



PLAN of ACTION to PREVENT VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Information Note for Media

On 15 January 2016, the Secretary-General will present his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) to the General Assembly (A/70/674).

The Secretary-General transmitted the Plan to the President of the General Assembly through a Letter dated 22 December (A/70/675).

While recognizing the importance of ongoing, essential security-based counter-terrorism measures, the Plan proposes a comprehensive approach, including systematic preventive measures to address the drivers of violent extremism.

The Context

Violent extremism is a scourge of our times. The Secretary-General is appalled by the attacks and atrocities committed by terrorist groups such as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab, and by violent extremists inspired by them, against innocent civilians around the world. These groups spread hatred and violence and can destabilize countries and entire regions.

These groups present a serious threat to all four core areas of work of the international community, namely maintaining peace and security, fostering sustainable development, promoting and protecting human rights and the rule of law and humanitarian action. They pose a direct assault on the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to the universal values upon which the United Nations was founded.

In recent years, these groups have shaped our image of violent extremism and the debate about how to address it. Their message of intolerance – religious, cultural, social – has had drastic consequences for many regions of the world. Holding territory and using social media for the global and real-time communication of their ideas and exploits, they seek to challenge our shared values of peace, justice and human dignity.

The spread of violent extremism has further aggravated an already unprecedented humanitarian crisis that surpasses the boundaries of any one region. Millions of people have fled the territory controlled by terrorist and violent extremist groups. Flows of migrants and refugees, in one direction and of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) in the other have increased, both away from and towards the conflict zones: those seeking safety and those lured to the conflict as further destabilizing the regions concerned.

Violent extremism is a diverse phenomenon, without clear definition. It is neither new nor exclusive to any region, nationality or system of belief. While the Secretary-General's Plan has been developed within this context, it is intended to address violent extremism in all its forms and wherever it occurs.

The Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism

In order to prevent the further spread of violent extremism, the Secretary-General is presenting a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) for the consideration of the General Assembly.

The Plan was developed through an extensive United Nations inter-agency process and is based on the outcomes of high-level meetings of the General Assembly and Security Council, interactive briefings to Member States and outcomes of several international and regional meetings.

The Plan of Action is putting forward a **comprehensive approach** which not only encompasses ongoing, essential security-based counter-terrorism measures, but also systematic **preventive measures that directly address the drivers of violent extremism**. For this reason, the Plan proposes an **“All-of-Society”, “All-of-Government”, and “All-of-UN” approach**.

The Underlying Conditions and Drivers of Violent Extremism

The Plan of Action identifies two main categories underlying conditions that drive individuals to radicalize and join violent extremist groups:

1. **The conditions conducive to violent extremism and the structural context, “Push factors”** such as the lack of socio-economic opportunities; marginalization and discrimination; poor governance, violations of human rights and the Rule of Law; prolonged and unresolved conflicts; and radicalization in prisons.
2. **Processes of radicalization, “Pull factors”**—which play a key role in transforming ideas and grievances into violent extremist action. These include: individual backgrounds and motivations; collective grievances and victimization; distortion and misuse of beliefs, political ideologies and ethnic and cultural differences; leadership and social networks.

The Recommendations

The recommendations put forward for the consideration of Member States seek to integrate prevention as an integral part in a comprehensive approach that will help tackle many of the underlying conditions that drive individuals to join violent extremist groups. The recommendations identify actions that can be taken at the global, national and regional levels, including developing policy frameworks, the mobilization of resources, and concrete actions in seven priority areas.

Setting the Policy Framework

- **Global Framework for Preventing Violent Extremism:** The UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments, General Assembly resolutions, such as the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and Security Council resolutions, such as resolution 2178 (2014), provide common commitments and political will that can be translated to effect real change and new ways of formulating public policy to prevent violent extremism in each country and region, recognizing that solutions will be unique in each case.
- **National PVE Plans of Action:** Each Member State should consider developing a National PVE Plan that sets national priorities to address the local drivers of violent extremism and complements national counter-terrorism strategies where they already exist. Such Plans should be developed in a multidisciplinary manner with input from governmental and non-governmental actors to fortify the social compact against violent extremism; address the Foreign Terrorist Fighter threat; prevent the financing of violent extremist and terrorist groups; align national

development policies with the SDGs; promote public-private partnerships; and include effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure impact.

