

Security Council Open Debate on Threats to International Peace and Security Terrorism and Cross-Border Crime December 2014, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Murmokaite Permanent Mission of Lithuania to the United Nations.

Whatever pretexts terrorists may employ to justify their murderous acts, there can simply be no justification for what they do. Terrorism is nothing less but an assault on our very humanity. Horrific events, like the massacre of school children in Peshawar three days ago, reinforce the sense of dramatic urgency for the Council to continue focusing sharply on and acting with resolve against threats posed by international terrorism.

In that regard, the initiative of the Chadian presidency to take forward the Council's counter-terrorism agenda by highlighting the linkages of terrorism with transnational organized crime is commendable and highly pertinent, as it provides a better understanding of how terrorist groups manage to sustain their activities by collaborating with transnational criminal groups, and sometimes by mimicking them.

As the concept note (S/2014/869, annex) suggests, from Afghanistan and Syria to West Africa and the Sahel, the linkages between terrorism and transnational crime act as a force multiplier. They strengthen terrorist groups by generating funding and providing logistical support, sharing skills and tactics, to such a degree that that at times the dividing line between them is extremely blurred. These interrelated security threats not only take advantage of instability, but are themselves drivers of conflict. Their combination amplifies the challenges to broader conflict-prevention and -resolution efforts and demands a comprehensive and multidimensional response, as most representatives who spoke before me have stressed.

Let me focus today on three key areas, the targeting of which can disrupt those linkages and significantly diminish terrorists' ability to sustain their activities. The first is countering money-laundering and illicit financial flows. Various illicit techniques are used to mask the origins and recipients of funds, as well as to divert funds to terrorist groups. States' abilities to effectively identify and prevent the illicit cross-border movement of cash, to tackle head-on the emerging trends and sources of illicit financing, which are often linked to specific criminal activities, to set adequate regulations for alternative remittances, and to stem the abuse of charities and non-profit organizations for the purpose of terrorist financing is a crucial component of counter-terrorism efforts. In that regard, we would like to highlight the importance of the full implementation of the comprehensive international standards set forth by the Financial Action Task Force, as well as enhanced engagement with similar regional bodies.

The second key area is countering illicit activities that are used as a self-sustained means to raise funds. Terrorist organizations increasingly rely on the illegal exploitation of natural resources, drug smuggling, human trafficking for coerced labour and sexual exploitation, kidnapping for ransom, and illegal trade in antiquities, ivory, and wildlife, all of which are typically attributable to transnational criminal networks. Given the diversity of the activities and the environments in which they take place, it is important that law-enforcement measures not be disconnected from those contexts and that they take into account the particular routes, commodities and other specificities.

The third area is countering the illicit movement of terrorists, arms and equipment. Over the past few years, we have seen unprecedented mobility and flow of foreign terrorist fighters to theatres of conflict. Their recruitment strategies and methods seem to evolve faster than our responses to the threat, and their reach seems to have no boundaries. On the other hand, the much-too-easy access to illicit arms and weapons and the unhindered flow of such weapons in and across conflict-affected areas suffering from borders that are poorly protected, if at all, is changing the security environment and placing civilians under increasingly higher risk of harm. Effective physical border controls, information sharing and analytical capability at border crossings, as well as effective sanctions and arms-embargo implementation are required in order to disrupt such transboundary flows.

We would also like to note that, even if the threats posed by terrorism and transnational organized crime are distinct, the means to counter them are often closely related, be it securing borders, tracking money flows, disrupting illicit ventures or curbing the movement of criminals and terrorists. This reinforces the need for a coordination and coherence in international and regional efforts to respond to these threats, both within and between organizations. That applies to the United Nations system itself, whose entities have developed vast expertise on dealing with these two phenomena separately but need to engage more closely and build on one other's work, especially with regard to capacity-building. The United Nations presence on the ground should be an integral part of these efforts, and the Council should take that into account when designing mandates for peacekeeping operations, special political missions and in the work of country teams. With regard to disrupting terrorist networks and undercutting their action base, the One United Nations principle is as valid as can ever be. Fragmentation of efforts in a typical silo manner will help neither counter-terrorism nor conflict resolution, nor ultimately development efforts on the ground.

Given the scope and nature of the terrorist threat and existing linkages with the criminal underworld, the importance of regional approaches cannot be stressed enough. The African Union-led Regional Cooperation Initiative, the Nouakchott Process, and the activities of the Economic Community of West African States are good examples of regional cooperation in West Africa and the Sahel. The open debate that took place in the Council two days ago under the Chadian presidency (see S/PV.7343) was a good opportunity to reflect on how the cooperation between the United Nations and its African regional partners could be further advanced, including in countering terrorism.

Before I conclude, let me express my delegation's hope that resolution 2189 (2014), which was adopted today and co-sponsored by Lithuania, will make a tangible contribution towards mobilizing efforts at all levels to address the phenomenon. In that regard, we look forward to the Secretary-General's report with recommendations of concrete options both for strengthening Member States' capabilities, as well as United Nations activities needed to disrupt the nexus between terrorism and transnational organized crime, and to further discussions on this issue.

Finally, Lithuania aligns itself with the statement to be made later today on behalf of the European Union.