

Speech by H.E. Mr. Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve,  
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

to the United Nations Security Council

**Debate: The international terrorist threat**

New York, 11 February 2019

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Mr President,

First of all, we would like to thank and congratulate the Secretary-General for his interim report, which highlights the latest directions of the international terrorist threat posed by ISIL. We would also like to thank Ms Coninx and Mr Voronkov for their excellent presentations.

We are pleased to note that **the Council has the necessary tools**, through the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Monitoring Team, to conduct an independent and in-depth analysis of the threat posed by ISIL.

We note that, although ISIL as a territorial entity has been virtually defeated and has become a clandestine international network, **its negative impact on international security remains substantial**, attracting a number of individuals, including in Europe.

The international community remains deeply concerned by the way in which the return of foreign terrorist fighters and their families in Syria are returned. There are persistent diplomatic, legal and logistical difficulties in ensuring the prosecution and security of foreign terrorist fighters held in temporary camps and those still at large.

Belgium has opted for **a holistic approach** to combating radicalisation in our country; we believe that the same approach, focusing not only on repression but also on prevention and reintegration into society, must also apply to foreign terrorist fighters and their families returning to Belgium.

Our policy takes into account the risk to public safety but, at the same time, the Belgian government recognises **its international humanitarian and human rights obligations**, including the rights of the child. Belgium thus gives priority to the return of children under 10 years of age of terrorist combatants, who are still in the conflict zone, and takes steps to ensure their rehabilitation and reintegration.

Personalised assistance will be provided once the minor has returned to Belgium, taking into account the individual situation of the repatriated child.

Mr President,

We have the right tools at our disposal to deal with the global threat from ISIL, and in particular from foreign terrorist fighters. The recently adopted "Addendum" to the **Madrid Guiding Principles**, which guides us in the implementation of Resolution 2396, is very useful, proposing a balanced approach of counter-terrorism measures while also emphasising the importance of prevention. Let us now make its implementation one of our main priorities.

We encourage the forthcoming publication of a manual on children accompanying foreign terrorist fighters.

We are very much in favour of the new **resolution on terrorist financing** announced by France, to which we will give our full support.

As part of its holistic approach, Belgium considers **the promotion of justice and the fight against impunity** as priorities. The fight against impunity is not only essential in itself but also as a tool for prevention and stabilisation. This is why Belgium supports the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria and the Investigation Team responsible for gathering evidence of crimes committed by ISIL in Iraq (UNITAD).

However, there are still a number of problems related to the terrorist threat that are not sufficiently addressed. We take note of the Secretary-General's report on the fact that, despite the excellent documentation of **acts of sexual violence** committed by ISIL members, none of these crimes have yet been prosecuted.

These acts are a source of serious concern for Belgium. They should be combated by creating appropriate preventive structures, fighting impunity and strengthening other deterrent mechanisms, such as sanctions.

Finally, as the report points out, the risk does not disappear once the terrorists and foreign terrorist fighters have been prosecuted and convicted. Member States are faced with the challenge of **deradicalising** prisoners and preventing them from radicalising their fellow prisoners. We welcome the capacity-building efforts of UNODC in collaboration with the Executive Directorate, but we also recognise that a great deal of work remains to be done to combat this phenomenon at a global level.

Thank you, Mr President.