



**ADDRESS BY MR. MAKIS VORIDIS, CHAIR OF THE
OSCE PA AD HOC COMMITTEE ON COUNTERING TERRORISM**

OSCE-WIDE COUNTER TERRORISM CONFERENCE

Rome, 10 May 2018

*SESSION I: TRENDS AND DYNAMICS OF RETURNING OR RELOCATING FTFs: EXCHANGE OF
VIEWS ON NATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION*

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Dear Minister,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, let me thank Minister Alfano and his able team for hosting this important OSCE Wide Counter-Terrorism conference as well as for keeping the topic of terrorism high on the OSCE's agenda. Thank you also for inviting me to address this distinguished forum in my capacity as the Chair of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism: it is an honor to be here and the presence of the OSCEPA underlines the strong cohesion between the parliamentary and executive structures of our organization.

Before highlighting the important role of parliamentarians in countering terrorism and updating

you on the work of our Committee, I would like to share some views on the challenges we are currently called to address.

Terrorism, with its transnational and evolving nature, represents today one of the major threats to security, freedom and to all those values that underpin our lives, founded on democracy and on the rule of law. Among these challenges there is the growing and evolving phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs), including their reverse flows, to which this session is devoted.

According to the latest report of the United Nations Counter Terrorism Committee, against the figure of approximately 40,000 active FTFs, the majority of which originating from the OSCE region, less than 6,000 have actually returned home. Many of them will never come back, having gone missing in conflict zones. However, as Daesh/ISIL territorial influence has been greatly reduced, these numbers also raise several questions: where are the “missing” FTFs? Should we expect a steady in-flow over the next months and years? And in case they will not be returning home, where will they go? While I do not have the answers, it is indeed time to develop comprehensive frameworks to address the situation thoroughly, with an eye to the whole FTF cycle: from prevention, financial and travel restrictions, and prosecution, to rehabilitation and reintegration upon their return.

I will now highlight some areas where joint action is urgently needed, in my opinion.

- We should ensure that national legislation fully reflects relevant provisions of UN Security Council Resolutions 2178 (2014) and 2396 (2017) on FTFs, especially concerning prevention and criminalization of terrorist offences. While such resolutions are indeed important and comprehensive, they might not be enough. You will agree with me that, given the dimension and the evolving nature of the challenges we face, we should push for new international and regional commitments which take into account the dynamic reality of FTFs, and in particular their relocation and return.

- We should strengthen coordination and information-sharing channels at local, national, regional and international levels. This is to ensure regular and reliable exchange of operational data, thereby strengthening our counter-terrorism preventive and response mechanisms. In this context, I would like to mention the interesting Belgian experience of shared databases of terrorists and of Local Integrated Security Cells. The latter are collaborative platforms to facilitate timely exchanges on suspected terrorists among municipal stakeholders, thus ensuring a greater inclusiveness at grass-root level in accordance with the “principle of subsidiarity”.
- If we want to reduce the number of FTFs we must also work on those who facilitate their recruitment, financing and movement. As pointed out *inter alia* by CTED and UNODC, organized crime is increasingly intertwined with terrorist organizations. We must break such links and stop this mutually reinforcing and remunerating activity. A special focus should be placed on how FTFs are able to relocate under increasingly tightened border controls, often with the support of smuggling networks. There is also a significant risk of FTFs exploiting known mass-migration routes to travel undetected.
- Among the several cyber-related threats of our time, online recruitment of FTFs and the spread of terrorist propaganda are among the most prominent ones. We need to enable our security providers to respond more effectively to the use of internet for terrorist purposes. States should engage at expert and technical level to address the issue more in depth, including by building stronger partnerships with the private sector, notably ICT companies, including the smaller and less protected ones.
- We should focus carefully on our integration policies and learn more about the underlying causes of radicalization, as well as on its processes. This includes working closely *inter alia* with religious communities, schools, families and prisons. When looking at returning FTFs, we must enable prison authorities and social service providers to effectively engage with them to promote deradicalization and reintegration into society.

Allow me now to elaborate on how parliaments and inter-parliamentary fora such as the OSCE PA may contribute on these burning issues. As representatives of over one billion citizens in the OSCE

region, we are fully committed to be at the forefront in addressing terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization. To meet this commitment, we can leverage on a number of strengths. I will underline three.

- The first one is our **policy-making function**. We can promote and shape innovative legislation and policies on FTFs, as well as bridging existing loopholes in counter-terrorism frameworks. In doing so, it is our responsibility to ensure that our new policies and strategies respect the fundamental freedoms of our citizens, on which we do not intend to compromise.
- The second is **oversight**. We should closely monitor and support the work of our Governments and Security Agencies in dealing with the reverse flows of FTFs, including through parliamentary committees, auditions and hearings. For instance, the PA will encourage national parliaments to seek more information on the implementation status of UNSCR 2396 in the context of border security and information sharing (i.e. API, PNR and biometrics).
- The third is our **aptitude to bring States closer to their citizens**. Parliaments should not only promote the inclusion of civil society and of local communities on FTFs issues, but also advocate for more transparency to generate greater confidence among the general public, for instance through regular open hearings.

Building on these assets and in response to a precise call from our citizens, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly created the **Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism** in July 2017. The Committee, comprising 12 parliamentarians from 12 participating States, is committed to identify the most pressing policy-legal challenges, as well as to forge strategic partnerships to best contribute to the global counter-terrorism efforts. In the long run, we aim to add value by developing strategic guidance and engage in targeted initiatives, whenever needed.

So far, we held two official meetings, conducted very interesting field visits to the Kingdoms of Morocco and Belgium, and contributed to several international expert events, the last one just a few days ago on cyber-terrorism in Lisbon. All these initiatives proved invaluable to gain important insights and share good practices. We have also built solid co-operation with the OSCE executive structures, indeed our privileged partners, as well as with other global and regional organizations,

such as the United Nations and the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law. Notably, we met with OSCE and UN interlocutors in Vienna as our very first activity, while I have already addressed twice the OSCE Security Committee about the need to work in synergy.

As for the upcoming activities, the Committee will visit the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina in the beginning of June to get better acquainted with the challenges faced by local counter-terrorism authorities and to lend our support to the OSCE field operations in South Eastern Europe. In addition, we are drafting a resolution on the fight against terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization for discussion at the next OSCE PA Annual Session in Berlin in July. Finally, our Committee will continue to engage in international counter-terrorism events to profile the added value of the OSCE, advocate for a greater engagement of parliamentarians and share relevant lessons learned.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The OSCE is very well positioned to address the complex challenges stemming from the reverse flows of FTFs in virtue of its comprehensive and inclusive security approach. We are part of the same OSCE family and we must unite our efforts, each one with its strengths and specificities, against the scourge of terrorism. As the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism, I am very much committed in this regard and I look forward to engaging with all of you.

Thank you!