

Speech by the Minister Mentor and Minister of Defence of the
Republic of Mauritius at
the 3rd Counter Terrorism Conference organised by the India
Foundation
Delhi-NCR, India
16 March 2017

The Chairperson, Shri Kaptan Singh Solanki, Honourable Governor, Government of Haryana

Shri Suresh Rajnath Singh, Union Minister of Home Affairs,

Members of the Board of India Foundation,

Distinguished Speakers,

Distinguished Counter Terrorism experts and officials,

Members of the media,

Dear participants

Good afternoon

First and foremost, I thank the India Foundation for inviting me to participate in this 3rd edition of the Counter Terrorism Conference.

After three days of frank, passionate and inspiring discussions, I believe we have amply assessed the daunting challenges that we need to address in the global fight against terrorism.

Three messages emerge from this conference.

First, we need to be vigilant more than ever and enhance collaboration in intelligence gathering and exchange of information.

Second, to address a man-made problem, we need a human touch to understand the root causes of terrorism and act humanly.

And **third**, we have to make the ballot of democracy and rule of law prevail over the bullet of anarchy and hatred.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last week countries of the Indian Ocean Rim met in Indonesia and adopted a stand-alone Declaration strongly condemning terrorism.

Leaders unequivocally recognized the need for information sharing and close cooperation to defeat terrorism. Surely, the outcome of this conference can help to further enhance the response mechanism that will be elaborated after the Jakarta meeting.

The Indian Ocean Region handles 30% of global trade.

Almost half of the global traffic of containers passes through the Indian Ocean waters.

Our region therefore holds strong strategic significance. Keeping the region safe is critical to our economy and prosperity.

That is why through such conferences we must convey a strong signal to those who want to

harm us that we are united and totally determined in our battle against terror.

My delegation has followed attentively the interventions of other speakers. Counter terror experts who addressed the Conference have raised concerns and identified gaps that are often exploited by terror groups.

We are aware that terrorists often show ingenuity in their tactics to cause harm. Hence, it is imperative that we are ten steps ahead of them to undo their plots and win this battle.

Let me make it clear that no cause, either political or otherwise, can justify the killing of innocent people in any society.

We are gathered in India - a country which faced several terror attacks in the past and which continues to be the target of violent terrorist groups. Thousands of citizens of this country have lost their lives in terror attacks.

One of our nationals was a victim of the terror attacks in Mumbai in 2008. He was the CEO of

the State Bank of Mauritius and was on official mission here.

He was, like thousands of others, an innocent bystander caught in senseless acts of violence. Such heartbreaking events torment us and we react firmly to condemn them without any reserve.

However I want to stress that the violent terrorist ideology should by no means be associated with any specific religion, nationality or a particular ethnic group. We are all concerned by this phenomenon. Terrorism is indeed affecting all open societies alike.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Terrorism is posing the gravest threat to mankind. It is a global problem requiring universal action starting with coordination in and between regions.

The Global Terrorism Database indicates that from 1970 to 2015, there have been more than 150,000 domestic and international terrorist incidents registered.

If in 2010 there were 4782 cases registered, the number almost quadrupled in 2014 with 16,818 incidents.

Terrorism did not start with 9/11 or with the hostage taking during the Munich Olympics. It outdates these tragic events in our history. However, since the 9/11 unprecedented attack there has been a growing determination to fight terrorism through the UN and an intensification of cooperation between nations.

We already have 19 UN instruments and other Security Council resolutions which form the basis for enhancing international cooperation to

fight terrorist activities.

The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy with its four pillars adopted by the United Nations in 2006 remains the unique instrument which enjoys a worldwide consensus on the need for joint action against terrorism.

Mauritius was a founder member of the UN Counter Terrorism Committee in 2001.

Mauritius is committed to the UN Global

Counter-Terrorism Strategy and joined the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism as part of its resolve to combat terrorism.

