

Opening **International Centre for Counter-Terrorism - The Hague**

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*Remarks by **Mr. Richard Barrett**, Coordinator of the United Nations Al-Qaida and Taliban Monitoring Team on behalf of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force*

Your Highness, Excellencies, distinguished guests,

It is a real pleasure to be present at the official opening of the ICCT and to be able to speak to you on behalf of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force.

The timing of this initiative could not be better. Terrorism did not begin with the attacks in the United States in September 2001, but in their immediate aftermath there was a huge surge of repressive activity to counter the terrorist threat that continues to this day. But while repression remains important, the focus of international counter-terrorism activity has shifted decidedly towards prevention.

The challenge for the global community is now to understand better why members of our own communities, people who have often had all the advantages of education and nurture, decide that the only way open to them to express their views, and to make a difference to the world, is through violence. This centre, particularly being based here in the Netherlands, can contribute significantly to addressing that challenge. There are also many other things that it can do.

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, drafted and agreed by all 192 Member States in September 2006, remains the most important international agreement on dealing with terrorism. It divides the need for action into four parts: a) Measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; b) Measures to prevent and combat terrorism; c) Measures to build States' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard, and d) Measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism. The Centre can contribute in all four areas.

I have already mentioned the importance of understanding and addressing the *conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism*. Several States, including of course The Netherlands, have begun to introduce policies designed to counter the spread of terrorism, based on their analysis of the social,

economic and political issues that may lie behind it. Some have also introduced de-radicalisation or rehabilitation programmes. But generally these initiatives have been focused on a national analysis of national circumstances and designed to address a national – or at best – regional problem.

Unfortunately terrorism is not so respectful of national or regional borders, and the terrorist narrative is designed to appeal to an audience beyond any immediate area of conflict, whether actual or theoretical.

There is a real need therefore to examine national and regional policies so as to judge their impact and effectiveness, both locally and more broadly, to analyse what has worked and why, and to see what relevance and applicability they may have for other States or groups of States that seek to take similar action. Ultimately, understanding and addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism is an international responsibility and the ICCT will be well placed to contribute to the analysis, consultation and policy formulation that must precede progress in this area, both through original research and by examining work done by others.

A related problem that remains in need of a solution is how to meld development work with counter-terrorism work in a way that both sides find supportive. Generally, people engaged in development projects do not want their work to be described as counter-terrorism. This is entirely understandable. Development projects help a far wider community than the minute number of terrorists or potential terrorists that may also benefit from them, they are good in themselves and donors are not inspired to give aid because they fear terrorism. It is clear though that development, whether economic or social, is essential to addressing many of the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, and there should be greater recognition of this synergy at the policy-making level.

The second pillar of the Global Strategy, *measures to prevent and combat terrorism*, has received much attention and many resources over the last nine years. Now may be the time to consider the result, in particular where the measures taken have been most pronounced as in the Afghan / Pakistan region and Iraq. The attempt by the Pakistan Taliban to launch an attack in the iconic heart of the United States and their threat –repeated just last week - to do so as well in Europe may add up to little in reality, but we have to examine why our actions have excited such reaction half-way across the world among people whose concerns are purely local. It was interesting too that the captured head of Al-Qaida operations in Baghdad, responsible for the murder of many people, said in an interview just a few days ago that Al-Qaida would continue to attack the Iraqi Government even were all foreign forces to withdraw. We need to understand what lit the fires that still burn so strongly, and whether the repressive measures were correct.

We also need to examine some of the measures put in place to see whether they are still delivering the results that they were designed for. Many things have been done in the name of counter-terrorism

and there is a need for independent bodies like the ICCT that can operate beyond the pressures of domestic politics, to point out if and when the cost/benefit ratio now demands that policies should be repealed or measures abandoned.

Both at the international and national level, terrorists have used repressive measures taken against them to endorse their narrative and reinforce the impression that counter-terrorism targets cultures and peoples, rather than criminals. The ICCT may like to participate in research on the long-term effects of short-term measures.

As for the third pillar of the Global Strategy, *measures to build States' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard*, we need all the help we can get. The United Nations system, coordinated through the Task Force, is engaged in many areas of capacity building. But we need much more follow up and analysis of what has been effective. States often assume that their counter-terrorism needs can be identified simply and met quickly, but this is almost always not the case. By sharing information and best practice both the recipients of aid and assistance, and the national and international donors that provide, it will have a far better chance of making every cent count. The development of structures that allow this freer exchange of information will play an essential part and I see the ICCT making a contribution in this area as well as in helping States to develop more effective and interoperable legal frameworks to counter terrorism.

The final pillar of the Strategy, *measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism*, is perhaps the most important. In the preamble of the Strategy, Member States reaffirmed among other things *that acts, methods and practices of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations are activities aimed at the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy*. The strategy also recognises *that effective counter-terrorism measures and the protection of human rights are not conflicting goals, but complementary and mutually reinforcing*. In fact, just as attention to human rights reinforces counter-terrorist activity, so does the lack of human rights undermine it. The ICCT can help us to demonstrate the key position that human rights occupy on the battlefield against terrorism and ensure that it is evident and clear to all that it is the international community that occupies the high ground.

To sum up, I believe this is an exceptionally exciting and creative time to be working on the next phase of counter-terrorism activity. As the emphasis shifts towards preventing terrorism, while ensuring that the law is properly applied in repressing it, there is a huge need for independent analysis and thinking about the best way forward. Terrorists are vulnerable in many ways, not least in their claims to legitimacy, the credibility of their threats and the relevance of their proposals. But the international community is also vulnerable to sending confusing messages, acting in disharmony and ignoring the experience of others. I am quite sure that the ICCT will quickly find itself at the heart of

our joint efforts to expose the true, criminal nature of terrorist movements, to undermine their appeal and bring them to an end. I look forward to working with it.

Please note that the views expressed in this statement are the author's owns, and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague