



European Council
The President

PRESS
EN

REMARKS
EUCO 187/14
PRESSE 480
PR PCE 163
New York, 24 September 2014

**Remarks by the President of the European Council
Herman Van Rompuy
at the UN Security Council
Special Session on Foreign Terrorist Fighters**

Let me start by thanking President Obama, and all members of the Security Council for holding this meeting.

ISIL poses a dreadful threat to security, and not only in Syria and Iraq. Beyond the Middle East, ISIL is a grave threat to us all. We must respond jointly. By undertaking direct actions to destroy ISIL's military and economic capability. By increasing our support to affected countries. By stopping foreign fighters from joining ISIL.

No doubt, ISIL will portray whatever we do as a fight against Islam. But this is a common fight – against cruelty, against barbarism. This is why public statements by Islamic leaders are so important.

As we gather, UN members are joining forces to fight ISIL. Its positions are under international attack. The Arab League has spoken clearly and many of its members are taking part in these actions, with the United States and European countries. Last month, the European Council – our assembly of 28 Presidents and Prime Ministers – backed the decision by individual member states to provide military material to Iraq. Along the line of measures now endorsed by the Security Council, we then also agreed to use existing sanction regimes more effectively. We will work to block ISIL's financial flows and weapon flows, and cut off illegal oil revenue.

We also must strive to strengthen the resilience of affected countries and the immediate region. Violent dynamics are spreading instability in all directions, into Northern Africa and the Sahel. The new Iraqi government needs to rally the support of all Iraqis. Efforts to find a political solution for the conflict in Syria must continue. European Union governments are ready to assist countries in the region with border- and aviation security as well as counter-terrorism capacity. We will continue providing humanitarian assistance to the affected populations and helping countries providing shelter to refugees.

But the crackdown must also take place in our own countries. We cannot allow that citizens from Europe, Africa or Asia feed ISIL's ranks. And foreign fighters also represent a dangerous threat back home. In Brussels, my hometown, at the Jewish Museum, four innocent people were murdered earlier this year by a returning jihadist ... Plots are being foiled.

We must renew our efforts to prevent radicalisation and extremism in our cities. We must cooperate better in sharing intelligence, police and judiciary information to track down terrorists. In this context, the European Union is accelerating work on its Passenger Name Record. It is about detecting and disrupting suspicious travel. Foreign terrorist fighters will be investigated, prosecuted and convicted.

The European Union welcomes today's Resolution calling on UN Members to make it a criminal offence to travel abroad for terrorist purposes.

Ms President, this will be a major endeavour, we know it. The strategic defeat of ISIL requires determination, long-term engagement and the unity of all of us. The European Union and its Member States are ready to play their part.
