

Statement by Ambassador Bhagwant S. Bishnoi, Deputy Permanent Representative at the UN Security Council Open Debate on "The Role of Youth in Countering Violent Extremism and Promoting Peace" on April 23, 2015

Madam President,

We thank you for organizing this open debate. Countering violent extremism is today one of the most important challenges for the international community. We also take this opportunity to thank the Secretary General, the Director of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence at Kings College and the Director of Research in Anthropology at the National Centre of Scientific Research in Paris for the briefings they have provided.

Madam President,

The concept note seems to argue that youth are central to the problem and that it is somehow through social and economic development that the challenge needs to be addressed. I would, with all due respect, like to say that our own understanding is somewhat different. We, therefore, welcome this opportunity for sharing our perspectives.

Firstly, in our view, we need to acknowledge that it is the absence of State authority, or weak State authority, that provides the breeding ground for violent extremist organizations to operate. The fact that there are conditions of poverty and unemployment are secondary. In fact, these conditions are also a result of absence of strong State authority.

Secondly, it is religious fanaticism that is responsible for violent extremism. It is the purveyors of hate and those who characterize others as infidels who are the culprits. Youth are only cannon fodder. While there is indeed merit in empowering and educating the youth, the more obvious need is to restrain those who engage in the politics of hate. This is a responsibility of the State. It is not one that can be exercised selectively. Terrorism is evil; there can be no good terrorists and bad terrorists. In the same way, extremism and violent extremism are always evil. There should be zero tolerance.

Again, it is the responsibility of States to ensure that education systems do not promote hatred and bigotry. It is important that traditional learning systems promote harmony and brotherhood of all mankind. In India, we seek to ensure that our textbooks reflect our rich heritage of diversity. Tradition and culture should be preserved in a spirit of responsibility and tolerance.

It is also the responsibility of States to ensure that media, including social media, is not used to incite and propagate hatred. As we have said earlier, States which do not take this responsibility seriously, do so at their own peril. In today's inter-connected world, they do so at the peril of others as well.

Lastly, a truly democratic, inclusive and participatory form of government goes a long way in preventing conditions that lead to violent extremism. It is important that no section of the society feel excluded or marginalized. This would certainly be the surest way of preventing radicalization.

Madam President,

India is one nation; a nation of many faiths and diversity of beliefs. It is a nation whose unity is strengthened by its pluralism. It is our firm belief that ultimately it is the values represented by open and tolerant societies that are the best foil to the forces of violent extremism.

Thank you.