

Statement by

His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

of the United Arab Emirates

before

The General Debate of the 72nd session

of the United Nations General Assembly

New York, 22 September 2017

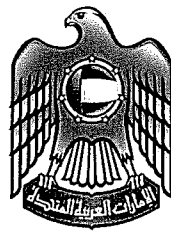
Please Check Against Delivery

Mr. President,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your presidency of this session of the General Assembly. We are confident that your deep experience in international affairs will contribute to its success, and we stand ready to provide you with all the support and cooperation you need. I also wish to thank your predecessor, Mr. Peter Thompson, for his stewardship of the last session.

Let me also take this opportunity to express my country's appreciation for the efforts of the Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, to reform the United Nations' work in conflict prevention and the achievement of peace and security. We fully support his vision, which will require United Nations member states to cooperate more closely on both existing and emerging global challenges.

The foreign policy of the United Arab Emirates is guided by principles consistent with the Charter of the United Nations and international law: a spirit of partnership, support for the rule of law, good-neighborliness and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States. These principles lead us to support a stronger role for the United Nations, and its reform, so that it can fulfil its mandate to maintain international peace and security and to bring about development and prosperity.



Mr. President,

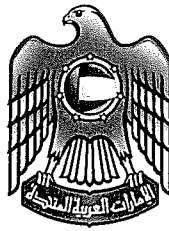
The United Arab Emirates works hard and responsibly, both within its neighbourhood and beyond it, to promote the stability and development of Arab countries and tackle the destruction which our region's wars have left in their wake. We see security and stability as the key to the advancement of nations and peoples, a promising future for younger generations, and a decent life for all. Our collective priority must be to promote peace and stability.

Despite serious regional and international efforts, our region continues to suffer from crises. These have several causes: extremism and terrorism; continued interference by states in each other's internal affairs; aggressive and expansionist policies driven by hegemonic ambitions; and regimes which seek influence by providing support to extremist and terrorist groups to undermine legitimate governments and spread chaos and conflict throughout the region and the world. These crises have killed many, displaced millions and destroyed infrastructure. If this situation persists, it will only generate more violence, destruction and depletion of economic, cultural and human resources not only in our region, but throughout the world.

There is no doubt that we, as an international community, have made progress in confronting security and humanitarian threats. However, more can be done to restore stability in the Arab world. The UAE believes that the initial steps to restore stability in the region should be the following:

First: to protect the development progress that has been made, and prevent any party from obstructing or wrecking collective efforts at peacebuilding. Otherwise we will be reduced to managing these conflicts instead of being able to solve them. I refer in particular to Libya, Syria, Yemen and Somalia. In those countries comprehensive political solutions can be achieved. Stability can be restored. But this will only be possible if we put a stop to outside interference in Arab affairs, and prevent any form of support from being given to extremist and terrorist groups. In this regard, we support the efforts of the United Nations to bring warring parties to the negotiating table and achieve comprehensive political solutions for the crises in our region.

Second: to unite in a firm and sincere rejection of extremism and terrorism in all its manifestations. There is no other way to confront and eradicate this scourge. My country believes that the Riyadh Summit was historic by any standard. It attracted an



unprecedented breadth of attendance at the highest levels, including the important participation of the President of the United States. The outcomes of the Summit demonstrated that the Arab and Islamic world stands firmly against terrorism and its ideological roots.

We believe that the elimination of this threat from our Arab region is within our reach. The liberation of ancient Arab cities with a rich history, such as Mosul in Iraq and Mukalla in Yemen from the grip of terrorist organizations is proof of this. It shows what can be achieved when we work together to combat extremism and terrorism.

Third: To take collective action to identify countries that support and finance terrorism, and hold them accountable. This is why the UAE has taken measures in tandem with its close allies the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Arab Republic of Egypt, aimed at stopping Qatar's support for extremism and terrorism, and forcing it to abandon policies which have destabilized our region.

We are committed to protecting our national interests, the security of the Arabian Gulf, and the stability of our region. Some parties in our region are making alliances with organisations that seek to undermine peace and security in the Arab region and the world. This is a gamble that they will lose. It is behavior that we should not accept. Let us stand united against those who finance, promote and justify extremism and terrorism.

We have a clear choice with no alternative: to stand against terrorism in all its manifestations and to stand against all perpetrators without exception. We must demonstrate zero tolerance to those who spread violence, fear and destruction among innocent people, and those who provide support and safe haven to terrorist groups. The sovereign measures taken by my country in cooperation with its close allies serve this purpose. They are consistent with international law and are intended to protect Arab national security and counter Qatar's support for terrorism.

Fourth: to promote compassion, tolerance and inclusion. Today more than ever, the Arab region is in great need of these values to counter the misleading messages and ideologies spread by extremist and terrorist groups, especially through social media platforms. My country works with regional and international partners to put in place mechanisms which remind our youth of our shared human values and counter the rhetoric of the terrorists. Specifically, the UAE established and hosts specialized institutions such as the "Sawab" Center, the International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism "Hedayah", as well as the "Muslim Council of Elders" which aims to demonstrate the peaceful nature of our Islamic religion, and the "Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim



Societies” which consolidates the principle of peace among Muslims . We have learned from experience that we must expose extremist and terrorist rhetoric and defeat it intellectually, and provide an alternative narrative based on the principle of peaceful coexistence and tolerance.

