

UN Global congress of Victims of terrorism

8-9 September 2022

Intervention by HE Vincent Van Quickenborne,

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice

Dear Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking the UN Secretary General and the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism for organizing this important congress. It provides victims and survivors of terrorism from around the world with a platform to meet, share their experience and voice their expectations.

In every country present here today terrorists have struck at one time or another. And though their motives may vary, the dramatic consequences for the victims and survivors are the same the world over. Their fate sealed simply by being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Six years ago, on the 22nd of March 2016, several attacks were carried out in and around Brussels. A total of 35 people were brutally killed. People taking the subway on their way to work. Families standing in line at the airport to go on holiday. Fellow citizens. Loved ones. And many more survivors who have been scarred for life.

It was the first time our country had been struck by a terrorist attack of that magnitude. And we learned a lot from this tragedy. It has taught us that our laws and government services were ill-equipped to deal with the needs of victims and survivors. Over the past year I've had the opportunity to speak with many of them. Their pain and suffering, but also their resilience, their pride and their conviction have left a deep impression on me. In working with victim organizations, the Belgian government has developed a more personal and compassionate way to support the survivors.

Together we've started working with victim coaches. Instead of a faceless bureaucracy, victims are now helped by a personal coach. Someone who comes to their home to assist in their needs. Maybe just to talk to them, ask them how they are doing. Or to help them with the administrative burdens of insurance

paperwork. Or even simply going on a walk together. Whatever helps them in overcoming the challenges they face on their path to further recovery.

We want to do better in helping the victims. As of 2017, victims of terrorist attacks receive a status of national solidarity, which provides for financial compensation, but is also crucial in the healing process. It is part of a warmer and more human victim-centered approach.

That victim-centered approach will also be crucial in the upcoming trial of the Brussels attacks that starts this month. It will be the biggest trial in Belgium's history. With almost a thousand civil parties. We are doing everything necessary to accommodate them with enough professional support, with easily understandable information at hand and the possibility to follow the trial online, from the comfort of their own home.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I hope that this UN Global Congress for Victims of Terrorism will bring fresh perspectives and that it will stimulate victim-centered policies across borders. Belgium encourages multilateral cooperation and the involvement of civil society. Including in developing UN-initiatives regarding counterterrorism and policies for victims. Belgium is an active member of the Group of Friends for the victims of terrorism, working hand in hand with other member states and the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism. We look forward to engaging with all of you during this important Congress.

Thank you.