

Remarks of H.E. Ambassador Charbel WEHBI
Director of Political and Consular Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants – Lebanon

(Madrid, July 28th. 2015)

Mr Minister,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. On behalf of the Government of Lebanon, I wish to extend our thanks and appreciation to the Kingdom of Spain for hosting this High Level Meeting of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee. It is an imperative and timely gathering over a crucial and serious source of concern, to which my Government gives utmost importance.
2. Lebanon has steadfastly expressed support to all UN Resolutions aiming at strengthening national and international efforts to counter terrorism, UN Security Council Resolution 2178 being a most-recent landmark step taken in this regard. Yet we believe that the alarming surge in “takfeeri” terrorism in the Middle East in the past few years poses no less than an existential threat of unprecedented scale to our country, the region, and, ultimately, to humanity itself. It is based on this firm conviction that the Lebanese Armed Forces are fighting a life-or-death battle against terrorist organizations, such as “Daesh” and “Al-Nusra Front” by our borders.
3. In the same context, Lebanon’s participation in the Global Coalition to eradicate Daesh is a token of our international commitment to the fight against terror. Among others, Lebanon decided to join the Coalition’s *Working Group on Foreign Terrorist Fighters* (FTF), demonstrating its will to play a proactive role in, and add value to, the work being done on this particular track. We also actively participated in the first two meetings of the Working Group, which took place in Istanbul and The Hague respectively, adopting and putting into action, together with Coalition partners, an ambitious Action Plan to counter Daesh FTF.

4. Lebanon believes that the FTF Action Plan provides a set of practical tools to address this phenomenon. It is action-oriented, and identifies measurable deliverables, and can be useful and insightful to the expected outcome of our meeting today.
5. Nonetheless, the key factor behind any aspired success lies, first and foremost, in our genuine commitment to the aim of combating this worrisome phenomenon and bringing it to an end. Which brings us to the prime element of effectiveness: **firm political will**.

Excellencies,

6. What is quite significant in UNSC Resolution 2178 is that it projects an essential and indispensable comprehensive approach for countering terrorism in general, and the FTF phenomenon in particular. Thusly, it provides a solid foundation for our collective will and effort to combat FTF.
7. With that in mind, I wish to highlight a few areas that Lebanon believes are of chief importance:
 - i. **Information Sharing:** We believe information sharing lies at the core of the of this effort, and is crucial for its ultimate success on delivery, be it on FTF profiling, itineraries and routes, or financing. Due to that, we stress that information sharing merits further cooperation between members of the international community, bilaterally, regionally and multilaterally.
 - ii. **Exit Facilitation:** It is of great importance to elaborate and support measures aiming at pushing FTF to disengage from Daesh, Al-Nusra Front and other cells, affiliates, splinter groups or derivatives of AL-Qaida, and return to their countries of origin. Such measures should be established on national and international levels, and firm commitment should be demonstrated.
 - iii. **Legal Tools:** Several legal tools have been identified to support development of appropriate legal procedures to prosecute FTF, and their recruiters and facilitators. One significant tool of paramount

utility is yet to be explored, and that is the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Daesh has committed atrocious crimes: mass extra-judicial killings, decapitations, enslavements, ethnic and religious cleansing, deliberate targeting of minorities, destruction of religious and cultural sites, to name a few. Accounts of war crimes and crimes against humanity are documented in several UN reports. Lebanon had taken the initiative and brought this to the attention of the Prosecutor-General of the ICC, and friendly countries, noting that many of the FTF Daesh leaders and commanders are nationals of States Parties to the Rome Statute. We believe this is a vital method to prosecute FTF and bring them to justice, the effective utilization of which would also have preventive implications, discouraging FTF enthusiasts to line up for recruitment.

Excellencies,

8. Lebanon voices strong concerns, here, today, because it is a country heavily impacted by the rise of terrorism in the Middle East, and is at the forefront of the battle against this disquieting tide. If we fail to effectively address the issue of FTF, we are allowing timed bombs to thrive amongst us, and threaten to spread the horrors of Daesh and similar terrorist organizations all around the globe. Inaction on our part means nowhere will be safe, and the prospects of ultimate triumph over terrorists will dwindle by the day.

Thank you.