



Non-official translation.

Statement by

H. E. Ambassador Bashar Ja'afari

Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic

To the United Nations in New York

At the United Nations General Assembly's Meeting

on the consideration of the

**"Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent
Extremism."**

Mr. President,

Thank you for convening this important meeting. My delegation takes note of the report of the Secretary-General and the Plan of Action for the prevention of violent extremism. We reaffirm once again the support of the Syrian Arab Republic to all serious and sincere efforts to address the threat posed by terrorism and its toxic ideology, and to uphold tolerance, dialogue, and respect for religions and civilizations values.

My delegation wishes to emphasize a number of important points overlooked by the Secretary-General in his report, and to make observations on some points contained in the report.

Mr. President,

The first step for success in combating terrorism and addressing the phenomenon of violent extremism, and its consequences such as the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters, is the strict adherence to the United Nations and the Security Council counter-terrorism resolutions and related instruments that have been adopted over the past years, in particular resolutions 1267, 1373, 1624, 2170, 2178, 2199 and 2253 and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and to hold accountable the governments that violate these instruments and provide various forms of support to terrorism.

Any effort to prevent violent extremism requires adherence to international law and the UN Charter to address its root causes. We are not going to reinvent the wheel, and will not restart from scratch, we have to work on the basis of the instruments that we have adopted through our work in the past years in the framework of many agenda items such as "countering – terrorism", "culture of peace", "dialogue among civilizations" and "Combating intolerance, discrimination, incitement and violence", etc, and to benefit from our cumulative work and experience. We stress, in this context, that if the United Nations is to achieve concrete results, it must move away from double standards in countering terrorism, and should not ignore the behavior of the governments that support terrorism, prolong crises and impede their settlement, incite to violence and terrorism, and spread hatred speech, intolerance and discrimination based on various factors. These well-known governments claim that they seek to combat the violent extremism supported and promoted by them, and claim their determination to combat terrorism which they created and sponsored.

My delegation stresses that efforts of preventing violent extremism will not succeed unless the international community put an end to the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and other occupied Arab territories, and stop the violent extremism and terrorism perpetrated by Israeli settlers against the Arab citizens living under occupation. The Israeli violent extremism is backed by the extreme Israeli governments that refused and rejected international legitimacy resolutions, and seeks to create, in the occupied territories, a one religion state that excludes the followers of other faiths.

It is also essential to put an end to the injustices caused by violations of international law and UN Charter, illegitimate foreign military interventions, unilateral coercive measures, and discrimination based on religion, color, race or nationality, and the distortion and defamation of religions, and the use of hate speech and incitement and stereotyping in political and partisan campaigns.

Mr. President,

Regarding the points contained in the report of the Secretary-General and his plan of action, my delegation would like to raise the following points:

1) The plan tries to consolidate the term "violent extremism" along with the term "terrorism" which the International Community could not reach a consensual definition of it because of the use of certain governments and regimes of terrorism as a political weapon. It is unclear the parameters and standards that will enable law enforcement authorities or legislative bodies to determine whether someone is a "violent extremist" or "non-violent or peaceful extremist". Who would decide? How can we find common standards in different countries and cultures? If extremism became "violent", when can we consider it "terrorism"? Such questions remain unanswered....

2) If Da'esh represents violent extremism, according to the report, then who represents terrorism for the Secretary-General? How can foreign "terrorist" fighters join a violent extremism organization without this organization be described as a terrorist organization? It might be helpful if the Secretary-General also takes the initiative to develop a plan to ensure the implementation of Security Council resolutions addressing the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters and prevent their travel in conjunction with the prevention of violent extremism.

3) The Secretary-General's report indicates that what he called "violent extremists" have been able to recruit over / 30,000 / foreign terrorist fighters from more than / 100 / member states to go to Syria and Iraq. And here we ask: did these violent

extremists succeed on their own to bring all those FTFs? And what about the role of the Governments that support, finance, train, and arm terrorists and facilitate their travel from all around the world to my country? These governments are known to all of you, one of them established the "United Nations Counter-Terrorism Center" and the second has the post of the "UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations" and the third will host in few months the "International Humanitarian Summit"! Another question, will the terrorists who return spread "hatred, intolerance and violence" in their home countries just as stated in the report, or they may commit, unless they are caught and held accountable, terrorist acts under instructions from their employers?

4) The report indicates that Da'esh and other extremist groups have benefited from the "armed conflict in Syria", and the instability in Iraq, Libya and ignores deliberately that the main causes for the emergence of Da'esh, who was born from the womb of al-Qaida in Iraq, is the illegitimate military interventions in member states and the persecution, repression, human rights violations and the destruction and looting of the capabilities of those countries and peoples? The report also deliberately ignores, as other reports issued by the Secretariat, referring to the terrorist entity named "Al-Nusra Front" in order to attempt to legitimize this entity and to consider it as "Syrian moderate armed opposition".

5) The Secretary-General repeats in his plan the term "rule of law" in an exaggerated manner in order to create the impression that this term is one of the pillars of the United Nations enshrined in the Charter, although the Secretariat is aware that, so far, there is no agreed definition for this term, and that there is a split in the positions of Member States on the "rule of law" and on the priority of its implementation at the international level or at the national level.

6) The Secretary-General's plan refers to his intention to strengthen the work according to his initiative entitled "Human Rights Upfront", which was prepared by the Secretary-General of the United Nations alone and was not considered officially and in a sufficient way, and is not adopted by the Member States yet.

7) The Secretary-General refers to his intention to include the prevention of violent extremism in the framework of the activities of peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Such a proposal raises legal concerns related to the mandates of peacekeeping operations, and the fact that most peacekeepers do not know often the traditions and beliefs and cultures of the host communities and what is violent extremism and what is non-violent extremism or otherwise.

8) The Secretary-General reaffirms the importance of "engaging" the concerned parties and "participation" and "plurality of views" at a time when he excludes interested countries from the consultations, and ignores observations and information addressed to him by certain member states.

9) The value of any text lies in its implementation. The plan includes important and constructive recommendations and proposals, but we fear that the extent of compliance with, if adopted, would not be better than the commitment by the Security Council resolutions on countering-terrorism which are openly violated by some Member States governments and without any fear of accountability or conviction. For example, how can the repressive regimes that marginalize women who are half of the society, and spread Wahhabi extremist ideas and sponsor terrorist organizations, such as "Da'esh" and "Al-Nusra Front" and "Muslim Brotherhood" and others, to accept a plan that calls for strengthening the role and status of women and the values of tolerance and respect for religions?

10) During the informal meeting, held on 01.15.2016, several delegations raised the issue of funding the plan if adopted. In this context, my delegation underlines the fundamental legal principle that "the responsibility of reparations lies with the perpetrator". In this regards, The United Nations and its Security Council should put the responsibility with the member states supporting terrorism, and oblige them to repatriate and shoulder the main cost for combating terrorism and violent extremism leading to this terrorism.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, my delegation calls on the Secretariat to address our concerns and other rightful concerns raised by some delegations on the report and plan in order to be able to official adopt it and start implementing it. My delegation also welcomes discussions on the plan, and stresses that any action regarding it must be taken by consensus only, taking into consideration that the Secretary-General's proposal as the basis for discussion.

Thank you.