

**Opening Statement by Ambassador H.S. Puri,
Chairman, Counter-Terrorism Committee
(Strasbourg, April 19-21, 2011)**

Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

In my capacity as Chairman of the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001), I am very pleased to welcome you all to this special meeting with international, regional and subregional organizations.

To begin with, I would like to extend my gratitude and appreciation to Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland, for having offered to host this event and for his, and his staffs', invaluable help in organizing the meeting.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations was created "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war." The Council of Europe was created in the aftermath of the most violent war in human history. Both these institutions aim to build a world in which there is freedom from fear; a world in which we are free to channel our energies into furthering the common good.

When the United Nations and the Council of Europe were formed, the main threats to international peace and security arose from conventional war between states. It is a measure of the success of both organizations that we are not here today to discuss conventional war. Instead we are here to discuss the most pressing current threat to international peace and security, viz., asymmetric conflict unleashed by terrorists.

War has been replaced by the IED, the suicide bomber, attacks on innocent civilians, and assassinations. Battles have been replaced by 9/11, 26/11 and waves of suicide or remotely triggered explosions.

Conventional war was often about expanding borders. Today's terrorists have made borders irrelevant. They recruit in one country, raise funds in another and operate in others.

The human and economic costs of terrorism are staggering. While there is no accurate estimate of the cost of the war in Afghanistan, the amounts mentioned run not into hundreds of millions of dollars but billions per month.

I need not remind an audience such as this that every Euro of expenditure inflicted by terrorists is a Euro less for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, for investing in clean sources of energy and towards scientific research.

Both the Council of Europe and the United Nations have vital interest in battling this horrendous scourge. The Council of Europe remains an important partner for the CTC in our common efforts to deal with the terrorist threat. It has been playing a leading role in dealing with different aspects of terrorism including terrorism prevention, suppression of terrorism financing, prevention of incitement to commit terrorist acts, protection of victims of terrorism and cyber terrorism. My distinguished colleague Mike Smith would dwell in more detail on the specifics of our cooperative relationship.

We believe that terrorism needs to be countered by a combined international effort. We also believe that the United Nations is the best mechanism for developing this coherent transnational response.

Despite concerted efforts of the international community, much more needs to be done. Our normative framework of international conventions and protocols is still incomplete and riddled with loopholes. The Global Counter Terrorism Strategy adopted in 2006 and the institutionalization of Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force in 2009 are useful mechanisms but need to be strengthened substantially. The Security Council has also created a network of subsidiary bodies including the 1267 Committee, the 1373 Committee (CTC) and the 1540 Committee. The 1267 Committee, assisted by an Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, is directed against the Taliban and Al-Qaida. The Counter-Terrorism Committee (which I head), assisted by the Counter Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, implements resolution 1373 and other subsequent resolutions which obliges Member States to take a number of measures to prevent terrorist activities, criminalize various terrorist actions, assist and promote international cooperation, and adhere to international counter-terrorism instruments. The 1540 Committee - monitors compliance with resolution 1540, which calls on States to prevent non-State actors (including terrorist groups) from accessing weapons of mass destruction.

In countering terrorism, the United Nations adopted a sectoral approach. The inability of United Nations to agree on a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism, even when terrorism endangers us at every moment, remains one of the most important lacuna in the international legislative framework in the fight against terrorism. However, I am quite encouraged by the recently concluded Adhoc Committee

negotiations where a vast majority of States have shown the flexibility and the desire to move forward.

There are many reasons for this incomplete and incomprehensible response. I will touch on a few of them.

The first and the foremost reason is the very regrettable tendency of some to justify acts of terrorism. No religion provides sanction for the use of violence. Any ideology that uses terror, as present-day events have repeatedly demonstrated, is bound to fail. The practitioners of terrorism today choose to take up arms because they like to impose their beliefs. They have no patience or desire to go through peaceful or legal means. They are a violent and radical minority that is determined to hold a peaceful majority to ransom.

People living under foreign occupation have a legitimate and a just complaint. However, that cannot be a justification for violence. I come from the land of Mahatma Gandhi. He led what is now a nation of over a billion people to freedom through non-violence. The recent developments in the Middle East demonstrate that peaceful and non-violent mobilization of a population can be a more effective instrument of social change than violence.

