



AD HOC COMMITTEE ON COUNTERING TERRORISM

**SPEECH OF THE CHAIR OF THE OSCE PA AD HOC
COMMITTEE ON COUNTERING TERRORISM,**

Reinhold Lopatka

at the

**International Conference “Global Challenges and Threats in the
Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Terrorism and Violent
Extremism” – Plenary Session**

Thursday, 15 April 2021, 10:00 – 11:30 (CET)

(Online)

Dear Mrs. Matvienko,

Distinguished Members of Parliaments,

I am honoured to represent the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE PA) before such a distinguished audience. It is a great pleasure **to co-operate with such important organizations and colleagues** from around the world.

I will get to my main point straight away: while **countering terrorism is a complex priority, it is indeed a priority we all share!** Despite our political differences, fighting terrorism and violent extremism is high on the agendas of all our governments. Terrorist organizations respect no borders and are keen to exploit our weaknesses to their advantage. In a nutshell: **our divisions are only making terrorists stronger!**

Hence, it is essential that **we stand together, continue our policy dialogue in good faith, and remain committed to our shared goal**, particularly at times of crises. Meetings such as today's are critical to **promote convergence on counter-terrorism affairs and share key lessons learned** on how to prevent radicalization and violent extremism. This is why we are **proud to be co-organizing this high-level gathering** for the third consecutive time.

Honourable parliamentarians,

I believe that **only with a comprehensive approach we stand a chance to effectively counter terrorism and violent extremism**. At the OSCE PA, we **grew determined to add value in five key domains:**

1. First and foremost, in **preventing terrorism**, especially online and in the context of crises such as COVID-19. As we have witnessed during the pandemic, terrorists exploit the vulnerabilities and latent tensions within

our societies to increase their online radicalization efforts among vulnerable individuals/groups. Consequently, new right-wing violent extremist movements are on the rise, in parallel to more traditional ones, such as jihadism. Against this backdrop, it is pivotal to prevent the misuse of religion, the uncontrolled proliferation of conspiracy theories and the deliberate targeting of certain ethnic groups – they feed social tensions through radical propaganda against our democratic values and individual freedoms.

2. Second we should duly **explore the intersection of terrorism with other serious threats**, since terrorism does not occur in a vacuum. For instance, by better understanding terrorist financing and organized criminal networks' *modus operandi*, we can uncover important interlinkages with terrorist organizations. Equally, it is critical to stay abreast of new developments, for instance in the context of **bio-terrorism** and of so-called **hybrid threats**, intended to cripple our societies from within! Finally, we should not forget the potentially devastating threat posed by **nuclear terrorism**.
3. Thirdly, **the timely and effective prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of terrorists and violent extremists** remains a top priority across our regions. By doing so, we punish the perpetrators of horrific crimes, bring justice to the victims, prevent further crimes, build more resilient societies, and promote reconciliation. Individually tailored, multi-stakeholder and comprehensive efforts in this regard are vital. **It is pivotal that all state responses are proportionate and human rights compliant!**
4. Fourth, **border security and timely information sharing** remain paramount for tracking the movement of radicalized individuals and preventing new attacks. In this regard, national parliaments should

contribute to the full implementation of relevant international standards (such as UNSCR 2396) at national level, not only by adopting effective legislation in line with relevant human rights standards, but also through the oversight of governmental efforts in this domain.

5. Finally, we should never forget those who suffer the most from terrorism: **the victims!** Parliaments should enhance relevant policies and laws to provide adequate medical, psychological, economic and legal support to the victims, thus ensuring nobody is forgotten.

Dear Colleagues,

In countering terrorism and violent extremism, a **multi-stakeholder approach is truly essential**. Parliamentarians must work with other actors, such as governments, law enforcement, civil society, religious leaders, academia, and youth.

Interparliamentary fora can also bring this “battle” forward. In fact, they can strengthen policy dialogue, promote the exchange of national experiences, monitor national counter-terrorism efforts, and promote respect for human rights.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly – which brings together 323 members from 57 participating States to discuss top security concerns in a region spanning from Vancouver to Vladivostok – **has significantly boosted its parliamentary engagement in this field over the last 4 years.** However, there is a lot more we can do together.

To further explore all these issues and consider a common way forward, I **invite you to join the upcoming session on “Assessing the Terrorist Threat and Efforts to Prevent Violent Extremism”**.

Thank you again for the kind invitation and for your attention!