



20.05.2017- Almost half of foreign terrorist fighters have come back to Europe. During a press conference on Thursday in Brussels, Mr. Jean-Paul Laborde, Executive Director of the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, outlined the security challenges posed by returning fighters, especially since the latest arrivals are in his opinion “more dangerous than the previous ones”.

The flow of foreign terrorist fighters leaving Europe for Syria or Iraq has fallen by 90% in 18 months, notably thanks to preventive measures and cooperation between European countries, however, there are now many returning fighters. Some, better trained and battle hardened, make their way back to the country they initially left; others head to new conflict zones such as Afghanistan.

Jean-Paul Laborde underlined the important of establishing a regional, national and international strategy to prevent terrorist attacks being committed by ‘returning’ foreign fighters, but to ensure their reintegration. He added that, “we need better cooperation, not just between European countries, but also with countries neighbouring conflict zones”.

He made clear that these measures had to respect international conventions, which has not always been the case so far.

Mr Laborde also welcomed the increasing number of countries that have established the “Advanced Passenger Information System” (APIS), used today by about fifty countries around the world.

When asked about terrorism and the Internet, Mr Laborde answered that the question should not be “if such attacks can happen but when they will happen”. “One day terrorists will have access to these tools, we must address this threat now and not wait until they are able to carry out an attack using these methods.”