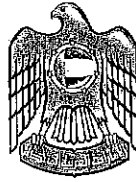


**Human Rights Council
28th Session
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**Statement delivered by
H.E. Dr. Anwar GARGASH
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs**

High Level Segment

4th March 2015



**Mr. President,
Your Excellency the High Commissioner,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

On behalf of the United Arab Emirates, I am pleased to extend to you, Mr. President, our congratulations on your election. I thank your predecessor, Ambassador Ndong Ella, for his work.

I would also like to extend our warmest congratulations to HH Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein on his appointment as High Commissioner. We pledge our continued cooperation with you in carrying out your important mandate. I am pleased to be able to announce today a contribution of 1 million US dollars to support the work of your Office.

Mr. President, Excellencies:

The world was shocked by the brutal terrorist attacks in Paris in January. These criminal acts against innocent civilians not only targeted freedom of expression. They targeted people based on their religion. They were an assault on human rights everywhere. Such acts are not justifiable on any grounds.

The attacks in Paris share common traits with terrorist attacks around the world – they are all fuelled by extremism. Extremism is a threat to the enjoyment of human rights by all.

But the attacks in Paris succeeded only in uniting the vast majority of the people of the world of all faiths and beliefs in our determination never to give in to the twisted ideologies of violence and hatred.

Terrorists are a small minority who do not represent any religion. They threaten us all, regardless of faith. These points bear emphasizing in response to the rise in intolerance we are seeing in many parts of the world. Stereotyping is a real fear of Muslim communities. The recent murder of three Muslim students in North Carolina, possibly due to their



faith, underlines the message that extremism is criminal and devoid of any religion.

The response to such attacks lies not in giving in to intolerance and hatred. It lies in reinforcing the values of tolerance and respect for diversity.

The role of the Human Rights Council in this endeavour is crucial. I urge the Council to redouble its efforts to promote religious tolerance, including by following-up landmark Resolution 16/18. While the Council and the High Commissioner must focus their limited resources on the most pressing human rights challenges, promoting religious tolerance must be a priority.

We believe that the UAE can continue to bring a useful contribution to the work of the Council. That is why the UAE has decided to present its candidature for a second term as a member of the Council.

The threat posed by extremist organizations in our region is all too real. It is important that our terminology is accurate and describes extremists for what they are. Daesh has committed horrific atrocities in Syria and Iraq which amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. The Human Rights Council must hold the perpetrators of these crimes accountable. The work of the Council's Independent Commission of Inquiry on Syria and the OHCHR mission to Iraq, which we strongly support, is critical in this regard.

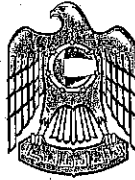
The UAE offers an alternative model of a peaceful, tolerant and modernizing society, providing economic opportunity and a better life to millions. The UAE is leading a number of initiatives to counter extremist ideology and advocate tolerance:

- The UAE co-chairs the Countering Violent Extremism Working Group of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum.



- The UAE hosts the International Center of Excellence against Violent Extremism ("Hedayah"), established to bring together world experts to address the challenge of diverting individuals from terrorism.
- On 9-10 March 2014, Abu Dhabi hosted the "Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies", which seeks to promote the message that Islam is a peaceful religion based on values of tolerance and human rights.
- On 13-14 December 2014, the Forum hosted the conference "Religions Working Together to Counter Violent Religious Extremism", which adopted a 10-point action plan aimed at countering religious extremism.
- On 19 July 2014, the UAE announced the establishment of the "Muslim Council of Elders," an independent, international body of fourteen Islamic scholars to promote the core tolerant values and practices of our faith. The Council includes the Shaikh of Al Azhar, which the UAE supports as the world's leading authority on the true teachings of Islam.
- The UAE is financing a 20 million US dollar project to train Imams in rural areas of Afghanistan in the true teachings of Islam.
- At the recent White House Summit, the UAE and the US announced the creation of a joint Anti-Daesh Online Operations Centre, based in Abu Dhabi, to counter Daesh messages.
- In addition, last week the UAE announced that it intends to launch a new "Contact Group on Countering Extremism."

The UAE led a joint statement by 75 States at the Council last June to condemn attacks on girls because they wish to attend school. Last



September the UAE led the consensus adoption of a resolution to hold a panel discussion in the Council this June on realizing the equal right to education of every girl. We hope that this panel will allow the sharing of best practices in fulfilling this right, essential to empowering women.

In our national development, we have sought to ensure that tolerance is a leading indicator in the society we are building. The UAE is also deeply committed to promoting the empowerment of women. In 2013, the UN ranked the UAE 43rd in the world on gender equality. The UAE is a firm believer in the mission of UN Women to promote women's human rights and has pledged 5 million US dollars to its core budget for the period 2014-2016.

The UAE is also part of the international effort to end sexual violence in conflict. The UAE has committed an additional 1 million US dollars to strengthen the capacity of affected countries.

People from around the world have contributed to our success, which is why the continual improvement of the protection of the rights of workers is a national priority. The UAE leads the region in legislative protections for foreign labour. The framework adopted by the developers of the Saadiyat Cultural District on conditions and protections for workers is unmatched in the region. Improving protections for labour is a work in progress.

In a region of conflict, the UAE is an oasis of peace and stability. We will defend our values of human rights, tolerance and respect for diversity against the forces of extremism. But we cannot defeat extremism on our own.

The international community must unite in countering this threat. The principles we are defending, of human rights, tolerance and diversity, are universal, and far more powerful than the forces of intolerance.



But we must do more if we are to defeat the forces of extremism. We must offer a positive agenda. Stagnant economies, high unemployment and poverty fuel radicalization. Young people need hope and jobs. We must integrate minorities into society.

We must re-invigorate efforts to end conflicts that have caused so much suffering and have become breeding grounds for extremism. The international community should support the legitimate Government of Libya in its efforts to combat extremist groups. In Yemen, agreement by all parties is urgently needed to avoid a political vacuum that extremist groups will exploit. Israel's continued construction of illegal settlements in Palestine and demolition of Palestinian homes threatens the viability of the two-state solution and must stop. Only a comprehensive two-state solution, based upon the 1967 borders—as endorsed in the Arab Peace Plan—can bring about lasting stability.

The UAE is whole-heartedly committed to this effort. We are convinced that, if we remain united and true to our ideals of human rights, tolerance, and respect for diversity, we will ultimately prevail.

Thank you Mr. President.