of tension, renunciation of double standards in the implementation of international resolutions, accepting others and respecting rather than eliminating the specificities of each

country or distorting its image. We should also end foreign occupation, injustice, poverty and the trampling of human rights and dignity.

We must also stress the role of dialogue among cultures and civilizations. Lebanon advocated that theme was advocated during its presidency of the Council last May. The initiative of an alliance among civilizations launched by Turkey and Spain plays a desirable role.

As we emphasize the importance of dealing with the root causes of terrorism, we do not have to recall that Al-Qaida tries to exploit the suffering of the Palestinian people as one of the means for recruiting terrorists. That alone is a reminder that we should affirm the need for the international community to accelerate the achievement of a comprehensive, just peace in the Middle East.

Lebanon — which has signed most of the international conventions on combating terrorism — has also suffered from terrorist bombings that have claimed the lives of a number of politicians, foremost among whom was President Rafik Hariri, plus many journalists and many innocent people killed in the past five years. Lebanese forces have fought terrorist groups and still are fighting them. The army was able to eliminate one of the most dangerous of them — Fatah al-Islam, in Nahr al-Barid in northern Lebanon. That movement had nothing to do with the national Palestinian liberation movement Fatah or with Islam.

In addition, Lebanon has suffered from Israeli State terrorism over the decades. I will recall that Israel bombed civilian installations, including electrical, water and oil installations, the airport, bridges, commercial planes, even hospitals and Red Cross Red Crescent ambulances, as well as the United Nations headquarters in Qana — which was supposed to be a refuge for the elderly, women and children, who thought that the Blue Flag could protect them.

The General Assembly has reached by consensus a unified counter-terrorism strategy. Lebanon hopes it will be reflected in a comprehensive convention that will deal with terrorism in a unified way. That is possible if we decide to deal with this phenomenon objectively and in a manner in consonance with the rules and provisions of international law.