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EICC-2021

Brussels, 15 November 2021

Mr. Josep Borrell

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and

Vice-President of the European Commission

Brussels

Dear High Representative, Vice-President Mr. Borrell,

Re: **Commemorating 26/11 and Fight Against Terrorism**

While November 11 is celebrated as Victory in Europe Day (V-E Day) and marks the victory of peace over a hugely destructive war, November is also month that has unfortunately come to coincide with several horrors that occurred in different parts of the world over the past few years. On November 13, France was shaken to the core by unprecedented terror attacks that saw terrorists, operating in different groups, carried out multiple attacks simultaneously. The murderous night left over 130 persons dead and over 400 hurt and created a deep sense of insecurity across Europe as a number of countries across Europe have since been hit by terror attacks. We, at the Europe India Chamber of Commerce, stand by our European brothers and sisters and mourn their loss and join them in their pledge to never let such bloodletting happen again on their soil.

Even as Europe mourns its dead, on November 26, India will commemorate 13th anniversary of the deadly terrorist attack on Mumbai, the commercial capital of India. Thirteen years ago, on this day in 2008, Pakistan carried out one of the most heinous of terror attacks perpetrated anywhere in the world. The 26/11 Mumbai terror attack, also referred to as 26/11, because of the magnitude and horror of September 11, 2001, terror attacks in the US, was a coordinated assault on Mumbai civilian targets by Lashkar-e-Taiba, a Pakistan-based and Pakistani intelligence service-trained terror group. This day will not fade into India's memory and India will never forget the wounds inflicted during the terror attacks. This is a sobering reminder of the continuing threat that terrorism poses to all nations. A total of 175 people died, including nine attackers, and more than 300 were wounded.

The Mumbai attacks alone claimed not only Indian lives, but the victims also included national of many EU countries like France, Italy, the Netherlands, and United Kingdom, as well as from other countries that are allies and friends of both the EU as well as India -- Australia, Canada, Japan, Israel, Jordan, Malaysia, Mexico, Singapore, and Mauritius. The victims of this terror attack were Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, and Jews.

Terrorism in any shape or shade is a threat to humanity. The terrorist attacks in France, Spain, Belgium, Germany, United Kingdom, and other EU countries speaks the fact that

although Europe and European Union have grappled with domestic and foreign terrorist groups for decades, numerous attacks since 2014 have renewed concerns about violent extremism in Europe.

While France can at least take some solace in the fact that it has put one of the terrorists involved in the attack on trial and a number of others associated with the attack have been arrested and are also on trial. Unfortunately, India has been denied even that slight solace as the masterminds of the attacks continue to roam around freely in Pakistan and planning and activating other terror attacks in India.

What happened in India's largest city and commercial capital was a crime against humanity, which no military or diplomatic dispute excuses. The refusal of the Pakistan government to try and punish Lashkar-e-Taiba co-founder Hafiz Muhammad Saeed and the group's leader, Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi, simply highlights the reality that Osama bin Laden's presence in Pakistan was no outlier but was rather evidence of a pattern in which Pakistani authorities protect master terrorists. The UN-designated terrorists based in Pakistan include Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief Azhar, Lashker-e-Taiba (LeT) founder Saeed and its 'operational commander' Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi. Pakistan's insincere approach to countering terror financing, as documented by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), simply reinforces this point.

Even after 13 years of this horrific day, every year India has commemorated this day amid the smell of death, destruction, and debris. What is significant however about this anniversary is that the country which perpetrated the attack, the country whose foreign policy is based on jihad, the country that used EU's generous trade benefits for its extremist activities, the country, which was an ally on global war on terror, is now the spokesman of the Taliban in Afghanistan. This raises the question what benefits EU gets out of GSP plus trade privileges. And the answer is "not very much." Once considered as an essential ally in the war on terror since 2001, the result is before us how Pakistan betrayed EU's trust and supported return of Taliban.

The EU has tolerated Pakistan because it claims to have allied in the fight with Europe and international community on the global war on terror. However, events in Afghanistan shows that while Pakistan was getting financial and military assistance and trade privileges, it was silently allying with terrorist forces against the interest of EU. Pakistan has in fact used these benefits to undermine some of EU's strategic diplomatic efforts in the region. Also, Pakistan seems to have taken GSP+ as granted as Pakistan continues its disrespect for human rights, particularly on blasphemy laws, minority and women's rights and press freedom.

Pakistan used the rather generous support by the US and EU to reshape the 'War on Terror' on terms that only bolstered its own foothold across South Asia and beyond. Over the years, Pakistan secured trade benefits from the EU and special treatment through Coalition Support Funds from the USA, and bailouts from the IMF. It participated in the global economy with a preferential treatment, acquired major non-NATO ally status and yet escaped accountability from the very allies that kept its economy and political structures afloat. Ironically, the enemy that it claims to fight, namely the Pakistani Taliban or the TTP, includes members from the Taliban and terror networks in Kashmir.

Sir, the world has witnessed the Taliban's dramatic comeback and cruel takeover of Afghanistan with the support of Pakistan. Besides the predictable treatment of women, minorities and government officials, the Taliban has refrained from giving any clarity over its policy of refuge to global terrorist organizations. Soon after the last American soldier left Afghanistan, Al Qaeda released a congratulatory statement and reaffirmed its goal to "liberate Palestine, Islamic Maghreb, Somalia, Yemen and Kashmir from the enemies of Islam". As you are aware, a violent anti-Europe / anti-France sentiment, with demands for expulsion of French Ambassador, orchestrated by fundamentalists, is sweeping across Pakistan. The country has become incubator for Al Qaeda because of the nexus between Islamic extremists.

Over the past two decades, the porous Afghanistan-Pakistan frontiers, along with the seminaries of Karachi, Peshawar and Bahawalpur became home to some of the intrigues that pose threats to global peace. The interlinkages between members of Al Qaeda, the Taliban and these seminaries were found to be undergirded by networks tracing linkages to individuals from Pakistan's intelligence apparatus.

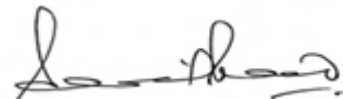
Now that the Taliban controls Afghanistan and is being engaged irrespective of its legitimacy, the EU and international community need to revisit its support to Pakistan considering the end results we see in Afghanistan. The Al Qaeda still survives, the opium economy flourishes with powerful stakeholders inside Pakistan and most alarmingly, a sense of victory seems to have reinvigorated the global Jihad narrative once again.

It is therefore important for European Union and the European Parliament to investigate and review EU's terms of engagement with Pakistan. With this we also call on EU and European Parliament to scrutinize some of the leverages the EU historically had on Pakistan. Such actions would not only set an example of EU's soft power through norm-setting but would also prompt the international community to act in unison against certain strands of the broader narrative on global terrorism which continue to be actively aided by Pakistani agencies.

We hope you will take note of the issues we have raised and act upon for the larger interest of safety and security not just of the EU, but indeed the entire world.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,



Secretary General

Cc: Mr. David Maria Sassoli, President, European Parliament