- **Regional PVE Plans of Action:** regional cooperation needs to be enhanced, for instance through adopting comprehensive PVE strategies and strengthening sub-regional and regional organizations.
- **Mobilizing Resources:** existing funds dedicated to countering terrorism and violent extremism should be adjusted to also address the drivers of violent extremism; other funding sources need to be identified—e.g. adapting existing funds to expand programming that is sensitive to preventing violent extremism.

Seven Priority Areas to Take Action

The Plan of Action recommends that each Member State develop its own national plan of action to prevent violent extremism, with a focus on seven priority areas:

1. **Dialogue and Conflict Prevention:** In the framework of the broader prevention efforts of the Secretary-General, the recommendations include the need to engage opposing parties and regional actors earlier; and to forge international consensus and engage religious leaders.
2. **Strengthening Good Governance, Human Rights and the Rule of Law:** In order to strengthen trust between Government institutions and communities to prevent marginalization and exclusion, the recommendations include providing access to justice and strengthening fair, effective, accountable and inclusive institutions; reforming national legal frameworks and penitentiary systems and fostering basic service provision in a non-discriminatory manner.
3. **Engaging Communities:** For genuine community engagement, the recommendations include developing participatory strategies with civil society and local communities; adopting community-oriented policing models; and developing local and family-based mentorship programmes.
4. **Empowering Youth:** Harnessing the idealism, creativity and energy of young people and others who feel disenfranchised, the recommendations include supporting and enhancing young people's participation in PVE activities, and integrating them into decision-making processes at local and national levels.
5. **Gender Equality and Empowering Women:** Fostering women as a critical force for sustainable peace, the recommendations include investing in research on women's roles in violent extremism, and ensuring that a portion of funds dedicated to addressing violent extremism are committed to support greater gender equality.
6. **Education, Skill Development and Employment Facilitation:** To foster respect for human diversity and prepare young people to enter the workplace, the recommendations include investing in programmes that promote "global citizenship"; and provide comprehensive primary through tertiary education, including technical and vocational education.
7. **Strategic Communications, the Internet and Social Media:** To communicate a vision that offers tangible change to the disillusioned and disenfranchised, recommendations include developing and implementing national communication strategies, and empowering victims to turn their suffering into a constructive force.

Supporting Member States, Regional Bodies and Communities through the United Nations

- While recognizing that the primary responsibility to prevent violent extremism rests with Member States, the Plan of Action notes that **the Secretary-General will instruct UN entities to prioritize, sensitize, and adapt existing programmes to target the drivers of violent extremism more precisely; and to introduce new initiatives to close potential gaps.**

- **Among other recommendations, the Plan notes that the UN will adopt an “All-of-UN” approach to supporting national, regional and global efforts to prevent violent extremism;** integrate PVE in relevant activities at the field level through UN Peace Operations and Country Teams; offer relevant capacity-building programmes to assist Member States; support Governments to develop education programs that promote civic education, tolerance and respect for diversity; launch a Global UN PVE Communications Strategy; strengthen early and effective action through the Human Rights up Front initiative; launch a global awareness campaign to support victims of violent extremism; encourage youth exchange programmes within and among Member States; and develop a proposal for a Secretary-General’s Fund to support innovative PVE projects.

An appeal for concerted action

The Secretary-General calls on the General Assembly to unite, harmonize its actions and pursue inclusive approaches in the face of division, intolerance and hatred spread by terrorist and violent extremist groups. We must use this universal appeal to send forth a resounding call for peace, justice and human dignity. Unity in principled action will overcome the rhetoric and appeal to violent extremism, and ultimately violent extremist groups themselves.

Next Steps

- The Secretary-General presents the PVE Plan of Action to the General Assembly on 15 January
- The President of the General Assembly will organize a formal General Assembly Debate on the Plan (TBD).
- In April, the Swiss Government will co-host an International Conference on the Implementation of the Plan of Action.

For More Information

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