



Kingdom of Belgium

Statement by H.E. Mr. Philippe Kridelka,
Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative

To the United Nations Security Council

**Briefing: threats to international peace and security caused by
terrorist acts**

New York, 24 August 2020

Mr President,

I thank the Secretary General for his report on the threats to international peace and security posed by Daesh, as well as Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Assistant Secretary-General Coninx for their presentations.

Thanks to the efforts of the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh, of which Belgium is an active member, the Syrian and Iraqi territories were freed from the control of the Islamic State terrorist group. However, the latter maintains its presence in the region, and other small groups driven by the same ideology continue to spread in other parts of the world, and notably in the Sahel, Western Africa or the Chad Lake region, hereby attempting to take profit of a damaged security situation.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the threat posed by ISIL is multifaceted but not yet clear. Although the measures taken by the Member States to fight against the pandemic may have complicated the activities of the terrorist group, we still see an increase of its activities in Iraq and Syria, and more particularly in the most fragile regions. In the coming months, it will be important to remain vigilant and to continue to assess the situation in order to prevent any resurgence of this organization in the region.

Furthermore, during the pandemic, the group's offensive propaganda efforts, mainly on online platforms, have benefited from a fragile, confined audience, particularly among the most vulnerable groups in our societies, who feel marginalized and downgraded. Preventing and fighting against such hate speech

must remain a long term priority, as they contribute to exacerbating radicalization leading to violent extremism and terrorism.

As you stated, the threat posed by Daesh and its followers is constantly evolving, and thus requires that all Member States remain vigilant and adapt in a quick, flexible way. In this context, on 16 June, the Council of the European Union updated its conclusions on EU external action on preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism, which form the basis of the EU's action in this domain. Those new conclusions will allow the EU to continue its action while adapting to the evolution of the Islamic threat and to the emergence of new ones, including the rise of far right terrorism.

Mister President,

Belgium condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. My country is convinced that the fight against terrorism can only succeed if it fully complies with human rights and international humanitarian law, which must constitute a leading principle in all 4 pillars of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. For this reason, and together with its European partners, Belgium ensures that measures taken to fight terrorism do not negatively impact human rights and humanitarian activities on the ground, including in the Syrian camps.

The foreign terrorist fighters issue constitutes a major challenge for our common security. Therefore, my country favourably welcomes the developments to prevent travel for terrorist purposes, and underlines the importance to bring terrorists to justice, while continuing to fight against the root causes of radicalization leading to extremism and terrorism. At the same time, developing specific rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for men and women suspected of having committed terrorism-related crimes is crucial. It is also essential to differentiate the status of children from those of men and women, and to primarily consider them as victims of terrorism.

Mister President,

Belgium considers that a successful fight against violent extremism and terrorism requires a comprehensive approach. This comprehensive approach is reflected on

the military level with four Belgian F16s in support of the Coalition's operations from October onwards for a period of 1 year, as well as on the stabilization level with a contribution of 4 million euro in 2020 in the territories freed from Daesh. We also promote an inclusive, whole-of-society approach. Youth, women, the private sector, civil society and human rights defenders, or victims of terrorism, all contribute to the development of efficient, relevant and sustainable policies. Their voices must be heard and integrated in our counter-terrorism strategies.

Finally, and despite the fragmentation of our efforts caused by the current pandemic, it is essential that our coordination and cooperation in countering terrorism be reinforced, on the international, regional but also national levels. In this framework, Belgium wishes to underline its appreciation for the flexibility of all UN entities, who managed to continue to successfully fulfil their mandate in the difficult circumstances in past months. Together with all our partners, Belgium will remain fully committed to eradicate the threat posed by Daesh.

I thank you.