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**STATEMENT BY MAXIME LEFEBVRE,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FRANCE TO THE OSCE,
AT THE SECOND PLENARY SESSION OF THE
TWENTY-FIRST MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Basel, 5 December 2014

Regarding the fight against terrorism

Mr. Chairperson,
Dear colleagues,

I associate myself with the statement by the European Union and would like to add some additional comments on behalf of France.

Allow me first of all to thank Switzerland for continuing to mobilize the OSCE on an issue that represents a major threat to peace and international security. The recent murders by Da'ish and the odious recent attacks in Afghanistan and Nigeria remind us of the scourge of terrorism and the need to combat it.

More and more regions are affected by terrorism, and barbaric groups are attempting to take control of territories. The likes of Da'ish, Ansar al Charia and Boko Haram represent a threat not only to the countries of the region but also to us ourselves. The security situation also remains fragile in the north of Mali, where terrorist groups are seeking to re-establish themselves.

Terrorism attacks the values of democracy, freedom of expression and respect for the rule of law.

There is a need to redouble efforts in the face of this challenge. There are several ways of responding.

First, a military response is required to face up to an imminent threat. The fight against Da'ish today involves a growing number of States confronted by the challenges and threats posed by this terrorist group. France makes a contribution in Iraq. Recent assessments that the balance of power in the conflict with Da'ish is being turned around are encouraging. France also has a military involvement in Mali. Operation Barkhane, which has 3,000 soldiers active in five countries of the Sahel, is dedicated to combating terrorism in support of the armies in the countries concerned.

The fight must also be political, as military action on its own will not enable us to respond to all of the challenges posed by terrorism. The International Conference on Peace and Security in Iraq hosted by France on 15 September helped to mobilize the international community in support of the new Iraqi authorities. The meeting of the international coalition against Da'ish in Brussels the day before yesterday enabled us to take stock of our comprehensive strategy, which, apart from military resources, also includes activities to prevent the recruitment and movement of foreign fighters, to close down sources of financing and supply to Da'ish and to oppose its propaganda. Support to the population affected by the humanitarian crisis is an integral component of this strategy.

Sanctions are another way of combating the scourge of terrorism. The Libyan groups Ansar al Charia Derna and Ansar al Charia Benghazi have been placed on the United Nations Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee list. The aim of these sanctions is to support the political process, send a clear message to terrorists and Islamists and encourage the more moderate to distance themselves from the terrorists and rejoin the political dialogue.

Terrorism is flourishing and directly threatens our societies through the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon. Through the civil war in Syria and in Iraq we are witnessing a rapid transformation of terrorism. Until recently it was still confined to a handful of individuals choosing to operate in secrecy; now, however, it has become freely available thanks to the Internet and social networks. Groups like Da'ish are now notable for their ability to recruit people, often young ones, to their cause. More than 15,000 fanatics are thought to have left to fight in Syria and Iraq, including some 376 French citizens or people residents of France. Around 1,100 are thought to be involved in jihadist networks of various kinds.

In September the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2178 to combat the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon. Since then France has also taken steps at the national level. On 13 November a new law with several innovative provisions was promulgated. It establishes a procedure for prohibiting entry into the country if there are serious reasons to suspect an underlying terrorist motive. The law also entitles the administrative authority to demand that Internet providers block access to sites advocating terrorism. Finally, it permits individual terrorist activities to be suppressed.

In confronting terrorism, the international community must step up its co-operation while respecting civil liberties. The two declarations we are about to adopt today would confirm the OSCE's regional contribution to international efforts. We are pleased to note that tribute was paid to the Organization's work in the statement of 19 November by the President of the United Nations Security Council.

Finally, we need to consider the causes of radicalization and the way in which the OSCE's activities in the three dimensions can help combat violent extremism. In particular, we need to be more vigorous in opposing propaganda by terrorist groups that could be attractive to some of our citizens. A comprehensive approach to combating terrorism should also be part of a long-term strategy. Co-operation between OSCE partner States would enhance the work within the Organization.

Thank you.