



Ministero degli Affari Esteri

*Direzione Generale per la Cooperazione Politica
Multilaterale e i Diritti Umani
Ufficio V*

Welcoming address by Counsellor Emanuele Farruggia, Director for Arms control and Non Proliferation (MFA, Italy) to the workshop on “Coordinating global and regional efforts to combat WMD terrorism”
(Rome, 24 October 2008)

*“Das Unvorsehebare ist das Warscheinliche”
(the unpredictable is the most likely to happen)
Carl von Clausewitz*

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour of welcoming you, on behalf of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, to this workshop, jointly organized by our munificent host, the Institute of International Affairs, and by my Ministry.

The issue our workshop will deal with is one of the most sensitive on the international security agenda, namely, the threat of WMD or CBRN terrorism.

We will explore, with the contribution of accomplished international experts as well as of representatives of relevant International Organizations, ways and means to better coordinate global and regional efforts to fight this heinous threat, basing ourselves on the assumption that only the concerted efforts of the international community can defeat the scourge of terrorism.

Mr Chairman,

As highlighted by many experts, we have gathered, over the years, consistent evidence of the intent of terrorist organizations - Al Qaida featuring prominently among them - to gain access to Chemical, Biological, Radiological or Nuclear (CBRN) weapons in order to wreak havoc in our societies, multiplying the effects already achieved by conventional attacks.

As far as capabilities are concerned, however, until now, very few incidents occurred where terrorist groups actually made use of non-conventional weapons or devices, mostly chemical or radiological.

Many of these attacks took place before 9/11, notably, among them, the employment of chemical weapons by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, in 1990, and by the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo sect, in 1994 and 1995.

The potential threat of WMD or CBRN terrorism, however, took a new dimension after the Twin Towers attack of 9/11/2001 and the subsequent discovery, in Afghanistan, of plans by Al Qaida to develop non conventional weapons.

Although terrorists continue to resort to traditional tactics, there is clear evidence that they are also seeking new and asymmetric methods to achieve their goals.

While terrorist use of an acquired weapon of mass destruction would have devastating results, such a scenario is far less likely than an attack involving CBRN materials. The delivery means of such devices may be crude and improvised, the physical and psychological consequences, however, would be serious and disruptive.

The assessment of the potential threat represented by terrorists gaining access to weapons of mass destruction is a common feature of some Strategy documents such as: the US National Security Strategy, the European Security Strategy as well as the latest French “White book on national defence and security”.

As underscored by the European Security Strategy: “the most frightening scenario is one in which terrorist groups acquire weapons of mass destruction. In this event, a small group would be able to inflict damage on a scale previously possible only for States and armies”.

Based on this widely shared assessment, the International Community devised a number of instruments, among them: UN Security Council Resolutions, conventions, multinational initiatives, action plans and “codes of conduct”, which are mutually reinforcing and add up to the pre-existing non proliferation and counter terrorism regimes.

Let us not forget that, due to the peculiarities of the threat, our approach should be multifaceted, having to cope both with measures to fight terrorism in all its aspects and to prevent proliferation of sensitive CBRN materials and know how.

Mr Chairman,

The challenge we are facing is serious. The threat may still be a potential one but, if unchecked, it may result in unprecedented disruption and loss of human lives.

As Ovid once wrote in one of his poems: “*Principiis obsta, sero medicina paratur, cum mala per longas convaluere moras*” (“Resist in the beginnings, too late is the medicine prepared when evil has grown strong for a long time”).

Therefore, an exercise of multilateral prevention is needed.

Our distinguished speakers will present us the different initiatives undertaken by the International Community. In this regard, I will mention only some of them, stressing the strong commitment of my Government to their universal and effective implementation in all their aspects.

Focussing on the non-proliferation side of the international efforts to fight WMD or CBRN terrorism, I would like to recall the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1540, adopted in April 2004, according to which: “all States shall refrain from providing any form of support to non-state actors that attempt to develop, acquire, manufacture, possess, transport, transfer or use nuclear, chemical or

biological weapons and their means of delivery”. Among the main legally binding instruments, I wish to mention the UN Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, adopted by the General Assembly in 2005 as well as the 2005 Amendments to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material.

Italy firmly supports, from the very beginning, international endeavours such as the Proliferation Security Initiative, launched in 2003, that aims to stop trafficking of weapons of mass destruction, their delivery means and related materials as well as the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism of 2006. The latter is specifically aimed at preventing the acquisition, transport, or use by terrorists of nuclear materials and radioactive substances or improvised explosive devices using such materials, as well as hostile actions against nuclear facilities.

Mr Chairman,

Looking forward to the incoming Italian Presidency of next year, I should like to highlight the specific role played by the G-8 in countering the threat of WMD or CBRN terrorism.

In order to prevent terrorists from acquiring or developing nuclear chemical, radiological and biological weapons, missiles and related materials, equipment and technology, “the G 8 Global partnership against the spread of weapons and materials of mass destruction” was launched at the G-8 summit of Kananaskis in 2002, less than one year after the 9/11 terror attacks.

Since then, G-8 nations, recognizing “the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, together with international terrorism as the pre-eminent threats to international peace and security”, have intensified their efforts with the approval of the G8 Action Plan on Nonproliferation at the Sea Island Summit in 2004.

As recently as this year, at the Toyako-Hokkaido Summit, G-8 leaders reaffirmed their determination to prevent acquisition of WMD’s by terrorists and agreed that the Global Partnership would “address the global challenges posed by the spread of weapons and materials of mass destruction, particularly in areas where the risks of terrorism and proliferation are greatest”.

Furthermore, in their statement on Counter-Terrorism, they expressly declared their intention “to reinforce, in light of the diversified threats and methods of terrorism, their efforts to tackle a wide array of threats including Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear terrorism”.

During its tenure of the G-8 Presidency, Italy will continue along this path, sustaining the implementation of existing initiatives and trying to find new ways, in co-operation with partners, to reinforce the Group’s commitment to the fight against CBRN terrorism. A particular subject for further brainstorming, due to the challenges posed by the spread of sensitive know how to terrorist networks, might be the employment of former weapons scientists, an item already included in the Global Partnership with regard to former Soviet scientists.

As a matter of fact, lessons learned in the projects which have already been carried out in Russia and Ukraine might be useful also in other areas where risks are higher.

Mr Chairman,

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to you and to your staff for the excellent organization of this landmark workshop and for the exceptionally high level of the keynote speakers, who will provide us with abundant food for our thoughts.

In particular, I should like to praise Prof Natalino Ronzitti, one of the highest authorities in International Law, for its outstanding leadership.

Let me conclude my address, by wishing you an interactive and fruitful debate and a pleasant Roman holiday as well.