

39th Annual Forum of Parliamentarians for Global Action

Milan, Italy

27-28 November 2017

Milan Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism and Mass Atrocities

We, the Members of Parliament from over 50 countries from around the world, participating in the Milan Forum for Parliamentary Action in Preventing Violent Extremism and Mass Atrocities, at the end of the deliberations held in Milan, Italy, on 27 and 28 November 2017, on the occasion of the 39th Annual Forum of Parliamentarians for Global Action:

Expressing gratitude to the Mayor of Milan and the Italian Parliament (Senate of the Republic and Chamber of Deputies), the European Parliament, the Organizing Committee of PGA Italy, the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies at Concordia University and the Stanley Foundation as co-organizers, as well as donors and institutional partners for making this Forum possible, within the framework of PGA's action-driven and results-oriented campaigns to prevent violent extremism and mass atrocities in all regions of the world;

Acknowledging the crucial role played by us, as Legislators, in preventing and halting violent extremism and mass atrocity crimes at the local, national, regional and international levels;

Recognizing that the international community is confronted with dangerous extremist ideologies that are used to justify atrocity crimes against civilians, and undermine peace, security, sustainable development, human rights, the rule of law, and resilient societies;

Understanding that this threat cannot only be addressed through security-based counter-terrorism measures but requires a more comprehensive approach, which encompasses preventive measures that address the roots causes and drivers of violent extremism and mass atrocities;

Underscoring the importance of justice, the Rule of Law, democratic governance, human rights – including the right to education– and strong civil societies as crucial elements of any viable strategy and policy aimed at addressing mass atrocities and violent extremism;

Underlining the importance of empowering legislators and other policy-makers to undertake policies and practices that may effectively prevent and contain violent extremists and eradicate discriminatory policies that serve as causes and drivers of violent extremism and mass atrocities;

Recognising that while terrorism, including international terrorism, is one of the most visible and perceived manifestations of violent extremist groups, these groups are also perpetrating atrocities that must be qualified as the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole, namely: (1) genocide, (2) crimes against humanity and (3) war crimes, including the destruction of cultural heritage sites, and (4) the crime of aggression, regarding which effective prosecutions may be facilitated by the application of general principles of international criminal law (i.e., non-applicability of statutes of limitations and of the defense of superior-order, command responsibility or responsibility of the superior, irrelevance of official capacity, prohibition of amnesties and other impunity measures, obligation to prosecute and extradite or surrender to the International Criminal Court);

We, the Members of Parliament attending the Milan Forum for Parliamentary Action in Preventing Violent Extremism and Mass Atrocities on 27-28 November 2017, therefore agree to use our legislative and political prerogatives to achieve the following national, global and, as appropriate, regional commitments:

I. On Addressing the Drivers and Root Causes of Violent Extremism and Mass Atrocities

We recognize that totalitarian approaches to and fundamentalist interpretation of religious beliefs, political ideologies and ethnic differences, combined with political and financial support from State and Non-State Actors to extremists who exploit real or perceived injustices and grievances, are root causes and drivers of violent extremism and mass atrocities. These actors distort beliefs to legitimize their actions and recruit followers.

We acknowledge that violent extremism does not arise in a vacuum but that certain *conditions* can contribute to a conducive environment for radicalisation that leads to violent extremism: marginalization, discrimination, poor governance, violation of human rights and the rule of law, prolonged conflicts, impunity for atrocity crimes committed by State and Non State Actors, gender inequality, poverty and extreme income inequality, and lack of socio-economic opportunities, social cohesion and education. These are all causes and/or drivers of the aforementioned crimes. Finally, we underline that the internet and social media are used as weapons of propaganda and recruitment by extremist groups. Violent retaliation in the form of “decapitation” and elimination of violent extremists pursued via extra-judicial or summary executions, including targeted killings, are outside the justice framework, inconsistent with International Law, perceived as an exercise of vendetta, and extremely ineffective. These strategies encourage recruitment into some violent extremist groups that promote a self-styled notion of ultimate sacrifice or “martyrdom.”

