



Statement by H.E. Archbishop Gabriele Caccia
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations
UNGA 76 – Sixth Committee

**Agenda Item 111:
Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism**

Madam Chair,

I congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election. You have my Delegation's assurance of our continued collaboration in your important work.

Terrorism strikes at the very principles that the UN Charter's Preamble extols. It is an affront to "*fundamental human rights*" and to "*the dignity and worth of the human person,*" it inhibits the "*conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations ... of international law can be maintained,*" it wreaks havoc on "*social progress,*" and slows improvement towards "*better standards of life.*"¹

Terrorism has both grave short-term consequences and long-term destabilizing effects on people and communities. The heinous crimes committed by terrorists demand condemnation. No ideological, political, philosophical, racial, ethnic, or religious reasons can ever justify or excuse terrorism. Terrorism is in fact – as Pope Francis has reminded us – utterly incompatible with authentic religion: "*Hostility, extremism and violence are not born of a religious heart: they are betrayals of religion. We believers cannot be silent when terrorism abuses religion; indeed, we are called unambiguously to dispel all misunderstandings.*"²

To underscore our condemnation of terrorism, all measures to combat and eliminate this crime must respect the rule of law – including due process, human rights and fundamental freedoms – as well as international humanitarian law. Any failure to abide strictly by the rule of law in this regard will only encourage further radicalization, undermining our collective efforts. In this context, the importance of the counter-terrorism conventions adopted by this Committee to ensure proper international cooperation should not be underestimated.

¹ Preamble, *United Nations Charter*.

² Pope Francis, *Address of His Holiness at the Interreligious Meeting on the Plain of Ur, 6 March 2021*.

Moreover, counter-terrorism measures that may inhibit the provision of humanitarian aid are particularly troublesome. Genuine concern regarding aid falling into the wrong hands must not prevent it from being delivered to those in need. It is worth recalling that legitimate humanitarian activities, including those carried out by religiously inspired organizations, contribute positively to the prevention of terrorism. It is therefore indispensable to ensure that counter-terrorism measures do not limit nor inhibit the capacity of charitable and humanitarian organizations to provide aid to vulnerable groups or persons, including emergency relief to refugees and displaced persons as well as medical services to the wounded.

Given the global threat that terrorism poses, it is essential that counter-terrorism efforts are multilateral in nature and adopt a “whole-of-society” approach. Building such a broad alliance against terrorism further underscores that *“we are in the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together.”*³ Combatting terrorism must also include a continuous analysis of both its root causes and short- and long-term consequences to facilitate truly result-oriented measures.

In light of terrorism’s multiform reality, advancing poverty reduction measures, promoting the work of local communities and grassroots programs, engaging with religious leaders and faith-based organizations, and supporting educational institutions are all essential to prevent and combat terrorism. With the pandemic forcing Member States to shift resources from counter-terrorism initiatives to public health needs, efforts must ensure that the necessary response to the pandemic does not unintentionally lessen our common anti-terrorism efforts.

In conclusion, the Holy See welcomes the international efforts made this year – despite the pandemic – to prevent terrorism, including the first UN Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism and the 7th Review of the UN Counter-Terror Strategy, and stands ready to support further efforts in the future.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

³ Pope Francis, Address for the presentation of credential letters by the ambassadors of Jordan, Kazakhstan, Zambia, Mauritania, Uzbekistan, Madagascar, Estonia, Rwanda, Denmark and India accredited to the Holy See, 4 December 2020.