

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN FIGHTING THE TERRORIST THREAT

HRH Prince Saud Al Faisal

I thank the Royal United Service Institute for organizing this timely and significant event. We have come here today because together we face a global threat. There is not only the physical threat of indiscriminate terrorist attacks, but, more importantly, their insidious aim of dividing us, and creating anger and hatred among our people, our religions, and our cultures. To overcome this threat, we must do more than simply defeat today's terrorists; we must remove the conditions that allow them to thrive. We must subdue and neutralize the voices of hatred and intolerance.

In this first decade of our new millennium, we are witnessing globalization and such rapid information dissemination heralding anew age of cooperation, economic interdependence, and increased cultural interaction. Yet optimistic expectations for a new era of global cooperation were shattered by the ugly spectre of terrorism and the resulting acts of violence and mayhem. Instead of good will and understanding among the cultures of the world, violent extremism came close to destroying the bonds of harmony and tolerance that globalization had promised.

A stranger to the Middle East relying only on the media for information about the region would be led to believe that we have a monopoly on terrorist acts. This is not the case. The most recently reported information, compiled by RAND, shows that during 2004, 47 percent of incidents of violence around the globe occurred in the Middle East and 53 per cent in the rest of the world. And the figures for the Middle East include the current violence in Iraq, which should put these statistics into perspective.

The gruesome crimes that were committed in Europe are no different from those perpetrated in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Extremism neither recognizes national borders, nor does it differentiate among people on the basis of their religion, creed, or colour.

In Saudi Arabia, we strongly believe that international cooperation is crucial for fighting terrorism. It also goes without saying that the will and resolve to fight terrorism must begin at home; the national will then must be extended to a universal collective resolve, for no country can



afford to stay on the sidelines. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation among security and intelligence services must be the backbone of efforts to combat terrorism. The sharing and exchanging of information is necessary to deter and prevent terrorist acts, and to stay ahead of our mutual enemy at all times.

We all recognize that there is no single model or example that represents all acts of terrorism. Misguided people perform violent acts. Some do so in quest of glory and salvation based on religious fanaticism; others commit violent acts as a result of frustration and despair caused by circumstances and conditions beyond their control. There are also violent acts that are motivated by opportunistic politics -domestic and international.

In order to eradicate the roots and manifestations of this evil, we must act collectively to find a spectrum of remedies to deal with terrorism effectively, both in the short and in the long run.

During the past three years, Saudi Arabia has witnessed more than 25 incidents of terror - including explosions, murders, and kidnappings - causing the death of nearly 144 citizens, security personnel and foreign nationals, while injuring more than 500 people. 120 terrorists were killed and 17 wounded, and over 52 terrorist operations were foiled. And the fight goes on.

The government and people of Saudi Arabia are united in the fight against the terrorists, those who support them, and those who condone or incite