



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

*To be checked against delivery!*

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Madame Chairperson,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Dear Experts,

At the outset, let me thank the Spanish Chairmanship of the Security Committee for inviting me to introduce this distinguished panel and present the work of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism. I would also like to commend the Italian OSCE Chairmanship for steering the organization in these challenging times and placing counter-terrorism high on their ambitious agenda.

The OSCE Security Committee is a key interlocutor for us, and I look forward to reinforcing our dialogue and promoting greater synergy between parliamentary and governmental structures at the OSCE. Let me recall that the word synergy comes from the Greek term “*sunergos*”, which literally means “working together”; and this is precisely what I think we should do.

Terrorism constitutes one of the biggest challenges to security, freedom and to all those values that underpin our lives, founded on democracy and on the rule of law. Terrorist networks usually operate at a transnational level and are very adaptable to the situation on the ground. To respond to such challenges and to their evolving nature, we are called to ensure inclusion and comprehensive approaches. Engagement with parliamentarians is an important step in this direction and the **OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is ideally placed to promote dialogue and co-operation in this field**. In fact, parliamentarians play an important role by developing effective and human rights-compliant legislation, ensuring oversight of

security services, promoting trust and transparency at all levels and mobilizing resources to counter terrorism and violent extremism.

Today, I will give you an overview of our work and key findings over the last months, present some of our upcoming activities and highlight possible areas of joint action in this field. In doing so, I will touch upon several issues that are relevant for our panel discussion, such as coordination and information sharing, radicalization and foreign terrorist fighters.

In response to a growing concern within our societies, in July 2017 the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly created the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism to promote greater co-operation among parliamentarians on the issue. The Committee is currently in the process of identifying the most pressing policy and legislative needs, as well as forging strategic partnerships to contribute to the global counter-terrorism agenda by leveraging on its comparative advantages. On the long run, we aim to add value by developing strategic guidance and engaging in targeted initiatives to bring a stronger parliamentary perspective to this field, which we believe is greatly needed.

Since my previous address to the Security Committee last November, the **Committee has expanded to 12 members from 12 participating States and has continued to work hard to meet its mandate.** In particular, we held our *2nd official meeting* here in Vienna in February and conducted a very interesting *field visit to Belgium* - one of the European countries with the largest ratio of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) - where we met counter-terrorism stakeholders both at the central and local levels and learned more about their experiences and approaches. Such activities proved useful to deepen our knowledge and to shape our future

engagement. In addition, Committee members took part in international events such as the *Annual Parliamentary Forum for Global Action* in Milan (November 2017) and the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law *Regional Workshop on the Nexus of Parliamentarians and Criminal Justice Actors in counter-terrorism* in Malta (March 2018), with the aim of gaining further insights on specific aspects of the fight against terrorism.

Let me now highlight some **recurring themes** which have surfaced in these months and which I deem relevant for today's session:

- **Coordination and information sharing** between different counter-terrorism stakeholders is proving to be increasingly complex also due to the growing number of players involved. If in the past we considered primarily traditional security providers - such as intelligence agencies, law enforcement and border control - the framework of actors involved is growing much larger, and it includes, for instance, prison authorities, religious communities and schools. This larger framework poses further coordination challenges, with operational and legal repercussions. Against this backdrop, it is paramount to strengthen information-sharing channels at local, national, regional and international levels. This is to promote a regular and reliable exchange of operational data aimed at strengthening counter-terrorism preventive and response mechanisms. The Belgian experience of local integrated security cells and shared databases of potential terrorists has proven valuable and could be replicated elsewhere, provided clear regulatory frameworks with adequate safeguards are put into place. While the local cells foster preventive actions at grass-root level and promote individualized approaches, the shared databases facilitate timely information exchange among key stakeholders.

- **Striking a functional balance between counter-terrorism security measures** and respect for human rights and the rule of law is one of the biggest challenges we face. This is particularly true in the immediate aftermath of a major attack. Clearly, there is no “one solution fits all”; each society should openly discuss and agree upon a well-balanced, tailored approach to their specific needs. While strengthening investigative capacities is paramount - for instance for collecting evidence on-line – protecting fundamental freedoms remains pivotal.
- **Preventing radicalization remains a key priority.** There is a widespread need for more understanding of the underlying and diverse causes of radicalization - including among selected categories of society such as youth and detainees - as well as of the effectiveness of participating States’ integration, de-radicalization and rehabilitation policies. Marginalization and social exclusion usually play in favor of terrorist recruiters. However, it is also important to ascertain why and how apparently well integrated persons have reverted to violent extremism. A special focus should also concern countering terrorism narratives in religious communities and schools, an area where parliamentarians could help.
- Participating States in the OSCE region have been increasingly called to address **security threats related to FTFs**, including their return, often without coherent and consistent legal frameworks. Their conviction, rehabilitation and reintegration process poses significant challenges to our societies, including in financial terms. Clearly, implementing UN Security Council Resolutions 2178 and 2396 remains a top priority in this field. Imprisoned FTFs should be closely monitored to prevent radicalization of other inmates. To the extent possible, radicalized individuals should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, engaging all levels of society in targeted deradicalization activities, including families, schools, social workers, religious communities and prison administrations. I

