

**Mr. Ruiz Blanco (Colombia) (spoke in Spanish):**

At the outset, I want to thank the Arab Republic of Egypt for convening this meeting and for the concept note (S/2016/416, annex) prepared for this debate.

Colombia strongly rejects acts of terrorism and violent extremism in all their forms and manifestations, out of our conviction that such acts are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivations and at whatever time or by whomever they are committed. Those acts pose a grave threat to the life, well-being and fundamental freedoms of all peoples and threaten international peace and security by undermining the values and principles of States, their democratic institutions, the rule of law and the freedoms enshrined in and promoted by the various instruments of the United Nations. Terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, ethnicity, community or nationality. We must therefore unite to forcefully fight that scourge based on objective criteria.

At this point, I would like to clarify that, although Colombia has not suffered the terrible effects of violent extremism based on religious grounds, it has, for years, suffered great violence owing to a domestic conflict in which terrorism was used as a tool of action. As a result, my country has acquired good practices and capabilities to deal with such new phenomena, which could yield notable results.

The Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) offers Member States a series of recommendations for countering the threat, which Colombia considers useful. Of particular interest to this debate are the recommendations on prevention. States must work with relevant members of their local communities and with non-governmental actors in the development of strategies to counter all kinds of incitement to acts of terrorism, regardless of their purported justification. We are aware of the importance of the participation and involvement of civil society and local communities in efforts to help the victims of terrorism, especially in the promotion of trust, harmony and intercultural respect and in efforts to boost individual and community resilience against terrorist activities.

Women should be included in all stages of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of counter-terrorism efforts. Those efforts must be accompanied by the promotion of education for girls and women, which in the medium- and long-term, enables them to increase their capabilities, knowledge and resources and which, by extension, will enable them to play a more active role in the actions that States and societies take in countering terrorism and violent extremism.

The policies for the prevention of terrorism and violent extremism must also focus on our young people, providing them with opportunities to study and work and play an active role in their societies. That will minimize the risk of their being radicalized and recruited by terrorist groups. Similarly, I consider it important to highlight the crucial role of the communications media in sensitizing and mobilizing public opinion against the atrocities committed by terrorist groups, using an approach that emphasizes the rights of victims and that forcefully condemns the perpetrators of terrorist acts. The international media have already begun to contribute to the common goal of creating spaces and opportunities in which we can raise awareness of the tragic consequences of terrorism.

At the same time, with regard to prevention, we must assess the negative impact of the cult of violence, to which many, in particular those same younger populations, are exposed. Under no circumstances can we accept the paradigm in which the use of violence is presented as an option for resolving conflicts or dealing with situations of any kind.

Finally, Colombia supports the further strengthening of international cooperation aimed at supporting the victims of terrorism, as called for in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. It is vitally important that Governments, international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and the media continue the work of supporting the victims of terrorism. My delegation reiterates its commitment to continuing to work actively with the international community in the discussion of this issue and in particular on the deliberations that will begin this week for the fifth Review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Dialogue, cooperation and concerted efforts are indispensable to a civilized coexistence free of the scourge of terrorism.

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