

Ministerial meeting (afternoon session) - 28 July 2015

Stemming the Flow of Foreign Terrorist Fighters

- I would like to thank the Spanish Government for organising this meeting.
- Also, I would like to thank our experts for the work they carried out yesterday and this morning. My delegation is in favour of the recommendations presented to us, which altogether call for a global coordinated effort to face the challenges of terrorism.
- Our major concern is the voluntary enlistment of our educated, yet often unemployed and disillusioned youth in jihadist organisations that have no values or aspirations to think of. In light of this relatively new and rapidly growing challenge, we need to delve deeper than simply facing renegade organisations. Looking to the future we need to instil fundamental concepts that are key to peace and stability. In our view, the most effective way to counter terrorism is by empowering the rule of law, promoting good governance and strengthening the judiciary and the legal system, particularly in states where such activity is gaining ground. In this regard, I wish to mention the International institute on Justice and the Rule of Law, which was launched in Malta last year. Since its inception it has been actively promoting good governance through the provision of training to lawmakers, the police, prosecutors, judges and other justice stakeholders, on how to address terrorism and related transnational criminal activities, within a rule of law framework.

- Given its geographic location, the Institute is paying particular attention to supporting countries in transition in North, West and East Africa, as well as the Middle East. Such institutes are crucial in providing training and expertise to states, particularly necessary in the work to develop their justice and security systems. Thus, such initiatives will contribute to the stability and could serve as a regional catalyst to counter terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism.
- Unfortunately we are living in a world where terrorism is on the increase and where persons from a number of countries, in particular young persons, are being incited and recruited to terrorism. Somehow many young people are feeling that they need to find a goal for themselves and they are being provided with this goal over the internet and in social media by persons who radicalise them, incite them to terrorism and finally recruit them. And it is often the case that this takes place within a relatively short time.
- The crimes of terrorism and incitement have therefore become crimes with no borders and subject to various jurisdictions. And it is only through closer cooperation between the governments and the law enforcement authorities of various countries that the fight against terrorism can be properly fought.
- First of all we need to step up our efforts to try to prevent people from being attracted to becoming foreign terrorist fighters. We need to make efforts, or build on existing efforts, to continue with an interreligious and intercultural dialogue. We need to avoid situations where some sectors of our resident populations feel excluded and feel the need to ‘punish’ those who they perceive as having excluded them.

- We also need to prevent incitement and recruitment. No one nation on its own can have an effective battle against this phenomenon. Internet sites, which are used for radicalisation and recruitment, could be hosted anywhere and their message could reach all corners of the world. It is therefore a challenge for competent authorities to intervene to prevent the use of social media for terrorist purposes. This gives rise to the need for Governments and law enforcement authorities to work together across borders. We also need to act at the national level by collaborating closely with internet service providers.
- We also need to prevent the actual travel for terrorism purposes. It is a known fact that travel can be part of the radicalisation process and that a number of persons who have been involved in terrorist activities have travelled abroad where they have been influenced by members of terrorist organisations. Furthermore, we have heard of many examples of persons who have left their country of residence and travelled for terrorism or related training. There is also the travel by radicalised individuals to actually join a terrorist organisation. To combat this, we need to collaborate amongst us, across borders, through the exchange of information and best practices, in order to detect and prevent such travel.
- We also need to have our legislation in place. In line with UNSC Resolution 2178 (2014), we should prevent the “recruiting, organizing, transporting or equipping of individuals who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning of, or participation in terrorist acts” and that, therefore, travel abroad for purposes relating to terrorism should constitute a criminal offence in our legislation. It is without any doubt that one of the

fundamental points in the fight against terrorism and acts relating to terrorism is to include these crimes in our national legislation and ensuring that effective sanctions are applied. This will enable our law enforcement authorities to proceed against persons suspected of such acts and to prosecute on the basis of legislation. It is therefore important for all of us to have legislation in place in order to ensure that we can bring terrorists and their collaborators to justice. We amended the law last year.

- Measures that strengthen judicial cooperation ought to be supported especially within the criminal law field so as to minimise as much as possible the threat that most Member States face from this phenomenon which unfortunately seems to be on the increase.
- The overall message remains that States need to act together.

Carmelo Abela MP

Minister for Home Affairs and National Security