



Taking stock of latest terrorism trends, joint OSCE PA-PAM-UNOCT event builds regional and international co-operation against violent extremism

COPENHAGEN/NAPLES/NEW YORK, 30 June 2020 – On the occasion of the International Day of Parliamentarism the [United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism \(UNOCT\)](#), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) co-organized an online event on the role of parliamentarians in countering terrorism in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The objective of the event was to deepen co-operation in response to the ongoing threat posed by terrorism and violent extremism in the context of the unprecedented crisis all nations face.

Participants concurred that it is vital to assess the impact of the pandemic on violent extremism and carefully monitor terrorism trends throughout the Mediterranean region, the Sahel, as well as the OSCE region spanning 57 countries in North America, Europe and Central Asia.

Policymakers must adapt to dangerous new trends, speakers stressed, and implement timely countermeasures to protect lives. Co-ordinated policy and legislative efforts are needed to counter the evolving threat of violent extremists, some of whom are exploiting the pandemic to advance extremist narratives, it was emphasized.

Speakers at the webinar included Hon. Gennaro Migliore, Chair of PAM’s Special Parliamentary Committee on Counterterrorism; Hon. Reinhold Lopatka, Chair of the OSCE PA’s Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT); Mauro Miedico, Deputy Director and Chief of Special Projects and Innovation Branch (SPIB) – UNOCT; Amb. Mohamed El-Amine Ould Ikek, Assistant Secretary General for Legal Affairs at the League of Arab States; Amb. Alena Kupchyna, Director of the Transnational Threats Department at the OSCE; Dr. Andrea Margelletti, President of the International Studies Centre and Advisor to the Ministry of Defense of Italy, and OSCE PA President George Tsereteli.

The webinar also played a [video message](#) by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on the occasion of the International Day of Parliamentarism who spoke about the important role of parliaments amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

“COVID-19 has been keeping authorities all over the world highly occupied, shifting their attention towards fighting the pandemic,” said CCT Chair Lopatka. He noted that terrorist groups nevertheless remain active and that the crisis has provided a fertile ground for them to boost their online propaganda, call for new attacks, increase recruitment operations, stigmatize minorities, and disseminate false and discriminatory information. “Against this background, it is paramount that we all stand united on this symbolic day marking the International Day of Parliamentarism to counter terrorism and violent extremism throughout our vast regions,” he said.

“In recent months, our attention focused on the many implications of COVID-19 on our lives, while remaining vigilant on the evolving threat of terrorism has been a challenge for all of us,” said Hon.

Migliore. He highlighted the current security situation in the Euro-Mediterranean and Gulf regions, with a particular look at North African and Middle Eastern countries, in which the already precarious political and humanitarian conditions have worsened due to COVID-19 pandemic. He stressed the political consensus achieved among the 34 PAM Member Parliaments now addressing the issue of ISIL detainees and their families in Iraq and northeast Syria and took note of the present status of ISIL terrorists held in European prisons. “We must examine the effectiveness of de-radicalization programs, post-prison monitoring, and halting the automatic release of prisoners, without a thorough clearance,” Migliore said. Parliaments are critical in counterterrorism efforts by sharing legislative practices and their determination to fight it, he stressed.

UNOCT Deputy Director Miedico congratulated all parliamentarians on the International Day of Parliamentarism recognizing the significant contribution which Members of Parliament make to facilitate the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. “The COVID-19 pandemic will continue to significantly impact international peace and security and related policymaking in the long term,” he said. Parliaments have powerful tools in their hands to counter the phenomenon of hate speech, including COVID-19-related hate speech, which is used by terrorist groups and their supporters to further their nefarious objectives and undermine government actions.”

The OSCE PA-PAM-UNOCT Parliamentary Web Dialogue provided a forum for representatives of more than 65 parliaments to exchange views on how to keep counter-terrorism efforts high on the international agenda during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parliamentarians discussed how crisis situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic may aggravate terrorist threats by offering new opportunities for terrorist groups to advance their agendas, as the attention of the world has shifted, and resources may be refocused to fighting the pandemic and its consequences. The unprecedented global crisis and economic disruption caused by COVID-19 could exacerbate existing grievances and protracted conflicts, potentially leading to the emergence of new terrorist trends and threats, they noted.

Participants welcomed the partnership between the UNOCT, PAM and the OSCE PA, and the active participation of parliamentarians from countries throughout Europe, North America, North Africa, the Middle East and the Sahel. Speakers underlined a strong sense of solidarity and common purpose in developing effective strategies to counter the terrorist threat that still impacts countries around the world.

Moderating the event, OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella emphasized that the fight against terrorism and violent extremism should be an area of the international security agenda that brings together all States, even in cases where hostility or divergence mark their relations, to join forces in bona fide co-operation. It is a confidence-building topic, he added, which makes today’s joint event even more crucial for our parliamentary diplomacy efforts.