

ISRAEL

61st Session of the General Assembly

Sixth Committee

Statement by:

**Ms. Tamar KAPLAN
Israel's Representative to the Sixth Committee**

Agenda Item 100: Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism

United Nations, New York

16 October 2006

Check Against Delivery

Mr. Chairman,

As this is the first time my delegation takes the floor in the Sixth Committee, allow me to congratulate you on your election to the Chair. We are confident that your experience and wise stewardship will help the Committee reach a successful conclusion, and we wish to assure you of our full cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

Only a month ago, the General Assembly adopted “The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy”. The launching of this Strategy sends a clear message that combating terrorism is a global problem requiring a global solution. The real test of any Strategy though, is its effectiveness in practice. Regrettably, a number of substantial proposals which appeared in the Secretary-General’s report and discussed in the deliberations, were omitted from the strategy. We hope these proposals and other practical measures will be incorporated and implemented in the future to better equip us in the fight against terror.

The adoption of the Strategy is a cause for some satisfaction, but not for complacency. If anything, it marks the beginning of the work, and not the end of it. A number of clear practical challenges remain ahead of us. Among these is the conclusion of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism in a way that advances the key principles for the suppression of terrorism and does not dilute them. In the course of the deliberations, we must ensure that we do not lose our clarity of focus, and that we continue to recognize the deliberate targeting and murder of innocents for the atrocity that it is - in all circumstances. Israel urges all states to oppose any proposal that has the effect of creating a pretext for justifying or excusing terrorist activity, or providing terrorist groups with an outlet for casting their atrocities in a positive or acceptable light.

Another inherent challenge is the development of practical measures to address the problems of radicalization and incitement to terrorism. We also urge the Counter Terrorism Committee to act on proposals to broaden its focus, and to address the treatment and rights of victims of terrorism as an important contribution to its mandate.

Mr. Chairman,

Terrorism knows no boundaries and attacks its victims indiscriminately. Hostage-taking, suicide-bombers and hijackings are not limited to one region or another. The forces of extremism that feed the campaign of terror directly threaten us all.

The international community must defend itself against an enemy who not only deliberately targets innocent civilians, women and children, but who also hides among them. For the terrorists, civilians are not just a target, but also a shield.

Today, terrorist organizations are hiding not only behind civilians but also behind civil society and democratic institutions. But, democratic values and civil liberties are not a prescription for national suicide and international law is not a suicide pact. No society should allow terrorist organizations to cynically exploit its democratic institutions. And no terrorist can claim legitimacy or recognition simply by claiming to be democratically elected. For the innocent victim of a terrorist attack, for the wife, the son, or the brother of the one who was killed or abducted, it makes no difference whether those who perpetrated the attack held elected office or a seat in a parliament. And so it should make no difference to the international community, which must muster the same firm resolve to confront terrorism, whatever the mask – democratic or other – that it seeks to hide behind.

The willingness of terrorist organizations to abuse civilians, as a shield, and civil society, as a pretext of legitimacy, places clear obligations on every state: to prevent terrorists from turning civilian centers into terrorist headquarters, and to prevent them from cynically abusing their democratic institutions.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel believes that today there is a universal support for the basic principle that the deliberate murder of the innocent civilians can never be justified by the furtherance of political or ideological goals. As the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel, Mrs. Tzipi Livni, stated before the General Assembly at the opening of its 61st session:

"Terror is terror - even when it is called resistance. It cannot be justified and it cannot be equated with the actions of those seeking only to defend themselves against it."

Indeed, terrorism is defined by what terrorists do, not what they say they do it for. The means adopted by terrorists are the truest indication of their real ends. The use of tactics which target the innocent is the clearest warning that the humanitarian goals the terrorists allegedly call for will never be realized by them. By the means they choose to adopt, terrorists show their disdain for the very freedoms and rights that they espouse.

Liberal societies and democratic states must conduct the struggle against terrorism within the framework of international law. They must fight those who show nothing but contempt for the rule of law with one arm tied behind their

backs. Indeed, the war against terrorism is the war of law-abiding nations and its law-abiding citizens against lawbreakers. It is, therefore, not merely a war of the state against its enemies; it is also a war of rule of law against those who oppose it.

Mr. Chairman,

The calls to address the underlying causes of terrorism are too often a poorly disguised attempt to justify the unjustifiable. Any honest discussion of underlying factors must address the problems of incitement, intolerance and the lack of democracy which feed a culture of hate that glorifies murder as martyrdom. These factors play a primary role in making innocent life a legitimate target, and in nurturing the kind of extremism and rejectionism that prevents the peaceful resolution of political conflicts.

Furthermore, terrorism is interdependent with other aspects of international crime, such as money laundering and drugs trafficking. International terrorist organizations operate with the profits from major crime, including the funding of its terrorist activities through drug trafficking. Hence, we need to effectively address cultivation and trafficking in order to reduce the ability of terrorist groups to fund themselves, and thus decrease their ability to operate. Israel has ratified the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. Other States must join in this effort to control the flow of money to terrorist organizations as well as the transfer of other illicit funds.

Mr. Chairman,

Terrorist groups do not operate in a vacuum. They depend on sympathetic states for sponsorship, harbor and support. These countries assist the terrorist organizations to grow a state within a state. Just as the terrorist organizations choose to hide behind others, so do the state sponsors of terrorism try to hide behind a smokescreen. State sponsors of terrorism seek to conduct "war on the cheap" through the facilitation and cultivation of aggression by terrorists' proxy groups. These states demonstrate cowardice and disdain, fighting their wars through proxies, on other countries' soil.

The world today is caught between rifts of extremism, where radicals and extremists engage in fierce battles that have no rules of play. They want to set the political agenda for the moderates and the tolerant. It is their desire to drag the world into chaos. It is their wish that hate and destruction will prevail. But every nation that sees itself as a part of the international community and shares democratic values should not let that happen. It should not let the terrorists prove that they can achieve by illegitimate means more than can be achieved through peaceful negotiation. It should not allow the extremist to use terror in

order to shift the attention from key issues on the political agenda that do not serve their interests. It is not only crucial to work to resolve unresolved conflicts, but also that we do this in a way which strengthens those committed to moderation and the rule of law, and not in a way which appears to give a victory to extremism and violence.

Mr. Chairman,

In short, terrorism is not “for” anything but “against” it; it is against every society which is built upon the values that the terrorist flout: the right to live in peace and security and under the rule of law. The choice, quite simply, is between those who build and those who destroy. In this battle there is no neutrality. There are only the defenders of freedom and life, and those who are helping, either actively or passively, to destroy it. Only together can we fight the aim of the terrorists and their sponsors to hold our basic natural rights hostage.

Thank you.