



Remarks for H.E. Nassir AbdulAziz Al-Nasser

Open briefing of the Counter-Terrorism Committee

**Countering Incitement to Commit Terrorist Acts Motivated
by Extremism and Intolerance: the Kingdom of Morocco's
Approach and Experiences of other African States**

*ECOSOC Chamber, United Nations Headquarters, New York,
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- At first I would like to thank The Kingdom of Morocco and CTED for inviting me to address this very important and timely meeting. This initiative to discuss the issue of “Countering Incitement to Commit Terrorist Acts Motivated by Extremism and Intolerance”, is indeed of serious importance to the maintenance of International Peace and Security.

- Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen, today, I speak before you at a very important moment in the history of multilateral efforts at countering terrorism. As many of you are aware, five days ago on September 24, the U.N. Security Council unanimously approved a historic resolution aimed at stopping the flow of foreign extremists

to battlefields around the world, in the context of combating the threat of terrorism.

- Resolution 2178 requires Member States to take specific steps to prevent suspected foreign terrorist fighters from entering or transiting their territories and to implement legislation to prosecute such fighters. It also calls on states to undertake various steps to improve international cooperation in this field, such as by sharing information on criminal investigations, **interdictions** and prosecutions.

- While these are all extremely significant aspects of the resolution, relevant to the work of the organization I lead, the Alliance of Civilizations, in this resolution, for the first time ever, the Security Council underscores the importance

of Countering Violent Extremism or CVE as a key element in effective responses to the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon.

- Specifically, the resolution “calls upon States to enhance CVE efforts and take steps to decrease the risk of radicalization to terrorism in their societies, such as engaging relevant local communities, empowering concerned groups of civil society, and adopting tailored approaches to countering FTF recruitment.”
- In this respect, the resolution also builds on previous Security Council Resolutions, such as 1624, which focuses

on prevention and places increased emphasis on social contexts that may be conducive to the spread of terrorism.

- In Security Council resolution 1624, the Council specifically calls upon all States to continue international efforts to enhance dialogue and broaden understanding among civilizations, in an effort to prevent the indiscriminate targeting of different religions and cultures, building bridges between nations and to take all measures as may be necessary and appropriate in accordance with their obligations under international law, to counter incitement of terrorist acts motivated by extremism and intolerance and to prevent the **subversion** of educational, cultural, and religious institutions by terrorists and their supporters.

- The two tracks of combating **FTF recruitment**, **Combating Violent Extremism** and incitement to hatred are so essential for the mandate of the UNAOC.
- Critical to observe here is that both these resolutions emphasize that any action that Member States and the international community take in this area must be **firmly guarded** by respect for fundamental freedoms, including freedom of religion or belief, expression, opinion and association. If we are to stop those who would seek to undermine our freedoms, we must always begin from the moral higher ground of first honoring and protecting those freedoms.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- From my perspective, counter terrorism efforts generally have two dimensions. The first is the **operational**. This refers to efforts made by states and the international community at **disrupting** the planning and execution of potential attacks, primarily through law enforcement methods.
- The second is **strategic**. This refers to addressing the root causes through which terrorist organizations and networks may be able to build support and sympathy for their causes, and even recruit individuals into such causes. And as you are aware, these root causes may be political, social or economic.

- While I believe that law enforcement, as a means of combating terrorism, must remain a priority, long-term success depends largely on strategic approaches to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. This specifically means that we need to work in the area of preventing violent extremism and radicalization, by not only reacting but also **preventive and proactive approaches** are **imperative** in this context.
- A big part of this comes from countering the ideologies that help justify and build support for terrorist causes. Ideology is a powerful mobilizing tool. Terrorists know and recognize this. They also use social injustice, political and protracted conflicts and economic fragility as **socially attractive grounds** for their crimes.

- It is thus no surprise that extremists for their own political ends **seize** religion—or the very frameworks that human beings use, to make sense of their vision and mission on this planet and to justify their actions. Extremist organizations work in sophisticated manner and under organized pattern, so lets not undermine their organizational abilities.

