



VIRTUAL COUNTER-TERRORISM WEEK

6-10 JULY 2020



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**Speech by Ms. Gabriela Cuevas Barron
President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)**

**Virtual counter terrorism week 2020
Strategic and practical challenges of countering terrorism
In a global pandemic environment**

Interactive closing discussion: member states' counter-terrorism priorities in the post covid-19 environment – synergies and complementarities between the covid-19 and the counter-terrorism agendas

10 July 2020

Excellencies

Dear Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by thanking the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism for organizing this important week-long event focused on counterterrorism.



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[What are Member States' counter-terrorism needs and priorities in the post COVID 19 environment?]

I must say that I am concerned. The challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic will deepen and exacerbate already existing structural problems. The road to creating sustainable, thriving, and inclusive societies was already paved with considerable obstacles; now we are at great risk of suffering a major setback. More and more people will be marginalized as a result of this pandemic, and this will result in them being more susceptible to radicalization.

This is where I want to be very clear. We must understand that terrorism thrives when there is a lack of equal opportunities, when young people are robbed of their future, when the only option is to despair. There must indeed exist international cooperation to stem the tide of terrorism and avoid the loss of innocent lives, particularly as those most vulnerable—women and children—end up suffering enormously.

[What are the synergies and complementarities between the response to and recovery from COVID 19 and the counter-terrorism agenda?]

But we must also address terrorism at its root causes. Building towards peace also includes enabling economic prosperity for all. I am certain that if all parliamentarians, 46,000 parliamentarians all over the world strive to create conditions for peace, the world would be a less harsh place for those who have already and tragically suffered enormous loss.

Therefore, Member States must stay ahead of this trend. They have to anticipate it by taking action now. COVID-19 has ravaged economies around the world; many will be in dire need of help. Therefore, states must ensure that social safety nets can be kept in place and that people can have access to proper healthcare. In these hard times, people



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need to be reassured that they are not alone. In doing so, we will avoid any future deepening of existing structural problems.

On the other hand, states must contain the pandemic to stop it from decimating any more lives. However, as noted in the IPU's "Parliaments in a time of pandemic" campaign, responses must also be rooted in a firm legal basis set out in national law, respectful of equality, temporary, free of discrimination, and, very importantly, to be necessary and proportionate to the protection of human health.

This is as true for COVID-19 as it is for counterterrorism responses. Threats are not to be dismissed, but they must also be assessed rationally. Institutionalizing undemocratic practices through fear is a step too far, and would be counterproductive. It would divide, rather than unify in a time when that is precisely what is most needed. The way forward to countering the deep-seated causes of terrorism is not through alienation, but inclusion.

[How can we strengthen political support for international counter-terrorism cooperation and capacity-building, including through the UN and its partners?]

And if we want to strengthen support for international counter-terrorism cooperation, that is the principle that we must consider: inclusion. Countries which concentrate the vast majority of victims of terrorist attacks are those whose voices and opinions are least heard and considered. As such, no response to this problem can attest to be comprehensive when it leaves out the perspectives of those whom it purports to help! International cooperation is essential as it allows the global community to offer a concerted response to terrorist attacks, but it is moot when only a few dictate terms while making key decisions.

I have to point out that the IPU has been for years prioritizing cooperation with the international community on the global efforts to counter terrorism. Yes, we are working with the UNOCT and with several partners. The IPU Assemblies have adopted numerous



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resolutions which highlight the need for parliaments to cooperate with the United Nations on the implementation of its counter-terrorism resolutions and strategies.

In this important regard, I think that IPU offers a privileged platform. We are the natural bridge between international commitments and the national legislation. The natural bridge between international and global cooperation and local solutions.

In 2018, the IPU strengthened its political support for the international counter-terrorism activities through the decision of the IPU Governing Council to create a High-Level Advisory Group to Counter-Terrorism and Prevent Violent Extremism.

In the IPU, we understand that parliamentarians are key to addressing terrorism. Yes, we need to translate international commitments, through global cooperation, into national realities and local solutions. We need laws for inclusion. We need laws to stop arms, weapons, and bullets' flow. We need laws for international cooperation. We need laws for prevention. Laws fully respectful of human rights, capable of stopping terrorist groups. Of course, we also need to work into our budgets and oversight responsibilities. We must go from global standardisation to local focus, in order to better tailor support for the safety of everyone involved. We have a huge responsibility with youth. We have a huge responsibility with women, with girls, with those people that are being the most affected by terrorist attacks. You can count on the parliamentary community. We are here to help. We are here to improve legislation, and of course to work together because we need to harmonize all of our legislation in order to work together.

In the end, all I can hope for is for a safe, inclusive and prosperous future for the peoples that we represent. We owe it to them, not only to the present generation, but also to the girls and boys that are expecting a lot from us. Thank you very much for inviting us.