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Terrorism Took Centre Stage on the First Day at Taormina

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On Day 1 of the Taormina G7 Summit, terrorism again took centre stage due to the attacks in Manchester that led to the death of 22 men, women and children at a family concert.

Prior to the Taormina Summit, the Italian government indicated that it had wanted to focus on the day-to-day lives of people by "Building the Foundations of Renewed Trust." Although terrorism formed part of the agenda under the umbrella of Citizen Safety, other issues to be addressed included the reduction of social inequality as well as ways to address the fourth industrial revolution (also known as the Next Production Revolution) through greater skills training.

Nevertheless, in a press briefing held the morning of the first day of the summit, Donald Tusk, president of the European Council, stated forcefully that G7 leaders "should be tough, even brutal in fighting terrorism." And while the other issues contribute in one form or another to the summit's communiqué that would be issued the following day, the leaders issued a three-page **G7 Taormina Statement on the Fight Against Terrorism and Violent Extremism**, condemning the Manchester terrorist attacks.

In the statement, G7 leaders stressed that "countering terrorism and violent extremism ... remains a major priority for the G7" and that they "will take the strongest action possible to find, identify, remove and punish, as appropriate, terrorists and those who abet their activities." They highlighted that they remained committed to the G7 action plan adopted in Ise-Shima, a multidimensional roadmap to tackle terrorism by:

- addressing the international governance framework via the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolutions;
- improving information sharing and cooperation
- strengthening traffic control across physical borders
- enhancing aviation security
- assessing terrorist financing in new payment methods
- working to stop the trafficking of antiquities
- increasing engagement with the private sector
- implementing the UN's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism to create more tolerant societies
- stepping up capacity-building efforts

The Taormina terrorism statement launched a new initiative to combat the misuse of the internet by terrorists by calling on companies to increase efforts to address terrorist content. This includes working to support industry to develop and share new technologies to automatically detect, remove and report extremist propaganda content that incites violence, radicalization or recruitment. G7 leaders pledged to counter online propaganda and recruitment. This is in recognition of British prime minister Theresa May's description of how fight against terrorism has shifted "from the battlefield to the Internet." May indicated that the G7 would support the development of an international forum where new technologies can be developed and shared among members.

On the issue of foreign fighters, the G7 leaders said they would pool resources to build capacity in transit and destination countries to manage the threat of travelling and returning foreign fighters. Efforts include developing legal channels to allow for the return of foreign fighters and sharing greater intelligence of known individuals who have travelled to territory controlled by Daesh or al Qaeda.

G7 leaders also pledged to refocus efforts to cut off sources and channels of terrorist financing, including by countering the looting and trafficking of antiquities and by the work completed by the Financial Action Task Force in closer collaboration with the private sector. The G7 further stressed the importance of sharing information with international law enforcement agencies.

On a different note, they highlighted the importance of cultivating culture "in a way to foster tolerance, dialogue, mutual understanding, religious pluralism, and recognition and respect for diversity."

In a stark reminder of the current challenges posed by terrorism, Theresa May returned to London after Friday's afternoon sessions to deal with the live terrorist threat at home in the United Kingdom. Her G7 colleagues continued their work until the summit ended with the closing press conference given by Italian prime minister and host Paolo Gentiloni.

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