welcome the decision of the Italian Chairmanship to devote the upcoming OSCE-wide counter-terrorism conference to this complex topic.

- There is an urgent need of **breaking the link between terrorism and organized crime networks**, including in the recruitment of potential terrorists and in the financing of terrorist organizations. The two phenomena feed each other and must be addressed through comprehensive and transnational strategies.

**Moving to our future activities**, the Committee is planning to *visit the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina* in June. The purpose of the visit is twofold: on the one hand, meeting relevant governmental, parliamentary and civil society actors to understand the challenges they are facing in countering terrorism and violent extremism. On the other hand, lending our support to the important work conducted by one of the largest OSCE field operations. As a matter of fact, this visit represents another step in forging a solid partnership with the OSCE executive structures. We already enjoy excellent co-operation with the Transnational Threats Department and the Conflict Prevention Centre in the OSCE Secretariat; both departments have been involved in our activities and we will continue to seek, as we do with you, further contributions.

Our Committee is also going to take part in a number of international counter-terrorism events to profile the work of the OSCE, advocate for a greater engagement of parliamentarians and share relevant lessons learned. Listing just a few, I intend to deliver keynote addresses at the *International Parliamentary Conference on Digital Resilience of a Democratic State* which will take place in Lisbon on 8 May, at the *OSCE-wide Counter Terrorism Conference on the Challenges Posed by the Reverse Flows of the FTFs* to be held in Rome on 10-11 May, and at the *International*

*Parliamentary Conference on Victims of Terrorism*, which will be organized by the Spanish Parliament in November. Notably, the Lisbon and Madrid events will look at two additional sensitive issues:

- **Cyber related risks** are increasing everywhere, they include the impact of the internet and of social media platforms in fostering violent extremism and radicalization, as well as terrorism recruitment and incitement. This poses complex questions, such as where to draw the line between freedom of expression and the need to fight terrorism incitement online; and what is the role of social media platforms and Internet Service Providers in preventing radicalization.
- **Victims of terrorist attacks** require more attention from Governments and the international community, as they and their families are usually facing many health-related, psychological, economic and legal repercussions which are impossible to address without professional support, as well as adequate financial assistance.

Finally, we are considering a draft resolution on the fight against terrorism, violent extremism and radicalism that leads to terrorism, to be possibly adopted at our Annual Session in Berlin later in July. The resolution would build on the efforts of the 2017 Austrian Chairmanship and bring more focus to our future endeavors.

I have already stressed the importance of our partnership with the OSCE executive structures. Looking ahead, we could consider the following **tools to further boost our co-operation and coordination**:

- Organizing joint initiatives, such as conferences, workshops and media campaigns, and joint participation in selected events, including field visits;
- Creating flexible formats for regularly exchanging key findings and lessons learned during our work.

Talking about the **focus of our engagement**, I see merit in joining forces to:

- Identify potential loopholes in international and national counter-terrorism frameworks, and develop new policy guidance as needed;
- Promote a greater involvement of local communities and civil society in our counter-terrorism efforts to make them more inclusive, comprehensive and transparent.

While the OSCE executive structures will remain our privileged partners, we are also working hard to boost our co-operation with key global stakeholders, such as the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. To this end, the President of the OSCE PA recently met with the Under-Secretary General Vladimir Voronkov and I met with Executive Director Yuri Fedotov last November. Finally, we have been opening new channels of dialogue with other relevant regional actors, such as the European Union and the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Madame Chairperson, distinguished Delegates,

As an inclusive platform for co-operative dialogue at governmental and parliamentary levels, the OSCE family is uniquely placed to address the multi-faceted challenges stemming from terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism. The OSCE executive structures are already doing a great deal of work in this field, and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is fully committed to complement this effort by stepping up its own engagement.

Thank you!