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Open briefing of the Counter-Terrorism Committee on “The Roles of Women in Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism”

Statement by Australia

Australia welcomes this initiative to hold an open briefing on the role of women in countering terrorism and violent extremism.

Including women and girls and promoting gender equality are often overlooked in efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism. That is in spite of the participation of women and girls in violent extremism and terrorism, as well as their roles in prevention.

We cannot ignore the reality that women are becoming radicalised, conducting radicalisation, and are victims of radicalisation’s impacts. Daesh has woven female participation into the narrative in a way that no other terrorist group has done to date.

Women in conflict zones have conducted targeted recruiting of other women abroad and this must be countered in our CVE efforts. 30 to 40 Australian women are known to be either engaging in or supporting terrorist activity in Syria, Iraq and in Australia.

Women suffer disproportionately from the consequences of radicalisation, terrorist activities and conflict more broadly. This fact was recognised in UN Security Council Resolution 1325 when it was adopted in 2000. Fifteen years on, we look forward to the outcomes of the High-level Review of UNSCR 1325 next month.

In June this year, Australia hosted a Regional Summit to Counter Violent Extremism in Sydney which included a panel session focusing on the roles that women and families played in countering violent extremism. Shared amongst panellists was the view that women and families play critical roles in: influencing and shaping the coping skills of young people, and in doing so, shape broader community resilience to violent extremism, and identifying early signs of radicalisation to violence, particularly amongst youth. Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment will support women to take an active role.

As one of the agreed outcomes of the Summit, we will establish a network of regional civil society organisations in order to foster peer-to-peer learning and partnerships. This will be done in consultation with regional governments, civil society groups from across the region – including those who work with and represent women, families and youth.

In closing, Australia supports the Security Council continuing to build on UNSCR 2178, to more explicitly support and recognise the role that women can play in countering terrorism and violent extremism.