



Statement by H. E. Mr. Masud Bin Momen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations under Agenda Item (3): Culture of Peace; The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy on Friday, 12 February 2015

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Mr. President,

Bangladesh appreciates your efforts to have the General Assembly Resolution adopted today to take forward the Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

We align ourselves with the Statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Bangladesh considers the Plan of Action to be a sound basis for our collective, integrated and strategic work on preventing violent extremism. We detect many commonalities between our national policies and actions on preventing violent extremism under the resolute guidance of our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the seven-point Agenda for Action outlined by the Secretary General.

Bangladesh maintains an unequivocal 'zero tolerance' approach to terrorism and violent extremism in all their forms and manifestations. We believe that terrorists and violent extremists do not have any religion, creed and caste. We remain committed to ensuring that our territory is not used for terrorist activities directed at other states, including our neighbours.

Bangladesh concurs with the Secretary General that violent extremism is an inherently global phenomenon. We are confronted with a generational challenge, and we must all join ranks to address it in a focused, determined and comprehensive manner. Any ad-hoc or piecemeal approach will bring us no dividend.

Bangladesh considers the Secretary General's Plan of Action to contain a useful portfolio of analytical tools and recommendations. It allows Member States to identify the key drivers of violent extremism in their respective contexts, and thus calibrate their appropriate responses at the national, sub-regional and regional levels.

There must be respect for a society's own inclusive understanding about the nature and scale of the challenges it faces. Any attempt to label, judge or draw conclusions, using a narrow, prescriptive lens from the outside, can only be self-defeating.

It is perhaps apt that the Plan of Action does not attempt to provide a clear-cut definition of 'violent extremism' as and when it is conducive to terrorism. This should leave room for Member States to further reflect on the conceptual framework of violent extremism, and to possibly arrive at a shared understanding of the phenomenon through its evolving forms, trends and manifestations. The perspectives emanating from various national contexts would certainly be useful to bear upon that exercise.

The Secretary General has developed his Plan of Action in relation to the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, especially its Pillars I and IV. For us, the Plan of Action aims to leverage the PVE agenda to contribute, in the larger context, to comprehensive, multi-dimensional, and effective counter-terrorism strategies, and not to substitute them.

As we see it, PVE can be pursued in the interface between security and development, while being anchored in human rights principles. PVE does offer the international community an avenue to avoid the potential pitfalls of over- or singular reliance on a military-based approach to counter-terrorism.

Prevention is appositely the buzzword of the UN's peace and security agenda at the moment. There is perhaps a growing convergence on the much-needed attention to be given to preventing the underlying drivers of intolerance, violence, radicalisation and terrorism to robustly complement the organisation's work on ending conflicts and defeating terrorism. A consensus, however, would perhaps remain elusive as long as there is a perceived imbalance in identifying the real drivers and processes of radicalization and violent extremism.

We see no purpose in denying some of the fundamental root causes that continue to give steady supply and sustenance to the toxic messages being peddled by certain segments of violent extremists. The present Plan of Action refers to the potential impacts of foreign occupation, protracted conflicts and systematic human rights abuses, but shies away from identifying certain obvious particular cases. We can perhaps opt for partial narratives to address the malaise of radicalization and violent extremism, but that would only serve to embolden those that thrive on their own interpretation of events, no matter how misguided their logic or objectives may be.

Likewise, the Plan of Action tends to focus on the local drivers of violent extremism, but demonstrates rather scant understanding of the external factors that profoundly influences the local narratives. The collective grievances, ideological imports and illicit financial flows that permeate through national borders continue to fuel the vested agenda of the local actors, including violent extremists.

The role of modern technologies, particularly the internet, merits our special attention when it comes to tackling violent extremism. It would be somewhat futile to address the spread the violent extremist messaging online only through the binaries of security vs. access and privacy. There needs to be a common space to be found for different groups of actors to converge and cooperate in the face of a shared global threat. Even if it takes time, Member States should

seriously consider reviewing the existing legal and normative frameworks to further facilitate mutual assistance and cooperation, with the active involvement, commitment, and responsiveness of the private sector.

Mr. President,

Bangladesh stands ready to draw on and customize the Secretary General's Plan of Action in line with our national circumstances and priorities. For the basis of our work, we have stringent counter-terrorism legislations, an effective national strategy to combat terrorism, a robust intelligence network among concerned agencies, and constant vigil ensured by the law enforcement apparatus to disrupt terrorist networks and eventually degrade any potential violent extremist entities and tendencies. This has resulted in the various home-grown terrorist groups or entities being denied any solid footing and being constantly on the run, despite their efforts to emerge or regroup among themselves under different banners and franchises.

In order to address the 'upstream challenges' of violent extremism at the grass roots, we have recently joined the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) as a pilot beneficiary country. Our sustained investment in human development has been critical in reducing poverty, enhancing women's social mobility, creating education and employment opportunities, especially for the youth, and strengthening human rights and the rule of law. Bangladesh's impressive achievement in women's empowerment has been a critical factor in resisting extremist elements in our midst. In our aspiration to build a knowledge-based society, we have made it a mission to infuse a 'culture of peace' in the minds of our children and youth.

To conclude, **Mr. President,** Bangladesh wishes to see that our deliberations concerning counter-terrorism and preventing violent extremism be contextualized within the 2030 Development Agenda since, apart from climate change, there is perhaps no greater threat to our collective, sustainable development pursuits than terrorism and violent extremism.

I thank you.