

Security Council Open Debate
Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Terrorist Acts
International Cooperation on Combating Terrorism and Violent Extremism
November 2014, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Quinlan Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations

For Australia, there is no more pressing matter of national and international security than reducing the threat from terrorism. The threat from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, the Al-Nusra Front (ANF) and other Al-Qaida-affiliated groups is more dangerous, more global and more diversified than ever before. Terrorists are younger, more violent, more innovative and highly interconnected. They are masters of social media, which they use to terrorize and to recruit, and they are very tech-savvy. They incite each other. They communicate their propaganda and violence directly into our homes so as to recruit disaffected young men and women.

They draw in young people, like a 17-year-old from Melbourne who grew up in a typical Australian household and played sport for his local high school. Recently, he travelled to Iraq and detonated his explosives vest in a suicide bomb attack in a Baghdad marketplace, injuring more than 90 people. There were also the three young brothers from Brisbane. One became Australia's first known suicide bomber, killing himself and 35 others at a military checkpoint in Syria. The second is currently fighting with the Al-Nusra Front. The third was stopped by Australian authorities before he got on a plane to join them.

Australians are rightly outraged. We have turned our outrage into action. We are committed to working with the Iraqi Government, the United States and over 30 partners to attack and degrade ISIL and take back Iraqi territory. We are currently conducting air strikes against ISIL and providing special forces to help build the capabilities of Iraqi security forces and others fighting ISIL. I met recently with Prime Minister Al Abadi in Baghdad. He expressed deep gratitude for the assistance of Australia and the other nations that have joined in the fight against the brutalization of his citizens by ISIL. I conveyed to him Australia's strong support for Iraq and our determination to stop terrorist fighters from Australia and prevent them from adding to the suffering of the people of Iraq and neighbouring Syria.

We are taking the necessary steps at home. The Australian Government has cancelled the passports of more than 70 Australians suspected of planning to commit a terrorist act or engage in politically motivated violence overseas. Australia already has in place sophisticated legal architecture to effectively counter terrorism, including laws enabling us to implement those obligations with regard to all Member States under resolution 1373 (2001). I used those existing laws last week to freeze the assets of two Australians who were recruiting for ISIL online. The Australian Government has now introduced new foreign-fighter laws to help disrupt the organization, financing and facilitation of foreign terrorist fighters by enhancing our ability to track financial transactions of suspected foreign terrorist fighters, lowering the threshold for arrest without warrant for terrorism offences, which will enable our agencies to disrupt terrorist activity at an earlier stage, and cancelling certain social welfare payments to cut off the diversion of such funds for terrorism. Those new laws will enable us to stop suspected foreign fighters before they board a plane by allowing us to

suspend as well as cancel a person's Australian passport and enhancing screening and security measures at international airports, including through the collection and matching of biometric data.

Those laws will enhance our ability to investigate and prosecute foreign fighters by introducing a new, broader offence for advocating terrorism, along with a new offence for entering, or remaining in, designated areas overseas where terrorist organizations are fighting, without a legitimate reason. We have also amended the terrorist organization listing provisions to include the promotion and encouragement of terrorist acts, requiring that the prosecution must prove that a person intended to engage in a hostile activity in any foreign country, rather than a particular foreign country, and allowing courts greater flexibility in determining whether to admit as evidence material obtained from overseas in terrorism-related proceedings. That is a significant development and will rely on good information-sharing with Member States. Moreover, we are now requiring telecommunication companies to retain metadata, enhancing Australia's capacity to track, investigate and prosecute foreign terrorist fighters and supporters of terrorism. The new provisions will also enhance our ability to manage the threat from returned foreign fighters by enabling our police to more easily seek control orders on returning foreign terrorist fighters and broadening the grounds on which such control orders can be sought.

Australia is a vibrant democracy. Therefore, this package of legislation has generated, as it should, a vigorous national debate on the need to protect the individual rights of Australians, including their right to privacy. Australia is preserving those rights by increasing support for independent oversight. We will also expand our regional law enforcement capacity-building efforts. Australia will host a major Global Counterterrorism Forum conference in December on air passenger security to help Governments use INTERPOL databases and implement the United Nations Al-Qaida sanctions to prevent international travel by foreign terrorist fighters. We are working with INTERPOL to deliver training in our region on the use of technology by terrorists and on how electronic evidence is gathered, managed and used in terrorism prosecutions. As President of the Financial Action Task Force for the next year, Australia will ensure that the Task Force will act to cut off funding to terrorist groups and foreign fighters.

A crucial pillar in the Australian approach is to work directly with our communities. It seems to us that the very best way to build resistance to radicalization is through well informed families, schools, and religious and local institutions that can influence those at risk to dissuade them from embracing violent extremism. We are building targeted early-intervention and counter-radicalization programmes to identify the most at-risk individuals and to work with them through mentoring, education, employment support and counselling. We must also involve women and girls, and we have developed leadership training courses with them to help build community resilience. We are working with the information and communications technology sector to reduce the risk posed by terrorists and extremist groups online through education, promoting alternative messages and removing extremist content.

ISIL and its ilk are an affront to Islam. All of us, including Muslim communities themselves, must do more to negate the violent extremist narratives of terrorists and denounce radical preachers of hate in our midst. The international community must join with them, and the United Nations is uniquely placed to provide leadership. The hateful ideologies are an affront to the values of the Charter of the United Nations. We believe that a United Nations envoy should be appointed to build a coherent, coordinated and strategic message to counter the spread of violent extremism and provide much-needed guidance to States, including through building their capacity to combat terrorism.

Every country has an obligation to prevent terrorism. Every country has an obligation not to export terrorist capabilities. Each one has a responsibility to degrade the resources of terrorist organizations and to prevent the spread of their evil propaganda. Resolutions 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014) enhance our framework to do that. But the road to effective implementation requires sustained effort, unwavering commitment and enduring cooperation among States. Today's presidential statement S/PRST/2014/23 builds on those resolutions. It identifies practical next steps to stop the recruitment and travel of foreign terrorist fighters, to ensure that there is no place for their toxic ideologies in our communities and to disrupt each and every terrorist organization's funding sources. The statement reaffirms the international community's unflinching resolve. We must starve terrorist organizations of fighters, funding and legitimacy. We must act decisively and together.