While these institutions promote a culture of peaceful coexistence and tolerance, we regret that some countries fund media platforms which call for violence, incite hatred and sectarianism and provide a podium for the murderous ideology of terrorism. History has repeatedly proven the catastrophic consequences that follow when media platforms incite people to commit violence and justify it.

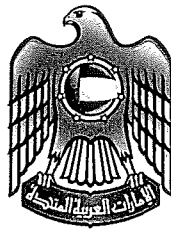
Mr. President,

Our international efforts to achieve peace in the region will not be successful without ending the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and Arab territories which has lasted over seven decades. This situation makes young people vulnerable to exploitation by terrorist groups who claim that they are the only choice through which they can achieve their aspirations.

The common factor in all crises suffered in the region and the real obstacle to any concrete progress in resolving these crises remains the hostile and expansionist policy of Iran in the region. That policy is one of interference in the internal affairs of other states, and of arming and supporting terrorist groups, such as the Houthis and Hezbollah, as well as terrorist groups and cells in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Bahrain and Kuwait. Iran has not only committed blatant violations of the principles of sovereignty, but also continues to exploit the crises in the Arab world to undermine regional security by inciting and fueling conflict. Iran must realize that peaceful co-existence based on respect for sovereignty in the region is the best basis for a harmonious relationship with the states of the Arabian Gulf.

We reaffirm from this podium the UAE’s firm position and its legitimate right to sovereignty over its three islands: Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, which are occupied by Iran in violation of the provisions of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. We will not abandon our demand for Iran to return the occupied islands to their rightful owners, either voluntarily or through the peaceful means that are available for the resolution of international disputes, particularly through the International Court of Justice.

Two years have passed since Iran’s nuclear agreement, with no sign of change in its hostile behavior in the region or any desire to abandon its nuclear ambitions. Instead, Iran



continues to develop and conduct more ballistic missile tests in a deliberate violation of the spirit of the nuclear agreement. Therefore, we support enhancing controls on Iran's nuclear program and continued assessment of the agreement and its provisions.

We view the similarly provocative behavior of North Korea, through its continued development of its nuclear program and ballistic missiles, as a part of the destructive efforts of these states to pursue their nuclear ambitions and threaten global security and stability. The aggressive policies of Iran and North Korea are inconsistent with their membership in an international organization whose primary concern is the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. President,

If we are to restore security in the region and protect its peoples from conflicts and extremism, then we must make development, in both its human and strategic dimensions, our top priority. We must create opportunities and hope for young generations looking to a tomorrow with optimism and confidence. Therefore, my country is committed to achieving economic and human progress, and to contribute to rehabilitation and reconstruction projects in conflict-affected countries, in order to enable their national institutions to undertake their role in restoring security and stability.

The UAE continues its humanitarian approach to alleviate the suffering of refugees. It supports international and regional efforts to protect them and improve their conditions by providing humanitarian and development assistance. However, the UAE stresses that managing crises by providing only humanitarian and development assistance is not a sustainable solution if we do not address the root causes of such crises.

In this regard, we reiterate the need for the United Nations to assume its responsibilities in finding solutions to humanitarian and political crises and addressing their grave implications, especially with regard to the recent violence and ethnic cleansing committed against the Rohingya in Myanmar. The United Arab Emirates condemns the acts of violence, and displacement and collective punishment, committed against the Rohingya and affirms that it will continue to provide humanitarian assistance and support efforts taken to reduce their suffering.

In this context also, we refer to the obstinate rejection by the Houthi rebels in Yemen of a political settlement to the Yemeni crisis and of humanitarian initiatives there. We see this clearly in their disruption and delay of numerous relief efforts and initiatives aimed at responding effectively to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen. Despite this,



we will continue to work determinedly through the Arab coalition under the wise leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the political and humanitarian processes with the utmost vigour and determination. We will strive to address the humanitarian and development needs of the Yemeni people, especially women and children, and restore stability.

Mr. President,

The UAE believes that it is by looking to the future, promoting humane values and human development, and responding to the aspirations of young people that peoples and nations can best advance their own development and prosperity. Today, my country has moved beyond the establishment of infrastructure and fulfillment of basic needs, including the provision of health, nutrition and education services, and adopted a model which is based on the principles of good governance and values of tolerance according to a vision for building happy societies. In addition, my country has ensured the provision of a safe environment to enable women and youth to fulfill their dreams and ambitions, and engage in the development of their country. This has allowed the UAE to pioneer innovations and ground-breaking achievements, and to become a beacon of hope for the younger generation throughout the region. The UAE is cognizant that its greatest challenge is to make its development sustainable and prepare itself for the post-oil era. This is a vital endeavor and it is our goal in every action that we undertake.

The UAE considers these values and principles a human and historic legacy passed on and celebrated by generations. Therefore, we have declared 2018 to be the "Year of Zayed" in memory and recognition of the achievements of the founding father of the United Arab Emirates, and to enshrine his values as we continue his journey to build and advance the nation.

Mr. President, we stand before a historic juncture. On the one hand stand those who pursue peace, development, modernity and the future. On the other, those who choose darkness, destruction, sabotage and chaos. In this most necessary and just confrontation, we must stand united. Our goal must be the eradication of extremism and terrorism and the elimination of those forces that are tearing our Arab region apart. Our path will then be clear, towards a future that is brighter and full of hope.

Thank you.