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PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM
THROUGH PROMOTING INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, TOLERANCE AND RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

Global meeting
14-16 MARCH, 2016, OSLO, NORWAY

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The Global Meeting on 'Preventing Violent Extremism through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity', organised by UNDP's Oslo Governance Centre and the Governance and Peacebuilding Cluster in the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support was held in Oslo on 14-16 March 2016. The meeting brought together 135 people from forty-seven countries who work in government; development agencies; civil society, including youth organisations and women's networks; academia; media; and the law enforcement and security communities to discuss experiences, lessons learned and approaches related to the prevention of violent extremism.

The meeting was held under the Chatham House Rule, and this report accordingly does not refer by name to individuals or institutions (either in the main text or quotation boxes), except for interventions that are otherwise publicly available. The organisers have not sought formal endorsement of the report by participants and present instead an 'Organisers' Summary'. Except for the section specifically covering UNDP's approach to preventing violent extremism, the report does not necessarily reflect the views of UNDP, the UN or its member states, but only the discussions at the Global Meeting.

UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in nearly 170 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations.

> '**Violent extremism increases fragility, it weakens communities, and it fuels migration.**'
>
> Norwegian State Secretary Tore Hattrem

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PROSPECTS FOR PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE - INTRODUCING THE GLOBAL MEETING

In March 2016, more than 130 practitioners, academics, government representatives, and activists met in Oslo to discuss the prevention of violent extremism. Violent extremism has grown to become a global challenge - threatening and instilling fear and suspicion in people of all creeds and backgrounds in virtually every corner of the world. The Global Meeting, hosted by the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS) and the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre, focused on exploring the paths that lead individuals and groups to commit acts of violent extremism. It explored the diverse and complex causes and conditions that initiate and sustain this action - from global narratives of injustice and prospects of a better and fairer life - and afterlife - to local, often legitimate, grievances relating to discrimination, repression, marginalisation, lack of opportunity, and hopelessness.

At the meeting we reminded ourselves that nobody is born a terrorist and that the task at hand therefore must be to identify and address the underlying drivers of violent extremism. We did so while also acknowledging the importance of geopolitics, national politics and local politics in driving violent extremism. We reconfirmed our commitment to 'the business of hope' and pledged to pursue the long-term societal transitions - socioeconomic opportunity, good governance, inclusion, justice, and dialogue - that help prevent violent extremism from gaining a foothold in the first place.

'We should all agree that when security authorities need to respond, we have in fact already failed in our longing for peaceful existence. When we're forced to respond through security measures, it is because we have failed to deal with the factors that lead first from alienation to radicalization, and then from radicalization to acts of mass violence.'

Magdy Martínez-Solimán, UN Assistant Secretary General, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support

We took as a starting point our context today- a world where people and ideas travel with unprecedented ease and speed - and the urgent need to design better models for governing diverse societies. We confirmed that tolerance is not enough - we need to appreciate and embrace diversity. Freedom from fear and freedom from want set the bar too low when competing against violent groups promising purity, prestige and power.

The United Nations and its Member States responded to developments in the world around us through the creation, in 2005, of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) and in 2011 of the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT), both in the Department of Political Affairs. In December 2015, the UN Secretary-General presented his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, and in January 2016 UNDP finalised its corporate strategy on *Preventing Violent Extremism through Inclusive Development and the Promotion of Tolerance and Respect for Diversity - A development response to addressing radicalization and violent extremism.* Having validated the strategic approach and focus at the Global Meeting in Oslo, UNDP will now proceed with developing and implementing a global program on Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) as described in the concluding chapter of this report.

The adoption last year by the broader UN Membership of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and namely Goal 16 to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies, marked another critical recognition of the drivers of violent conflict and extremism. The universal targets under SDG 16, aimed at reducing violence; ensuring access to justice; reducing organised crime and corruption; developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels; ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making; and protecting fundamental freedoms, provide a useful platform for, and commitment to, the global efforts to address the drivers and push factors of violent extremism.

In this context and with this new commitment in place, I strongly believe we need to show that what we have to offer is stronger, more trustworthy and more compelling than what violent extremists offer. We need to stress the potential for growth, opportunity and security in societies that are at peace with themselves and offer spaces for dialogue as well as platforms for the non-violent resolution of conflicts and grievances. We need to stress the individual and collective power of understanding, respecting, embracing and empathising with our fellow human beings.

Achieving this requires a collaborative effort between development actors, security sector actors, and decision-makers, as well as the communities and individuals affected by violent extremism. The Global Meeting and this report play a part in that process of identifying how development actors can contribute to offering alternatives to violent extremism and help address its root causes.

Magdy Martínez-Solimán
UN Assistant Secretary General, UNDP Assistant Administrator and
Director of the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support

Principal messages from the Global Meeting

The Global Meeting on 'Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) by Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity' held in Oslo in March 2016 was an opportunity for global development actors to engage in in-depth discussions of their role in preventing violent extremism. This report presents key points from the many conceptual and thematic discussions. Its principal messages are presented in summary here:

⇨ Current trends and characteristics of violent extremism and efforts to prevent it

- Efforts to prevent violent extremism must acknowledge the primacy of politics. Political decisions and developments at global, national and local levels are key drivers of violent extremism.

