



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN  
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA MEDITERRANEE  
برلمان البحر الأبيض المتوسط



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

*(co-organised by IPA CIS, PAM, OSCE PA, PACE and UNOCT)*

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**OSCE PA - PAM Joint Session :**

**“Assessing the Terrorist Threat and Efforts to Prevent Violent Extremism”**

*Thursday 15 April 2021, 13:00 – 15:00 (CEST)*

**HIGHLIGHTS<sup>1</sup>**

**OVERVIEW**

On 15 April 2021, IPA CIS, OSCE PA, PACE, PAM and UNOCT jointly organized an online International Parliamentary Conference “*Global Challenges and Threats in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Terrorism and Violent Extremism*”. Building on similar successful parliamentary initiatives held in 2017 and 2019, the conference provided an expanded inter-parliamentary platform to discuss and address the prevailing issues of terrorism and violent extremism worldwide. Featuring the participation of more than 200 parliamentarians, the conference explored how to prevent violent extremism, boost international action in the field of countering terrorism, and support victims of terrorism. Within the framework of this conference, the OSCE PA and PAM co-hosted a Working Session “*Assessing the Terrorist Threat and Efforts to Prevent Violent Extremism*” to better understand the evolving trends, including in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, as well as to evaluate ongoing international efforts to prevent all forms of violent extremism.

Facilitated by PAM Secretary-General Sergio Piazzi, the joint session featured welcoming remarks by OSCE PA Secretary-General Roberto Montella, who underlined the importance of inter-parliamentary dialogue in building synergies against terrorism and stressed that international co-operation is the only effective way to counter this heinous threat. High-level speakers included Hon. Gennaro Migliore, Chair of the PAM Special Committee on Counterterrorism, Hon. Aude Bono-Vandorme, Deputy Chair of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism, Amb. Alena Kupchyna, OSCE Co-ordinator of Activities to Address Transnational Threats, Mr. Jacob Bertnsson, Head of Policy and Research at Tech Against Terrorism, Hon. Dherar Belhoul Al-Falasi, Member of the UAE Delegation to PAM.

<sup>1</sup> DISCLAIMER: The Highlights are not intended to be official conclusions, nor an exhaustive list of all issues raised during the debate, but rather a collection of key points pulled together by the organizers for possible future reference. As such, the organizers make no claims nor warranties of any kind, expressed or implied, about their completeness and reliability.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Prolonged health, economic and social distress exacerbate already existing vulnerabilities and provide a fertile ground for terrorists and violent extremists to spread their ideologies, promote societal divisions, and foster radicalization, especially on-line.
- The use of new technologies by terrorist groups, including in the digital communications sphere, remains widely unexplored and legally unregulated, with social media platforms expected to proactively monitor and determine what content is inappropriate or illegal. In this context, smaller social media platforms are particularly vulnerable and exposed.
- It is paramount to develop sensible global parameters and guidance to counter violent content, both offline and online. It is also critical to safeguard human rights and the rule of law while countering the terrorism threat, including by striking a proper balance between freedom of speech and censorship of potentially dangerous material on-line.
- Strong public-private partnerships and co-operation are indispensable to better understand and properly address these complex dynamics online.
- The effective prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) and their families, including women and children stranded in conflict-affected areas, remains key. Terrorist groups are exploiting the precarious conditions of most detention centres in conflict-affected regions as a breeding ground for the next generation of ISIL supporters. Many of the children detained in such camps are faced with war-related trauma, persistent radicalization, and the issue of statelessness.
- The deterioration of the security environment in many parts of Africa - including in the Western Sahel region, Lake Chad Basin, East Africa, and Mozambique - provides a fertile ground for terrorist organizations to establish dangerous footholds in the region.
- Children in volatile security contexts are particularly vulnerable to being exploited as fighters, informants, looters, messengers, spies and sexual slaves by criminal and terrorist organizations.
- Looking at recidivism, recent terror attacks in Europe have proven the need to continue strengthening deradicalization and reintegration efforts in places of detention.
- A whole-of-society approach is crucial in deradicalization and rehabilitation programmes, which should be tailored to the individual needs, especially those of women and children.
- Preventing terrorism and violent extremism requires strong partnerships with a multitude of stakeholders, including the civil society, intelligence services and business sector.
- Given the evolving nature of the terrorist threat, policymakers should regularly review and update national strategies and legislation to effectively address new and emerging trends.
- Further action is required to ensure that national and regional parliamentary efforts intended to promote the implementation of the Global Counterterrorism Strategy and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions are duly coordinated and fully complementary.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **States** should comply with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions to bring terrorists to justice and ensure appropriate prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration of foreign fighters and their accompanying family members.
- **States** should continue to develop counter-terrorism policy guidance at the international level, thus ensuring that all responses, both offline and online, are well-coordinated and in full compliance with international human rights and the freedom of speech.
- **States** should enact effective strategies to counter the abuse of social media and new technologies for terrorist purposes - including financing, recruitment, and propaganda – in close partnership with the private sector.
- **States** should work together to address the issue of child recruitment, radicalization, and exploitation for terrorist purposes, while national and international authorities should take the appropriate steps to facilitate the reunification of separated families.
- **States** should develop a comprehensive strategy to ensure that regional and local instability in the African continent and the Middle East does not foster terrorism and violent extremism.
- **National Parliaments** must remain informed, vigilant, and pro-active in their counter-terrorism efforts, continuously assessing new and evolving threats and supporting governments in updating their prevention and counter-terrorism strategies as appropriate.
- **National Parliaments** should contribute to the full implementation of relevant international standards on border security (e.g. UNSCR 2396) at the 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.
- **National Parliaments** should address possible existing legislative gaps which aggravate the risk of recidivism while ensuring that such measures are in line with international human rights obligations.
- **National Parliaments** should continue to monitor the work of the government and law enforcement and engage in developing strong counter-narratives, reaching all vulnerable members of societies.
- **Parliamentarians** should make full use of interparliamentary fora such as OSCE PA and PAM to foster the exchange of trends and lessons learned in the field, including by facilitating exchanges among security forces, the criminal justice system, the private sector, and NGOs.