

## Report of the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security

*Noted by the 133<sup>rd</sup> IPU Assembly  
(Geneva, 21 October 2015)*

The Standing Committee on Peace and International Security held one sitting on 18 October 2015 with its President, Mr. R. Tau (South Africa), in the Chair.

During this sitting, the Committee held an experts hearing *Terrorism: The need to enhance global cooperation against the threat to democracy and individual rights*, the topic of a resolution that is expected to be adopted by the 134<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly in Lusaka (Zambia). The purpose of the discussion was to give Committee members an opportunity to learn about current issues in cooperation relating to counter-terrorism, and to exchange views with experts in the field.

Having dealt with procedural items, the Chair opened the meeting and introduced the experts, Mr. A.S. El Dawla, Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) and Mr. K. Koser, Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF).

Mr. El Dawla began by explaining the role of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and its Executive Directorate, and its work in assessing threats and devising standards on counter-terrorism. He explained that while successful, efforts to counter terrorism could also increase threats, as they forced groups to transform their activities, shortened time-frames and changed the methods of recruitment. Nowadays, many fighters were young people or women. This created many challenges at the policy, legal and operational levels, such as increased difficulties in exchanging information and transposing measures to create standards and norms, or the need for close cooperation and coordination at all levels. Mr. El Dawla underlined that the responsibility for creating new legislation or adapting existing laws lay with parliaments. He added that executive branches should then apply that legislation, and that parliaments would then have the additional responsibility of overseeing its implementation.

Mr. Koser was then given the floor. He began by presenting the newly established Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) which sought to support local community-level initiatives aimed at strengthening resilience against violent extremist agendas, and to be a new means of countering terrorism. He analysed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of this tool.

The new approach was a truly global effort which focussed on communities and helped understand why people turned to violent agendas. However, it was working in a vacuum as there was no clear definition of violent extremism. It aimed to bring together security and development communities, which were often divided while having counter-terrorism right in the middle. With regard to threats, Mr. Koser highlighted that since the tool was new, there was a difficulty in demonstrating results that would only appear in the long term. Moreover, the approach of preventing terrorism was still fragile; and needed to be action-oriented and sustainable so that countries did not revert back to military responses. Based on that analysis, he then made the following recommendations: Supporting and funding efforts to counter violent extremism was everybody's duty. Parliaments should adopt a comprehensive, action-oriented, counter-terrorism approach, engaging with all relevant stakeholders. Such an approach should deal with development as well as military intelligence. Parliaments should also work to ensure that a robust human rights framework was in place.

Further to the experts' interventions, a total of 33 speakers, including two observer organisations, took the floor during the discussion. All the participants had an opportunity to express their views on the various aspects of the issue at stake.

Many of the interventions referred to acts of terrorism that had occurred in some countries, and the nature of the legislation that had been put in place or the actions taken to counter such acts. Some speakers also pointed out that there was no definition of the concept of terrorism, and that there was a need to come up with a commonly-held notion. They also addressed the issue of terrorism financing, through money laundering or drugs, and the need for economic and social development to be at the heart of international assistance, so as to deter young people from being encouraged to engage with terrorism.

Speakers commented on how to strike a balance between security and individual rights, including the capacity to use new technologies and social media, which are now resorted to by terrorists to recruit people. Many of the comments dealt with young people, often emphasizing that they should be supported and provided with a better future, and that organisations should be provided with a means to combat poverty and promote employment opportunities.

Finally, speakers called for acts to replace words, and for stakeholders to go beyond diplomacy and be more proactive in tackling the roots of terrorism. They felt the need to address more effectively sensitive matters such as the issue of weapons used by terrorists, and how the suppliers should be punished. Several speakers spoke about the need to strengthen cooperation to counter terrorism.

In their concluding remarks the two experts referred to the fact that although terrorist acts were still being committed, counter-terrorism actions had been successful. They highlighted the need for those actions to be in accordance with the rule of law. With regard to definition, they supported the existing framework, which defined 19 actions. They also emphasized the need for prevention.

The Bureau of the Standing Committee met on 18 October 2015. 8 members out of 18 were present. Two had excused themselves.

The President of the Committee began by informing the Bureau members of the discussions held during the Joint Meeting of Chairpersons of the Geopolitical Groups and Presidents of the Standing Committees and their outcomes, especially the reshuffling of leadership positions that was expected to take place in March 2016 during the 134<sup>th</sup> Assembly in Lusaka (Zambia).

The Bureau established the Committee's work programme for the 134<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly. Keeping to existing practice, it decided to propose that the whole time allocated to the Committee be devoted to the resolution, i.e., 3 to 4 hours of debate on the resolution itself and some explanation of amendments, the remaining time being used for negotiating the resolution in plenary. That proposal was subsequently approved by the Committee plenary.

There was some lively discussion of the methods of work of the Bureau of the Committee, and the topics to be studied by the Committee. Bureau members felt that better means of communication should be put in place, and that the Bureau should meet more often. Two members of the Bureau stated that they would like to host additional Bureau meetings, including with the co-Rapporteurs, to discuss at length the resolution and other topics of interest.