



AUSTRALIA



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High Level Conference on Counter-Terrorism

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Australian Statement by Tony Sheehan, Commonwealth Counter-Terrorism Coordinator

(As delivered)

Chair, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

Australia would like to thank the UN Secretary-General for hosting this important conference. On a global issue such as terrorism the United Nations, as the premier global body, has a significant role to play.

Chair, in the wake of ISIL's failed so called caliphate in Syria and Iraq and the deaths of many terrorists there, Member States still face an enduring threat from foreign terrorist fighters.

States are dealing with the threat in a range of ways, within the parameters of their legal frameworks and community expectations.

However, no country can address this issue alone so we are pleased that United Nations Security Council Resolution 2396 [*twenty-three ninety-six*], has established a range of obligations to mitigate the threat.

Australia is one of the most successful and harmonious multicultural societies in the world. Our diversity has enriched our nation.

And the Australian Government's first responsibility is the security of its people.

To this end, Australia has introduced legislative measures to deal with foreign terrorist fighters.

Australia's declared area offence means it is a crime for a person to intentionally enter or remain in specified locations where a terrorist organisation is engaging in hostile activity, unless it is solely for a legitimate purpose.

Dual nationals who choose to fight with terrorist organisations may lose their Australian citizenship.

We are putting systems, procedures and resources in place, to ensure that any foreign fighter who returns from the conflict zone does so with forewarning and into the hands of authorities.

We seek to ensure that terrorists who face imprisonment in Australia will be housed in prisons that effectively manage terrorist offenders and prison radicalisation risks.

Those returning from the conflict zone who are not subject to criminal charges are assessed for their level of risk to the community. They may be subject to control orders and can be considered for rehabilitation programs. We also have a framework in place to manage the return of children of foreign fighters, to mitigate any risk they pose to the community and to assist their integration through measures such as counselling and remedial education.

Chair, this is where civil society and community groups, in partnership with all levels of Government are essential to deliver an effective whole-of-society approach against violent extremism.

In doing all this work, Australia is committed to observing human rights and its international obligations.

Chair, through international partnerships, States can achieve much more than the sum of our individual national actions.

We must have effective and harmonised arrangements for mutual legal assistance and sharing intelligence, supporting, in particular, those countries most exposed to foreign fighters who have departed the conflict zone and those who require additional support to detect, detain, prosecute and rehabilitate them.

While good intelligence, strong law enforcement, and prosecutions are important, we must also share lessons to understand the diverse drivers of terrorism and ultimately prevent violent extremism from gaining a foothold anywhere in our communities.

As part of the prevention agenda, we need to invest in global partnerships with industry, particularly technology firms, to prevent terrorists' ability to exploit the Internet and communications technologies for recruitment and propaganda, including foreign fighters reach-back to our societies.

This includes preventing foreign fighters and other terrorists from communicating and peddling their narratives, as well as using technology to offer compelling alternative messages.

Chair, to conclude please let me emphasise that Australia will continue to invest in national and international partnerships to address the threats posed by foreign terrorist fighters, and to bring the perpetrators of crimes to justice in accordance with the law.

We commend the efforts of Member States to tackle the foreign fighter phenomenon, and their commitments at this important conference, to work together to confront this challenge together into the future.

Thank you.