Statement by Ambassador H.S. Puri, Permanent Representative and Chairman, Counter-Terrorism Committee at the meeting of NATO and Ambassadors from the Partnership for Peace countries within the framework of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. Brussels, December 11, 2012

H.E. Mr. Anders Fogh Rasmussen, NATO Secretary General

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is both a singular honour and privilege for me to address NATO and Ambassadors from the Partnership for Peace countries within the framework of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council.

I would like to thank you Mr. Secretary General for the kind invitation and I recall the briefing by Ambassador Gabor Iklody, Assistant Secretary General to the Counter-Terrorism Committee last September.

I avail this opportunity to present before you some thoughts in my personal capacity as Chair of the Counter Terrorism Committee.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Terrorism today constitutes the most pressing challenge to international peace and security. It is a global threat that recognizes no border, nationality, ethnicity or religion. There is hardly any region of the world that has not been scarred by terrorism. The situation is further compounded with the increasing ability of terrorist to inflict catastrophic damage to critical infrastructure.

Terrorists are not only globalized, but are waging an asymmetric warfare against the international community. Terrorists have made borders irrelevant and are adept in exploiting advances in technology. They recruit in one country, raise funds in another and operate in others. Statistics would indicate that the share of terrorism in global violence is at an all-time high.

We all have a vital interest in battling this horrendous scourge. Effectively combating terrorism requires necessary political will of member states and greater international and regional cooperation.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

The UN’s convening power is unparalleled and it has been in the forefront of global effort in combating terrorism. Despite gaps, the normative framework agreed at the UN is fairly comprehensive and comprise of UN conventions on terrorism and protocols, the Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005) and subsequent
resolutions and the universally agreed Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. However, considerable ground is yet to be covered when it comes to implementation.

Terrorism has to be confronted with resolute determination, not only by governments, but also by societies at large. The preventive aspect needs much greater attention than ever before. Security Council resolution 1963 (2010) as well as the universally agreed Global Counter Terrorism Strategy recognize that terrorism will not be defeated by military means, law enforcement measures and intelligence operations alone.

Meeting violence with greater violence can never provide a lasting solution. I come from the land of Mahatma Gandhi. He led what is now a nation of over a billion people to freedom through non-violence. The recent developments in West Asia and North Africa demonstrate that peaceful and non-violent mobilization of a population can be a more effective instrument of social change than violence.

We need a holistic zero-tolerance approach towards terrorism anchored in human rights and rule of law. We also need greater outreach and, enhanced cooperation, coherence and coordination of international counter-terrorism efforts as well as amongst various UN entities including the CTED, UNODC and the CTITF Office.

During the last two years, the Counter-Terrorism Committee, which I Chair, has organized three Special Meetings with participation of the wider UN membership and international regional and sub-regional organizations. The Committee organized a Special Meeting in New York last month focusing on prevention and suppression of terrorist financing with participation of the expert bodies - FATF, FATF Style Regional Bodies (FSRBs), IMF and the World Bank. The Meeting was immensely helpful in putting a spotlight on the issue of terrorist financing, which lies at the heart of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). The Meeting built upon the success of the two Special Meetings held last year - the Strasbourg meeting which focussed on the prevention of terrorism and the commemorative meeting at in New York on the tenth anniversary of adoption of UNSCR 1373 (2001) where the Committee introduced a substantive and qualitative higher benchmark of “zero tolerance” in the counter-terrorism lexicon.

The Committee, through CTED, has also been constantly improving its analytical tools to monitor and assess the progress in implementation of resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005) around the world. The Committee issued updated global surveys of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005) last year.

The Committee has also agreed earlier this year to a revised set of assessment tools including the Overview of Implementation Assessment (OIA) and the Detailed Implementation Survey (DIS), which are designed to provide greater objectivity to the Committee’s stocktaking process of identifying States’ strengths and challenges in countering terrorism worldwide.
Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Notwithstanding the progress achieved so far, the efforts of the international community continue to face many challenges. Foremost is the need to remove the moral and legal ambiguities that allow terrorists to gain succour and even legitimacy. Progress under mutual legal assistance and extradition cases is still sketchy and is yet to be fully mainstreamed as part of regional and international counter-terrorism efforts. We need to expand the normative framework and strengthen enforcement efforts to destroy safe havens for terrorists, their financial flows and their support networks.

The success in the fight against terrorism goes hand-in-hand with progress in strengthening counter-terrorism cooperation and exchange of information at the international, regional and sub-regional level. A large number of terrorist plots can be neutralized by international cooperation. The sharing of information is of fundamental importance. The mechanisms that have been developed to pool the resources and the knowledge of the international community needs to be augmented and made more effective.

We have witnessed important progress at the international and regional levels including the recently established Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF). We would need a scaling up of some of the concrete ideas emerging from these processes. In these times of austerity, it becomes imperative to fully coordinate the international efforts and avoid duplication of efforts leading to diversion of resources, which probably could be better used elsewhere.

NATO remains an important partner for the CTC/CTED in our common efforts to deal with the terrorist threat. Further, with its considerable expertise and the resources that NATO has dedicated in confronting the cross-cutting and ever evolving terrorist threat, it stands well-placed in sharing its valuable experience with CTC/CTED and the UN. We need to consider expanding synergies in areas of capacity-building, training and technical assistance.

I am glad that the CTC/CTED and NATO have a healthy interaction and this need to be strengthened further.

Before I conclude, I would like to echo the UNSG’s clarion call: “we must take collective and concerted action to prevent terrorism from posing an existential threat to human kind”.

Thank you