My country welcomes the initiative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to create a New Counter-Terrorism Office to be headed by a new Under Secretary-General to ensure that due priority is given to counter-terrorism across the UN system.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me highlight some areas where I believe we

can do better and which deserve attention.

1. We need to elaborate a concerted plan of action that will bring all Indian Ocean countries on a single platform that will have an accrued vigilance in respect of potential threats before they spiral into uncontrollable happenings.

2. We must develop an Ad Hoc Task Force to deliver capacity-building assistance and share counter-terrorism experience among

states. Terrorist groups are now using new covert methods such as encryption, use of dark web, and messengers to conduct terrorist activities as well as for recruitment purposes.

Radicalisation through the internet is a real issue in every country. Therefore, our ICT intelligence units should have the necessary capacity to detect and neutralize these kinds of operations. Capacity building, greater information sharing and usage of more sophisticated technologies should be the focus of our collaborative efforts.

3. It is as important to put in place National Counter Terrorism Strategies to address the root causes of terrorism.

Moreover, countries should ensure that their laws and regulations to counter terrorism are in line with guidelines established by the United Nations. Mauritius is collaborating with the African Union to further strengthen its legislation on terrorism.

4. Fighting radicalism, violent extremism and terrorism by developing effective

counter-narratives against extremist propaganda should be high on the agenda of our national strategies. For that we have to use all available means, including social media, the Internet, and electronic and print media.

5. We should also enlist the cooperation of civil societies, NGOs, parents and teachers in identifying and deterring home-grown violent extremists that seek to disrupt social harmony. Civil societies create the space for dialogue and alternatives to violence. In this respect, the value of education which promotes tolerance, mutual respect for others and inclusiveness cannot be

underestimated.

My delegation firmly believes that fostering dialogue within a society must be part of a participatory strategy that protects communities from recruitment for extremist groups.

6. Religious leaders should be our privileged partners in the fight against terrorism. Engaging these leaders is crucial to promote inter-faith dialogue, tolerance and a rejection of the doctrine of violence.

7. We must establish legal systems that criminalise the movement of foreign

terrorists, their logistical support and the networks that facilitate their movements, departure and return, as well as the standardisation of punishment procedures.

In the same context, the African Union Peace and Security Council emphasized the need for concerted efforts towards drying up the funding sources of terrorists and neutralising their modus operandi.

8. Respect for human rights and the rule of law are critical when countries develop

legislations and national strategies for countering violent terrorism. Mauritius is ready to share its experience and participate in training law enforcement officers on integrating law enforcement standards into their daily practices.

AND

9. In the appeal that I am making for countries to work in a concerted manner, we must also address the issue of the cost of security which is very important for Small Island Developing States like Mauritius.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I mentioned earlier the need for a

human-centered approach in addressing the issue of terrorism.

True it is that we are dealing with individuals and organisations that breed on hatred and violent killings.

We cannot spare them as they are a threat to humanity altogether.

But we need to understand what triggers that sort of behaviour.

What is wrong in the world that fuels so much violence?

Can we be happy with the doctrine that Might is always Right?

How do we react when those who advocate the rule of law and justice in the world do exactly the contrary when confronted with issues regarding the interests of others?

Some speakers mentioned good and bad

terrorists. Can we accept that some people use other people to spread terror for their own selfish interests?

These questions are pertinent and they need answers if we are to win the battle against terrorism.

My country which has a multi-religious and multi-cultural population believes in an equitable world.

We believe in equal treatment and inclusiveness.

We have made of unity in diversity our mantra for social cohesion and harmonious living.

We are of the view that there are four requisites that are essential to shield societies from hatred and its implications.

First: NO DISCRIMINATION

Second: NO DOUBLE STANDARDS

Third: TOLERANCE AND MUTUAL
RESPECT

And Fourth: READINESS TO ACT

DECISIVELY AND EFFECTIVELY.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I will conclude with the inspiring words of Mahatma Gandhi.

I quote: **“You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty”.**

On this note, I thank you for your kind attention.