

16th Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean

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Statement of

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Your Excellency Mr. Speaker of the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates,

Honourable Mr. President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean,

Excellencies, honourable representatives, distinguished colleagues,

I am delighted to join you for this opening of the 16th Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean.

Allow me to congratulate the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates for hosting this meeting. CTED currently has the privilege of working closely with the United Arab Emirates within the framework of its membership of the Security Council.

Parliamentarians and parliamentary assemblies are close and essential partners of CTED.

CTED routinely recommends to Member States that their parliaments have a key role to play in ensuring that terrorist offences are clearly and precisely defined in accordance with relevant international instruments and respect human rights law.

Parliamentarians and parliamentary assemblies also play a critical role in ensuring that Governments allocate adequate resources to put into practice legal

and policy frameworks to effectively counter terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

In many States, parliamentarians exercise oversight functions over the use of intelligence and special investigation powers.

Parliamentarians represent localities and constituents throughout their countries and therefore play an essential role in voicing the concerns of local communities and civil society in addressing terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, which requires a “whole-of-society” approach.

Excellencies, honourable representatives, distinguished colleagues,

In December 2021, the Security Council adopted resolution 2617 (2021), which has several aspects that are of particular relevance to your work.

First, the Council reiterates its encouragement to Member States to consider developing comprehensive and integrated national counter-terrorism strategies and effective mechanisms to implement them.

Many national counter-terrorism strategies tend to focus too narrowly on law enforcement measures. The Council stresses the importance of including attention to the conditions conducive to terrorism.

National strategies should also seek to strengthen the resilience of the population through a balanced, multidisciplinary approach that integrates law enforcement measures and measures to address the socio-economic, political, educational, developmental, human rights, gender, youth and rule-of-law dimensions.

The Council also encourages CTED to cooperate with Member States and international, regional, and subregional organizations, such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, to assess existing strategies and advise on formulating comprehensive and integrated national and regional counter-terrorism strategies.

Second, the Council urges Member States not to lower their guard with respect to the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters. The Council expresses grave concern over FTFs seeking to return to their countries of origin or nationality, or to relocate to third countries.

Excellencies, honourable representatives, distinguished colleagues,

CTED conducts expert assessment visits to Member States on behalf of the Committee in monitoring, promoting and facilitating Member States' implementation of the relevant Council resolutions.

Allow me to briefly outline three challenges identified through our assessments.

The first challenge is data-protection and information-sharing with respect to biometric data; passenger data; financial intelligence; and data collected through special investigative techniques. Although there has been considerable technological progress, many States have yet to develop the laws and policies required to ensure that these new tools are used effectively, appropriately, and responsibly.

Parliaments could play a significant role in ensuring that these new tools are employed in a manner that is compliant with the rule of law. CTED and its partners recently prepared a compendium of good practices on the use of biometrics, and we are in the process of preparing a similar tool on data protection.

- ***The second challenge*** is the drafting and implementation of comprehensive and tailored strategies for the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of suspected terrorists, including individuals who return from the conflict zones. Parliaments can ensure that such strategies are effectively monitored in full respect for international human rights law.

The third challenge relates to family members associated with FTFs, especially children, and the various roles that women have played in terrorist organizations and activities. Again, the efforts of parliamentarians in this regard are key to identifying and sharing good practices.

Excellencies, honourable representatives, distinguished colleagues,

We are confronted with unprecedented new and emerging terrorist threats, coupled with the severe impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

We must continue to work together, learn from each other's experiences and effective practices. In this regard, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean continues to serve as a vital platform for this exchange and collective learning.

I wish you every success in your deliberations over the next two days.

Thank you.