

Meeting of the UN Security Council

11 May 2016

“Countering the narratives and ideologies of terrorism”

Statement by H.E. Ms. Lilja D. Alfredsdóttir,

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Mr President

Allow me to thank you for organizing this timely debate on a matter of vital importance. I would also like to pay tribute to the co-organization by Switzerland and the UN of the international conference on preventing violent extremism in April. We also look forward to the conclusion of the review of the UN Counter-terrorism strategy and the discussions on the SG’s Action Plan on Violent Extremism.

Mr. President

While it is clear that Africa and the Middle East bear the brunt of terrorism and its destabilizing and corrosive effects on the life of millions of individuals and whole communities, there is virtually no country left untouched.

Underlying the violence are complex webs of tacit or active support, sympathy and encouragement, which are often hard to identify and even harder to root out.

All our societies potentially harbor individuals who instigate and nurture ideologies which can be turned into a justification for violence and terrorism.

What is new in recent years are the powerful tools of modern life which give such individuals tremendous leverage. To give some examples, we know that Youtube has taken down 14 million videos in the past two years. Facebook receives and reviews 1 million user notifications per week about violations of its rules, and Twitter has closed around 2000 ISIL related accounts in recent months.

The SG's report on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) paints a frightening picture of the sophistication of ISIL and other similar movements in manipulating young people through use of visual and social media. The same report makes the point that the journey of each individual fighter into terrorist activity involves a unique combination of factors. There is no simple approach to identifying potential terrorists, and even less one silver bullet to stop them being radicalized and recruited in the first place.

The impact of terrorism fuelled by violent extremism is clear to us all. The massive scope and complexity of the task of addressing it are also clear – in scale if not in detail. We must act together urgently as a world community. We must improve coordination within the UN of how we address terrorism and violent extremism. We need to work for an internationally comprehensive approach. I fully agree with the Foreign Minister of Egypt on the imperative of confronting narratives and ideologies, and we must do this together. And we need to be honest about identifying the internal and external drivers of violent extremism and terrorism. If we do not do this then we will be fighting with one hand tied behind our back.

Thank you