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MEASURES TO PREVENT INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM WHICH ENDANGERS OR TAKES INNOCENT HUMAN LIVES OR JEOPARDIZES FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS AND STUDY OF THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF THOSE FORMS OF TERRORISM AND ACTS OF VIOLENCE WHICH LIE IN MISERY, FRUSTRATION, GRIEVANCE AND DESPAIR AND WHICH CAUSE SOME PEOPLE TO SACRIFICE HUMAN LIVES, INCLUDING THEIR OWN, IN AN ATTEMPT TO EFFECT RADICAL CHANGES

Letter dated 17 December 1986 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter addressed to you by H.E. Mr. Farouk Al-Sharaa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic.

It is kindly requested that the enclosed letter be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under the item entitled "Measures to prevent international terrorism which endangers or takes innocent human lives or jeopardizes fundamental freedoms and study of the underlying causes of those forms of terrorism and acts of violence which lie in misery, frustration, grievance and despair and which cause some people to sacrifice human lives, including their own, in an attempt to effect radical changes".

(Signed) Abdul Mou'men AL-ATASSI
Minister Plenipotentiary
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

ANNEX

Letter dated 17 December 1986 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs
of the Syrian Arab Republic addressed to the Secretary-General

In view of the increasing importance attached by the international community to dealing with the phenomenon of terrorism, its recognition of the risks of its proliferation on the international arena and its concern over the exploitation of this phenomenon by imperialist circles and racist régimes in the pursuit of a policy that opposes the aspirations of peoples to liberation and independence; and proceeding from the conviction that there is an international consensus on combating all forms of terrorism and putting an end to its causes and its evils, which are directed against the lives of innocent individuals and their property and expose the sovereignty of States to violation and the rights of peoples to usurpation and loss; and in view of the absence, on the other hand, of definite agreed international criteria that would enable the international community to distinguish clearly between terrorism, which must be condemned and combated, and national struggle, which must be protected and supported; the Syrian Arab Republic would like to put before the international community, represented in the United Nations, the substance of the statement made by His Excellency President Hafez al-Assad during his official visit to Greece on 27 May 1986 regarding the need for international efforts within the framework of a responsible international organization to formulate criteria for distinguishing between terrorism and national resistance. The Syrian Arab Republic would also like to put before the international community the proposal made by President al-Assad in his statement before the Twenty-first Conference on the General Federation of Labour Unions in Syria on 16 November 1986, in which he called for the establishment of an international commission to define terrorism and to lay down the demarcation line separating it from the struggle of peoples for their just causes and the liberation of their territories. He also expressed clearly Syria's absolute readiness to co-operate in this regard and to contribute with practical ideas and formulations that would assist in the serious combating and suppression of terrorism.

The proposal by the President of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the establishment of such an international commission was received positively by numerous States in the various regions of the world, especially those States that condemn terrorism, support the struggle of peoples against occupation and call for the elimination of colonialism and racism.

It goes without saying that the idea of establishing an international commission to confront the phenomenon of terrorism and its underlying causes requires that all our States consult, co-operate and undertake joint action on the basis of our conviction that terrorism, from which we have suffered and are still suffering greatly, must be suppressed through collective action. It endangers or destroys innocent human lives, threatens fundamental freedoms and violates human rights and human dignity.

Serious joint action to implement this idea without delay assumes greater importance in the light of the fact that the policy of waiting and remaining silent in the face of the feverish attempts to blur the distinctions between terrorism and the legitimate struggle of peoples and to apply a double standard only allows scope for the forces of imperialism and racism to persist in their perfidy and to resort to the pretext of combating terrorism in order to commit aggression against independent States which pursue policies that displease them and do not submit to their pressures. This poses a serious threat to international co-operation, creates a favourable climate for the unlimited use of force in contravention of the principles of international law, the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and its resolutions and leads to the spread of international terrorism, the aggravation of tension and the jeopardizing of international peace and security. You have no doubt noticed such indications recently in the intensification of disinformation campaigns on the international arena directed against the nature of national struggle and against the States that support it. Some racist and imperialist circles have even gone so far as to portray piracy and State terrorism as an act of self-defence, whereas the peoples of the world consider State terrorism as the worst and most dangerous of all forms of terrorism.

There is no doubt that the efforts made so far to deal with the question of international terrorism and its causes within the framework of the United Nations have achieved some measure of success, but they have not yet produced any results regarding the aspect raised in the present letter, namely, the distinction between terrorism and the legitimate struggle of peoples.

On the basis of the above, the Syrian Arab Republic, proceeding from a position of responsibility, concern with the protection of international legitimacy and affirmation of the principles of international law, proposes the convening of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations to consider the proposal of His Excellency President Hafez al-Assad. It feels that preparations for such a conference can be undertaken through a committee established for this purpose, with all the geographical and regional groups represented in its membership. The Syrian Arab Republic is confident that your positive reception of this idea and your support for it through your constructive ideas and efforts will have a conspicuous effect on its success in the attainment of a noble goal sought by all the peoples of the world.

Farouk AL-SHARAA
Minister for Foreign Affairs of
the Syrian Arab Republic