We resolve:

1. To engage with our legislative colleagues and other policy-makers from all political affiliations at the local, national, regional, transnational and international levels, to achieve multi-partisan agreement to prevent and halt totalitarian ideologies that promote violent extremism and mass atrocities.
2. To address the underlying conditions that drive individuals to join extremist groups, particularly by strengthening democratic governance, protecting human rights, enabling civic participation, fostering

the rule of law, paying attention to young people and returning foreign fighters, and guaranteeing gender equality and the rights of marginalised populations, including indigenous, ethnic and religious minorities.

3. To call for the development of a national plan of action to prevent violent extremism and a national mechanism for the prevention of mass atrocities. These preventive tools will address justice deficits and governance issues; improve social cohesion, equality and socio-economic opportunities; acknowledge that authoritarian regimes are the worst threat to peace and resilience; and ensure effective parliamentary engagement and oversight through –*inter alia*– parliamentary questions to the Executive and Committees’ hearings with appropriate experts, including the UN Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide, Responsibility to Protect and Children and Armed Conflict.

4. To intensify efforts to ensure the implementation of national, transnational and international mechanisms to detect and alert to warning signs of atrocities and extremism, including hate speech and propaganda both on and off the internet, and, to this effect, raise questions to the Government about the actions it is taking to fulfil its duty to prevent atrocities and ensure the allocation in national budgets of resources for such prevention measures, including regular atrocity risk assessments and reporting, to be undertaken in conjunction with national human rights institutions/ombudspersons and academic/civil society initiatives on national and international risks.

5. To develop disengagement, de-radicalization, rehabilitation/reintegration and education programmes for individuals engaged in violence, including national communication strategies that challenge and disprove the narratives promoted by extremist groups.

6(a) To ensure that alleged perpetrators of atrocity-crimes and acts of terrorism, including high-level recruiters and instigators to hatred, are brought to justice in accordance with internationally-accepted standards applicable to the rights of the accused to have a fair trial and the rights of victims to have access to justice, remedy and reparations, and to know the truth and have it officially acknowledged.

6(b) To prevent further atrocities by ensuring that justice is done, fulfilling the inalienable rights of victims, and halting existing policies and practises through which members of violent extremist groups are *not* brought to justice for genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes, but are *executed outside an active armed-conflict framework* with the view of purportedly eliminating the threat that they are posing or decapitating the leadership of their organisations, labelled as terrorist, regardless of whether an imminent threat or criminal conduct has been independently verified by a competent judicial authority.

6(c) In order to ensure that the respect of the dignity and rights of victims are fulfilled, to establish effective and comprehensive reparation and assistance programmes for the benefit of victims and their families, as well as communities affected by atrocity-crimes and other forms of violence.

II. On Halting the Proliferation of Conventional Arms and Weapons of Mass Destruction to Violent Extremists

We acknowledge that acts of violent extremism and atrocities are committed by usage of a wide range of legally- and illegally-obtained conventional arms and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), and non-state and state actors have taken steps to develop, manufacture and use WMDs.

We resolve:

7. To give priority to mitigate and eradicate the illicit trade of conventional arms and to prevent the proliferation of WMDs, including encouraging states to support the UN process to ban nuclear weapons.

8. To take concrete legislative steps to improve domestic firearms legislation and the implementation and enforcement of relevant regional and international treaties, resolutions, conventions, and other relevant instruments, including the Arms Trade Treaty, the UN Programme of Action Addressing the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, the International Tracing Instrument, the UN Firearms Protocol on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) on WMDs.

9. To enhance cooperation, coordination and investment in security and intelligence at the regional, transnational and international levels while ensuring effective democratic control and civilian oversight, including holistic parliamentary oversight, is developed and maintained on such processes.

10. To develop and strengthen mechanisms to guarantee the accountability of security forces and those who control them and, to this effect, undertake to pose relevant parliamentary questions to the Executive and arrange dedicated Committee hearings.

III. On Ending Impunity for Violent Extremists and Perpetrators of Mass Atrocities and Ensuring Justice for the Victims

We observe that impunity for perpetrators of mass atrocities serves to increase the likelihood of new crimes and we underline the importance of national and international jurisdiction. We recognize that all states have a duty to prosecute or extradite suspects and alleged perpetrators of international crimes in national or international jurisdictions. In order to give effect to these obligations, we stress that states and international bodies must develop better mechanisms to collect and preserve evidence for prosecution. At the same time, we underscore the importance of proportionate law enforcement and security responses and adequate criminal and reparative justice responses. This must include equality of all before the law, which will help prevent further deepening of the victim complex that can be used by extremists to recruit.

