



EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION TO THE  
REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

**Speech by Ms Anna MERRIFIELD  
Deputy Head of Delegation and Charge d'Affaires  
of the European Union to the Republic of Uganda  
at the Roundtable discussion on Prevention of Radicalisation to  
Violence in the Penitentiary Facilities  
at Imperial Royale Hotel- Kampala,  
10 September 2019**

The Deputy Commissioner General of Prisons,  
The Director of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre  
Representatives of Uganda Prisons Service and other JLOS actors,  
Representatives from the UN and Civil Society Organizations,  
Ladies and Gentlemen – all protocol observed

It is an absolute pleasure and honour to be part of this roundtable this morning – to launch the project on "supporting the management of violent extremist prisoners and the prevention of radicalization to violence in prisons".

This project is topical, as countries increase their efforts to fight terrorism and bring terror suspects to justice. At the same time, an associated challenge has gained importance and urgency: how to manage those violent extremists who end up in custody, and how to use their

time in prison to break the vicious circle of radicalization, aggression, and violent responses? This calls for a unified response. I am glad the UN has already developed a comprehensive Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. The Plan emphasizes the risk of radicalization in prisons, including, inter alia, as a result of inhumane detention conditions and inhumane treatment of inmates, and stresses the need for safeguards to be put in place to prevent the spread of extremist ideology in prisons. It also emphasizes strengthening good governance, human rights and the rule of law. It encourages all UN Member States to consider the need to reform national penitentiary systems to prevent and counter radicalization in prisons based on human rights and the rule of law.

The project being launched today aims at addressing this growing challenge. It is a four year (2018-2021) joint initiative by the European Union, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) in partnership with the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (UNCTED). The bulk of the funding comes from the European Union, with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Netherlands co-funding the project.

I am glad that Uganda has been selected to be among only three countries in the world where the programme is being piloted, the others being Kazakhstan and Tunisia. This has been made possible thanks to the

joint lobbying by the EU Delegation here in Uganda together with our colleagues from the UN and the Dutch embassy, with strong support from the Uganda Prisons Service and other JLOS partners. The project aims at strengthening the management of violent extremist prisoners, effectively preventing prisoners' radicalization in the course of their imprisonment, in full compliance with international standards and norms. Although prisons may constitute potential locations for the radicalization, at the same time, they can also provide an opportunity for prisoners to disengage from violence, potentially serving as a catalyst for positive change.

I wish to emphasize here that good prison management and necessary reforms constitute a fundamental basis for the effective management of all prisoners, including violent extremist prisoners. Stand-alone interventions for violent extremist prisoners which are implemented in isolation of the broader prison context are unlikely to yield positive results. I would also like to add that in order to effectively address extremism in prisons, information sharing between the whole chain from law enforcement through prison services to support in rehabilitation is necessary. While Prison Services is key, the support of the Police Force to help identify those prisoners at risk of radicalisation is crucial.

It is important to underline that the challenges posed by violent extremist prisoners must be addressed in full compliance with the UN Standard

Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the so-called Nelson Mandela Rules) and other relevant international standards and norms, including from a gender perspective. Efforts to address violent extremism must not lead to undermining fundamental human rights to which all persons, including violent extremist prisoners, are entitled to, including the freedom of thought, religion or belief, and the absolute prohibition of torture.

The aim and approach of this project reflects the European Union's larger global approach to the issue of radicalization and violent extremism leading to terrorism, as well as the importance we place on this topic. The European Union Strategy for Combating Radicalization and Recruitment to Terrorism calls for a balanced approach between security-related measures, and efforts to tackle those factors that may create an environment conducive to radicalization and recruitment to terrorism. The Strategy also establishes the full respect for human rights as one of the foundations for EU's work in this field.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to emphasize that this project builds on and strengthens the EU's long-term and multifaceted partnership with the Government of Uganda in promoting rule of law, human rights and delivering justice. For example, the EU has earmarked **66 million Euro** for a budget support programme for the JLOS and Accountability Sectors. The EU is also the current chair of the JLOS Development

Partners Group. This project will therefore leverage on of the work that has already been initiated, supporting some of the key needs identified by JLOS under its Fourth Strategic Development Plan and continuing to work closely with the EU's key partners in the Ugandan criminal justice sector.

I also wish to state that the EU has also been working closely with the Uganda Prison Service (UPS) on some projects especially in its advocacy for the abolition of the death penalty, but also on other rehabilitation projects by some Civil Society Organizations. I wish to commend the Uganda Prisons Service under the leadership of Dr. Johnson Byabashaija, for their open and accommodative approach especially to the outside world. It is well deserved that the Uganda Prisons Service is seen as model for other prison services in Africa and beyond.

Lastly, I would like to extend my gratitude to the Government of Uganda for its on-going constructive co-operation on this and other projects. We look forward to expanding this cooperation to developing and implementing tailor-made policies to prevent radicalisation to violence in prisons and prison-based disengagement programmes as another important area of co-operation.

Thank you very much.

