

High-Level Parliamentary Conference

Conference Theme: Understanding the terrorist threat in Africa: new challenges and necessary measures

Area Doha, The State of Qatar

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SPEECH

By Hon Sooroojdev Phokeer, GCSK, GOSK,
Speaker of the
National Assembly of Mauritius

Speech Theme:
“International technical assistance programmes and projects on Counter Terrorism and Preventive Violent Extremism”

VENUE: La Cigale Hotel, Area Doha, Qatar

DATE : Thursday, 31 March 2022

Chairperson and Deputy Director of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism,

President of the African Parliamentary Union,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen

First and foremost, allow me to thank the Speaker of the Shura Council of the State of Qatar who has enabled us today to meet in this beautiful part of the world.

On behalf of the Members of the National Assembly and in my own name, I convey to you the warm greetings of the people of the Republic of Mauritius.

Chairperson

The evolving and growing threat of terrorism and Violent Extremism remain one of the major and complex security challenges that many countries are confronting, both regionally and internationally, on a day-to-day basis. Mauritius is no exception to those threats.

The Government of Mauritius is leaving no stone unturned in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. As a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country, we have the challenge of maintaining justice, peace and harmony among the community.

Chairperson

Regarding regional and international cooperation, Mauritius is a member of different sub-regional, regional, continental and international organizations and has signed multiple resolutions and conventions against (i) Terrorism (ii) Violent Extremism and (iii) the Financing of Terrorism.

As far as networking is concerned, Mauritius has, since 2015, expanded and enhanced its intelligence networking capabilities.

- (i) At the sub-regional level, with the Indian Ocean Commission;
- (ii) At the regional level, with the Southern African Development Communities and other Intergovernmental Authorities on Development,
- (iii) At the Continental level, with the African Union, the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism; and
- (iv) At the International level, with the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crimes, the United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Interpol through existing cooperation,

to effectively identify and disrupt terrorism threats.

Parliament in Mauritius has been proactive in adopting legislations to counteract the threats posed by terrorism and violent extremism which have been amended from time to time to respond to the evolving threats.

Parliaments play a vital role in the prevention of violent extremism through its oversight and law making powers.

Parliamentarians act as a medium between people and parliament. Through parliamentary motions, statements, resolutions, questions, debates and legislative initiatives, parliamentarians contribute immensely in the combatting of terrorism and violent extremism.

In 2016, the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2002 was amended to give additional powers to authorities and to also include offences which were not previously catered for, including Support to Foreign Fighters.

In 2017, the Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism Act 2003 was amended to criminalize the financing of terrorism in regard to travel, training and supply of logistic support.

Considerable efforts have been made to enhance our capacity to effectively address the complex issue of money laundering and terrorism financing.

Consequently, a series of measures have been taken since 2018 including various legislative amendments through the Finance Act in compliance with all international obligations.

Moreover, a number of national level committees have been set up to look into progress and serene implementation of all the measures taken by the government to ensure full compliance with the recommendations of both FATF and European Commission.

These measures have played a significant role in ranking Mauritius first among African Countries and thirteenth on the World Bank's Ease of doing business 2020 report.

Chairperson

Mauritius is among the first countries within the SADC to have finalized, in 2019, its first “**National Strategy to Prevent Radicalisation and Violent Extremism 2020 – 2023**” which has been derived from the SADC Regional Counter Terrorism Strategy, based on the **four Pillars** of the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy and adapted to the domestic risk assumptions.

The main objectives of the strategy include :-

- (a) Counter Extremist Ideologies
- (b) Disrupting Terrorist Activities
- (c) Denying Support to Terrorism
- (d) Developing Response and Recovery Plan

Whereas the Plan of Action, that is being implemented has the following four approaches:-

- (a) Community Bonding;
- (b) Law Enforcement;
- (c) Intelligence Networking;
- (d) Strategic messaging.

Chairperson

As part of the national strategy, to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism, the Government of Mauritius has taken additional measures to address conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and violent extremism, for instance -

- (a) the setting up of two key ministries, namely-
 - (i) The Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment in 2010; and
 - (ii) The Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms in 2015.

- (b) The setting up of a Citizen Support Portal in 2017 by the Prime Minister's Office;
- (c) In 2018, the Negative Income Tax and the Minimum Wage Scheme for low income earners;
- (d) Youth Employment Programme; and
- (e) the National Empowerment Foundation.

Chairperson

Terrorism being an ongoing threat, calls for the international community to be on a constant alert warranting both preventive and proactive actions in our quest to avert its damaging impact on societies and economies.

Chairperson

Moreover, with regard to parliaments, there should be continuous empowerment and exchange programmes for parliamentarians which can help to lead to a transformational shift towards democratic governance, to address the grievances feeding violent extremism.

Therefore, let us pledge to work towards concerted efforts through international technical assistance programmes and projects to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism for building more resilient, peaceful and harmonious nations.

I thank you.