

**SPEECH BY HON. MINISTER DR GEORGE W. VELLA, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF MALTA AT THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL – BASEL, 4 – 5
DECEMBER 2014**

Fight against Terrorism: Common Challenges within and beyond the OSCE area

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Terrorism continues to dominate our daily lives. It has become a real threat to global peace and security, besides presenting common and numerable challenges within and beyond the OSCE area. We all have repeatedly condemned all terrorist acts whenever, wherever and by whomsoever they are perpetrated and committed.

Terrorism is synonymous with death, destruction, massacres, kidnappings, sexual violence in conflict areas, and all other forms of atrocious crimes. Unfortunately terrorism has acquired centre-stage in global politics and indeed continues to feature prominently on the international agenda. In an interdependent world the fight against terrorism must not only be seen as being tackled, but has to be tackled in a cohesive and coherent manner, with commitment and conviction.

We have all been witnessing regional offshoots which have emerged as a source of major concern to all levels and strata of our populations, rich and poor, large and small. Not one region has been left unscathed!

The particularity of terrorism lies in its constantly changing physiognomy and nature, as terrorism moves ahead with the times in terms of efficacy, sophistication and effectiveness by utilising all forms of terror and every resource available, be it physical or virtual.

Violent extremism and ideologies, with organized criminal movements and organizations claim no borders and in most cases no allegiance, making it even harder to ferret out the source of perpetration. Indeed, terrorism in all its forms has no frontiers, no face and no respect towards the human being. This situation is compounded by foreign terrorist fighters enticed financially and with other means to participate and engage in these horrific acts.

Whole populations are being indiscriminately targeted and killed with an ever-increasing large number of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons that are fleeing these daily hardships, enduring famine, starvation and warfare on a daily basis. These movements are having a social and economic consequences on the neighbouring countries which are constantly facing the spill-over of the fighting and the plight of the refugees.

Over the years, the OSCE has extensively contributed to the fight against terrorism. The Permanent Council Decision 1063 of the OSCE Consolidated Framework for the Fight against Terrorism specifically underscores the OSCE's ongoing commitment to counter terrorism. This commitment can be achieved through the promotion of dialogue, exchange of expertise, and the nurturing of a network that facilitates the coordination of counter-terrorism activities at all levels, assisting Member States in building national capacities towards this endeavour. Likewise, the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy has been instrumental in fighting this war on terrorism, even through its legislative framework, namely through the UNSC Resolution 1373 on terrorism which was the core theme for the Mediterranean Conference held in Neum this year and the UN-OSCE Mediterranean Regional Counterterrorism Expert Workshop on Terrorist Kidnapping and Hostage-Taking: Enhancing the Implementation of the International Legal Framework against Terrorism, held in Malta on 16-17 September 2014.

As a participating State at the southern border region of the OSCE area - an area afflicted by instability, Malta continues to advocate the singular role of the OSCE's Mediterranean dimension. The encouraging opportunities for debate and possibly solutions that lie ahead of us should bolster a full and meaningful interface with the OSCE's Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. Such a measure must keep firmly in view the validity of also engaging with other Mediterranean countries which are key to security and stability in the region – countries like Libya, which regrettably continues to struggle to stand up again. It is important that we value our collective role in engaging with North African States that are currently undergoing radical transition processes.

Every effort should be made to allow the OSCE to connect with determination with our Partners through the promotion of good practices, including on counter-terrorism mechanisms. The Helsinki+40 process, and the inherent Mediterranean Chapter of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act provides the necessary medium and a unique opportunity to set ourselves these targets.

My country has left no stone unturned to contribute towards the OSCE efforts as well as those of the United Nations towards this end. The proposed setting up in Malta of an OSCE Centrex-Med to serve as an OSCE Command and Senior Staff Centre for Excellence in Justice and Security, and the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IIJ) established in Malta earlier this year, are just two initiatives which will contribute in the fight against terrorism.

We are at a defining moment in the history of the OSCE. The challenges – our common challenges – which we are facing as Participating States of this Organisation, are many and diverse. Our challenges are also those of the neighbouring countries of the OSCE if not also beyond. The fight against terrorism must continue unabated. We must stand firm and combine our efforts and determination to combat this phenomenon which in recent years has reared its head dramatically and transformed itself into a mammoth challenge to peace loving, democratic countries and populations..

Thank you