

Speech: Statement by the Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, at UN Security Council briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. I'd like to open the session by thanking Mr. Voronkov and Ms. Coninx for their briefing on the Secretary-General's report on the threat posed by the Daesh to international peace and security. I'd also like to welcome Dr. Joana Cook. Thank you for sharing the key findings of your report on Daesh women and minors which shows the value of inviting civil society and researchers to inform our discussions.

In the summer of 2014 Daesh swept down the Tigris and Euphrates valleys capturing thousands of square miles of Iraq and Syria and imposing its pitiless rule on millions of people in an area that was once the cradle of civilization. Over the next three years, attacks that were directed, inspired or enabled by Daesh would claim more than 30,000 lives including 181 attacks outside Iraq and Syria.

The world responded by forming a global coalition to defeat this threat and military action by many countries including my own has driven Daesh from almost all of its domain and liberated millions from its oppression.

But the point I wish to emphasise today is that this has not been vanquished and the root causes of its emergence have yet to be resolved. Britain shares the assessment of the Secretary-General's report that Daesh is responding to the loss of territory by evolving into a covert terrorist network that branches as far apart as Afghanistan, Libya and Yemen.

Daesh takes advantage of ungoverned space and weak states. Its terrorists do not necessarily require a central direction and they've demonstrated their ability to strike in Europe and Southeast Asia. The Secretary-General's report estimates that as many as 20,000 Daesh fighters remain in Syria and Iraq, including the citizens of many countries. About 900 people with links to the United Kingdom have travelled to join the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. About 40% returned to the UK in the early days of Daesh's so-called Caliphate and some 20% are believed dead. The rest are still in Iraq, Syria or elsewhere.

Our response to this enduring threat should fall into two parts. First we must press on with military operations against Daesh. British forces continue to play their part as members of the global coalition and UK leads in a vital area of strategic communications against Daesh. This year the British government has committed another 20 million pounds to counter-terrorism projects in countries we assessed to be most at risk from returning foreign

fighters.

Second, we should renew our focus on prevention. By addressing the root causes of the emergence of Daesh. This means doing more to support peace and reconciliation in Iraq and a lasting political settlement in Syria. It also means responding to specific humanitarian problems. For example, up to 20% of foreign fighters globally are women and girls. Almost 10% of the 40,000 individuals who travelled to join Daesh were minors. Many of whom have witnessed or experienced horrific violence and been exposed to radicalization. Some will be suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. We need to act to prevent these minors from becoming the next generation of terrorists. The UN has a vital role in the struggle against Daesh consistent with the responsibility of this Council to address threats to international peace and security. This Council made air travel more secure by passing Resolution 2309 – the first ever Resolution on aviation security. And it addressed the threat from foreign fighters in Resolutions 2178 and 2396. Earlier in 2005, this Council passed Resolution 1624 condemning incitement and repudiating all attempts to justify or glorify acts of terrorism.

The Council should be willing to consider further action in order to counter the use of the internet by terrorists for propaganda and fundraising. Prevention is a key pillar of the UK's approach to counter terrorism. Our aim is to identify anyone at risk of radicalization and seek to reintegrate them into society. Agencies and local governments from health education social services and the police routinely meet to identify individuals at risk and refer them to programs run by specialists in de-radicalisation. This approach focused on prevention rather than prosecution after a crime has been committed has turned more than more 500 people away from terrorism in the UK.

Over the years we've learned lessons and refined our Prevent program. We stand ready to share our experiences with countries that face similar problems. Societies that are confident about their beliefs and values and hold governments to account are societies that are resistant to the virus of terrorism. The key to success is partnership between many nations. We mustn't lose sight of the importance of those partnerships even as Daesh loses its grip on Syria and Iraq. I look forward to our discussion today on how we can act together to prevent and counter the evolving threat from Daesh. Thank you.