

# World Leaders Need To Raise Moderate Voice To Eradicate Extremism - Belgium DPM

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**By S. Chandravathani**

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 25 (Bernama) -- Belgium's Deputy Prime Minister Didier Reynders has called on world leaders to raise their moderate voice through their words and concrete actions to eradicate extremism and achieve global security.

In making this call, he pointed out that it was important to tackle terrorism in the minds of the people first, and every leader had the responsibility to be the voice and hand of moderation to citizens.

"Often, moderation is silent, while extremism is heard. Our media echos violence and extremism. They do not often talk about all these small but powerful initiatives of the moderates.

"Our duty as leaders is to give moderates a voice and place, and help their initiatives multiply. Messages of peace and tolerance need to be spread," he said in his lecture on 'Moderation: A Belgian and European Perspective', at the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR) here today.

Reynders is part of a 300-strong Belgian economic mission delegation to Malaysia from Nov 22-26. The economic delegation is being led by Belgium's Princess Astrid.

Admitting deep transformation took time, Reynders, who is also Foreign Affairs and European Affairs Minister, however said, all these required commitment and involvement of all parts of societies; thus, education is the strongest weapon.

"There must be a vision of society's future, integrating its various components. They need to take into account the specificities and challenges a country faces. They need to address underlying causes like injustice, corruption, socio-economic disarray...

"These problems need years to be tackled, sometimes even decades. They cannot be solved with a magic wand," he said.

Having said that, Reynders agreed that extremism and use of violence had nothing to do with Islam, and extremist groups were merely using religion or politics to justify their actions.

"The current coalition against terrorist groups around the world is not a war against Islam. It is not a conflict between cultures or civilisations, either. Rather, it is a fight against violence, hate, fanaticism

and extremism," he said.

He ended his one-hour lecture by saying moderation was about tolerance, trust, mutual understanding and dialogue to resolve disputes, and moderation should not just be confined to religion alone; instead, it should encompass economics, politics, culture and social dimensions.

Malaysia is on the same page with regard to moderation, when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak told the 69th United Nations General Assembly in September that the moderation approach could make a valuable contribution to fragile states and international affairs, including addressing extremism.

Meanwhile, Global Movement of Moderates (GMM) chief executive officer Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah said experts and research had found that about 21,000 hours of stories, short videos, v-logs, photos and images were posted and shared via YouTube, Facebook or Instagram, that either supports, or were directly about terrorism.

"Unfortunately, the counter narrative is very small. It is like 10 per cent of the amount. So, we are really lacking on the online voices as a counter narrative to eradicate terrorism. That is why, we need to work really very hard," he said.

Therefore, Saifuddin urged video-makers, documentary film-makers and v-loggers to flood the online social media, with images and stories that could counter terrorism.

"Some organisations in Europe are doing a good job in producing short videos, but not many are coming from this part of the region, especially using the Malay language," he said.

He said the duty to eradicate terrorism was not solely the burden of the authorities; instead, civil society too, needed to come forward and play its role by explaining to the younger generation on how terrorism could destroy the security and peace of the world.

Meanwhile, International Movement for the Just World president Dr Chandra Muzaffar said the current problem with terrorism had to do with misinterpretation and distortion of religion, by people seeking power.

"So, the solution to fight this problem is to put forward the right interpretation. This is not just Islam, but involves all religions, which face this problem (misinterpretation and distortion of religion)," he said.

He also called on world leaders to have economic equality so that people did not feel alienated and joined radical groups.

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