In this context one cannot but describe the short-sighted and irresponsible tendencies of some to use terrorism as an instrument of policy as one of the greatest tragedies of our times. History suggests that these terrorists will be the first to turn on their erstwhile benefactors -particularly when these patrons have outlived their utility.

In our shared resolve in combating terrorism, it is absolutely essential that any measures taken by States to combat terrorism comply with all their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law. However, some of us do a great disservice when we attempt to use the pretext of human rights and humanitarian agendas to justify terrorism. Targeted killing of civilians has nothing to do with root causation. It has everything to do with unpopular causes.

Another disturbing developments arising out of this ambivalence has been the tendency to overlook the victims of terrorism. The lack of recognition of their suffering and loss and the denial of justice can only weaken the efforts to universalize human rights.

Let us now turn to counter-terrorism efforts. Some of these strategies are based on meeting violence with greater violence. The limitations of this strategy are apparent and are reflected in the ongoing debate between Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Insurgency (COIN). Mahatma Gandhi, I would like to remind you at this stage, said that an eye for an eye makes the whole world go blind.

The Security Council resolution 1963 (2010) recognizes that terrorism will not be defeated by military means, law enforcement measures and intelligence operations alone, and that there is need to promote the rule of law, the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, good governance, tolerance and inclusiveness to offer a viable alternative to those who could be susceptible to terrorist recruitment and to radicalization leading to violence.

Poverty, in itself, can neither justify nor provides a full explanation for the actions of terrorists. It is important to remember that most of the terrorists and terrorist organizations do not have economic grievances. They include, in their ranks, highly educated people who understand economics and technology. They use the internet to propagate their beliefs, communicate through encrypted emails, use satellite phones and are on social networking sites. They use technology and money, and most importantly, the tolerance of free societies, to attack freedom, tolerance and progress. If I am not mistaken, all or most of the 9/11 terrorists could afford to study at western universities. Al Qaeda has no shortage of funds. Omar Saeed Sheikh, the British-Pakistani man who kidnapped and beheaded innocent Western tourists and then went on to kidnap and behead Daniel Pearl, studied at the London School of Economics.

The ability of terrorists to utilize modern technology is most evident in their ability to raise and transfer money. While the creation of this Committee itself is partly in recognition of this, the fact that remains that terrorists are still able to find money and resources. The LTTE in Sri Lanka retained its financial resources and its arms procurement activities till the end. The Taliban are able to procure weapons and explosives at will. Al Shabab in Somalia is able to channel resources through and obtain revenue from the port of Kismayo. The revenues of Kismayo port, which receives mostly cargo transhipped at Dubai, have given Al Shabab a source of sustained income that is sufficient to meet its requirements.

The international response to terrorism seems to have fallen short and it is obvious that we need a new global compact to tackle terrorism. We need to recognize terrorism for what it is, the gravest threat to international peace and security today.

The mechanism that has been developed to pool the resources and the knowledge of the international community needs to be augmented and made more effective. We would argue that the central requirement of an effective counter-terrorism strategy is the necessary political will to squarely face the challenge of terrorism. We need to remove the moral and legal ambiguities that allow terrorists to gain succor and even legitimacy. We need an international mechanism to ensure accountability and justice. We must continue international efforts to enhance dialogue and broaden understanding among civilizations. We need concerted international efforts to expose and destroy the linkages that exist between terrorists and their supporters. We need to expand the scope of the legal instruments and expand enforcement efforts to destroy safe havens for terrorists, their financial flows and their support networks.

This year will mark the 10th anniversary of 9/11 and also of adoption of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). This Special Meeting being held today offers an ideal setting for us all to not only brainstorm some of the most pressing challenges in the prevention of terrorism, but also through an informal interactive process to tap avenues for future cooperation.

In concluding, I would like to quote the great European philosopher Edmund Burke. He said that "All that it takes for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." This is the philosophy behind the creation of the United Nations and of the Council of Europe. It is in that spirit that I am here as Chairman of the United Nations Counter Terrorism Committee to urge greater cooperation between our organizations to face this contemporary evil.

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