- One of the key ways that extremist organizations mobilize support among young people is not only by **appealing** to religious ideology, but also marginalization that young people face, from being outside of the decision-making processes that affect their own futures, to the problem of social injustice and lack of equal opportunities.

- The fact is that in many societies around the world, young people **constitute** a majority of the population, but have very little influence on local, regional, and national policies that affect their lives. This is especially true of many Muslim-majority societies. I see this as a deeply problematic **paradigm**, and as something that extremists can exploit.
- At the Alliance, much of our work consists of creating avenues of empowerment for marginalized communities, and especially young people.
- We find that one of the most effective ways to work in this area is by focusing diverse groups of young people,

working across different communities, to come together to work on a shared need—whether that is youth unemployment, access to water, or the need to mediate and resolve local conflicts.

- When we model effective cooperation in a society around a shared need—including by bringing religious leaders into the conversation—we believe that we create the most effective counter narrative to the radical ideologies.
- In summary, to be truly successful in countering the incitement and appeal of extremist organizations, we need to address not just the ideological dimension, but crucially also the **socio-economic** and political **grievances** of the

populations that extremists prey on. While reducing the space in which terrorists can mobilize support for their activities, this approach also leads to better and more integrated communities that are more **resilient** and better able to meet the development challenges they face.

- As the international community, I firmly believe that it is **incumbent** on us to provide viable, meaningful **exposition** to the **falsifications** of religion that terrorists propagate.
- In the Arab world, the region from which I come, it is an unfortunate reality that in the last 30 years, we have seen a singular rise in the **mis-approp-riation** of Islam by extremist organizations for their goals. There are many

causes for this, some of which I aim to touch upon momentarily. But I want to take this opportunity to recognize how crucial it is that we, as Muslims and non-Muslims, furnish our young with interpretations of this religion that speak to their reality in a way that is ultimately viable and universal.

- In other words, for young Muslims, their personal practice of Islam should be a source of inspiration for being in the world in a way that both recognizes the **interdependence** at the heart of human existence, and position them to serve to improve the world and the lives of everyone around them, and this is what the Muslim World should strive to do.

- In putting forward such an interpretation, I must praise the efforts of the Kingdom of Morocco under its responsible and wise leadership, which since 2004, has embarked upon an ambitious program to engage religious leaders—male and female—in working with young Moroccans. I look forward to hearing more about these efforts from the following speakers.

- The UN Alliance of Civilizations has a long record, through its many civil society, youth, and media engagement programs, of working with the grassroots around the world. Much of our work is dedicated to creating viable and effective alternatives to radicalization.

- Even though the Alliance is not **primarily** or directly a counter-terrorism entity, its work is valuable to global counter-terrorism efforts because it aims to combat and prevent the hatred and extremism that can serve as conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. Combating extremism is of great importance to me as High Representative and **principal implementer** of the vision of the Alliance.
- We have worked with religious leaders in many different parts of the world to provide a platform to amplify their voices and more effectively disseminate messages of **pluralism** to their communities. This has been meaningful work, but we are also seeking constant improvement, and so we have found that there is more we can do.

- Having considered the recent development around the world, I hope that I get the chance to interact with the Security Council on so many preventive and cultural activities the Alliance can contribute with. It is time for this important organ to use the service we are providing. I count on our cooperative agreement with the CTED to do so as well. My participation in this very event is clear message of my role as High Representative of the Alliance in combating violent extremism.

- Finally, while I welcome all of you to visit the website of the Alliance to learn more about some of our projects that adopt this approach, I want to end by saying that as an organization, we are constantly seeking partnership among all sectors—Member States, International Organizations,

civil society, and others—to help us run more projects in which we can effectively and more holistically counter the appeal of extremist organizations.

- I thank you and looking forward for good interaction with all of you.