We resolve:

11. To ensure the adoption of domestic legislation that incorporates the definitions of mass atrocity crimes and violent extremism, taking into account available model and reference laws (e.g., reference law to domesticate the crimes and general principles of law contained in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court developed by PGA).

12. To ensure effective national efforts to investigate and prosecute international crimes under the Rule of Law and guarantee that counter-terrorism policies and regulations respect human rights.

13. To develop reparations mechanisms and introduce rehabilitation programmes for victims of extremist non-state actors, including women, children and marginalised populations, and facilitate their reintegration into society, particularly through the systematic use of child-protection professionals and other appropriate psycho-social and educational personnel that can adequately and sustainably provide therapeutic and empowerment programmes and help prevent re-occurrence of atrocity crimes and recidivism.

14. To ensure that evidence and documentation concerning the perpetration of crimes under International Law is collected and preserved in respect of all relevant situations in such a way as to make such evidence and documentation available for trials and other accountability processes aimed at putting an end to impunity for crimes that threaten the peace, security and well-being of the world.

IV. On preventing violent repression that may bring about the perpetration of atrocity-crimes and facilitate the surge of violent extremism

We emphasise the fact that authoritarian and repressive regimes are an enormous threat to open and democratic societies and, as such, may create conditions that can lead to the perpetration of mass atrocities and facilitate the recruitment into violent extremist movements of oppressed segments of the population, especially youth. We underline that democratically-elected parliaments and the respect of the rights of the opposition are the prime institutional defenses against this threat.

We resolve:

15. To affirm our unwavering and unconditional support for parliamentary institutions that are threatened and attacked by repressive regimes, as forcefully denounced in this Milan Forum.

16. To ratify and domesticate all relevant human rights treaties on the exercise of fundamental freedoms and democracy as well as to support parliamentarians who are threatened and whose fundamental rights are violated.

IV. On promoting strong and healthy civil societies and protecting the Rights of Minorities and other Vulnerable Groups

We recognize that enabling environments for civil society and the existence of a free press without any censorship reduce the appeal of violent extremism, and that ensuring the inclusion and rights of individuals and communities, including minorities and vulnerable groups, prevents the real or perceived exclusion conducive to violent extremism. We acknowledge that shrinking space for civil society, including freedom of expression and assembly, can lead to support for violent extremist actors.

We resolve:

17. To engage in dialogue with civil society, communities, and community and faith leaders in order to build trusting relationships to prevent the emergence of violent extremism, reject violent ideologies and protect individuals from recruitment.

18. To defend and extend civic participation, and develop joint and participatory strategies, such as intercultural dialogue, to enhance the capacity of communities to be proactive in preventing mass atrocities and violent extremism.

19. To use all Parliamentary means, including in observing elections and preparing legislation for free and fair elections, by enhancing our *pre-election conflict prevention dialogue* with political parties on their responsibility to avoid hate speech, the radicalisation of the electorate, and violence against women, youth and vulnerable groups, especially during electoral campaigns, as well as enhancing our *post-electoral follow up* of election observation recommendations to ensure root causes of conflict are addressed, including through legislation that addresses the full implementation of elections observation recommendations.

Conclusion:

We appreciate the support provided to PGA by its partners and recognize the invaluable importance of information and strategies provided to us during PGA's Milan Forum for Parliamentary Action in Preventing Violent Extremism and Mass Atrocities. In addition to this Plan of Action, individual legislators will be working with the PGA Secretariat in the elaboration of country-specific and, as appropriate, regional and sub-regional Action Plans and strategies.

We recall the objectives of the PGA's vision is "to contribute to the creation of a Rules-Based International Order for a more equitable, safe and democratic world."

We, the Participants in the *Milan Forum for Parliamentary Action in Preventing Violent Extremism and Mass Atrocities*, have agreed on this Milan Plan of Action and are committed to keeping the PGA Secretariat informed on a periodic basis of all the actions and initiatives that we will carry out to implement its objectives, as well as report back on the results of the 39th Annual Parliamentary Forum of Parliamentarians for Global Action within a six month period from its conclusion.

39th Session of the Annual Parliamentary Forum of Parliamentarians for Global Action

Milan, 28 November 2017