- Efforts to prevent violent extremism can be profoundly counterproductive if they curtail basic political, human and civil rights.

- There is a need to avoid focusing exclusively on religious extremism, but to consider the full range of extremist discourse and behaviour.

- Violent extremism is not new, but the challenges we face today are more complex owing to globalization of the problem and spillover effects across borders.

- Local grievances can be rapidly and easily manipulated into violent extremism through modern communication technology and the ease of travel.

- The nexus of fragility, conflict, migration and violent extremism is complex and worrying. The number of states showing severe strains – and thus possibly providing fertile ground for violent extremism - is increasing.

⇨ The role, comparative advantages and constraints of development actors in preventing violent extremism

- Prevention is not an alternative to security actors' responses; it complements those efforts and reduces the need for them.

- Development partners must focus on understanding and addressing the root causes of violent extremism as part of a prevention agenda.

- Much is already known about the drivers of violent extremism from a range of fields. While more context-specificity is needed, evaluation of violent extremism can benefit from comparative analysis, especially drawing on decades of criminology research and radicalisation studies.

- Extensive knowledge and experience of what works and what does not work already exists in the field of preventive programming - what is certainly needed is better local contextualization.

- Low levels of funding for prevention (including gender considerations) indicate the securitised nature of current approaches to addressing violent extremism.

- Development actors must navigate a highly securitised space around PVE. They also have to work with partners uncomfortable in the (often politicised) domain of PVE. Pragmatic language and honest partnerships are therefore needed.

⮑ **Development actors must develop and sustain partnerships with key stakeholders**
- Young people are not the problem; they are part of the solution. Violent extremist groups often target the young because society has failed to make them feel safe, acknowledged, empowered and included.

- "Radicalisation" is not necessarily a problem. It can be a force for good when the urge for social change has positive, peaceful and constructive outlets.

- It is essential to recognize and support the vast majority of young women and men who reject violent extremism and work for peace.

- Women play a critical, yet often disregarded role in understanding, preventing and responding to violent extremism.

- Participation and leadership of women and women's organisations in strategy development and programming to address violent extremism is critical, but funding remains inadequate.

- Moderate religious leaders and interfaith networks should be supported and strengthened to confront narratives exploiting their own traditions to promote violence, hatred and division, and should address inflammatory rhetoric within their institutions.

- Women of faith have compelling and alternative religious, historical and cultural narratives and visions to offer.

- The governance community, including donors, needs to strengthen independent, free and protected media as a component of good governance strategies and in support of non-violent, free and inclusive dialogue.

⮑ **Critical next steps for development actors to enhance PVE programming**
- There is an urgent need to break with professional exclusivity and apply an inter-disciplinary approach to PVE throughout the programming cycle.

- A 'PVE lens" should be applied in order to develop explicit policy guidance establishing a normative framework for PVE programming anchored in human rights compliance.

- In the design and implementation of PVE programmes communities should be engaged to reflect the context-specificity of violent extremism dynamics and the need to draw on and reinforce local, endogenous PVE mechanisms.

- Regional approaches and strategies are important in reflecting the transnational nature of violent extremism.

- Development actors and donors must support countries that successfully prevent violent extremism and avoid creating a perverse incentive by targeting only those countries where violent extremism arises.

- The global discussion on PVE now needs to be contextualised at the regional, national and community levels, and significant investments must be made in analysis, evidence-generation and documentation.

Past and present – tracing the history of preventing violent extremism

A globalised threat thriving in fragile and conflict-affected states

Although violent extremism is a global challenge and concern, and more than forty countries have experienced at least one terrorist attack, it is a fact that violent extremism thrives particularly where state authority is weak. In the 'epicentres' of violent extremism, thirty-four groups are now affiliated with Daesh, accounting for thirty-eight thousand fighters from 120 countries (including 32,000 fighters in Iraq and Syria). While Daesh is still the world's deadliest terror group in terms of both civilian and military casualties, in 2014 Boko Haram actually murdered more civilians (6,500), in Nigeria, Chad, and Cameroon. Violent extremist groups especially prey on – and challenge the legitimacy of - failing or collapsed states by offering competing 'services' spanning security, justice, social welfare and employment, and intangible but crucial elements of recognition, identity, and community. Out of twenty-three countries in conflict, 17 are also experiencing violent extremism; and eighty-eight per cent of all terrorist attacks have occurred in countries involved in violent conflict. There thus seems to be a strong link between conflict and fragility on the one hand and the growth of violent extremism. With 59 countries at risk of instability in 2016, the breeding ground for violent extremism is accordingly expanding. Geopolitical action, or inaction, pushing countries into fragility or collapse is therefore of particular concern.

> It has become much easier to translate local grievances into violent extremism organized by transnational if not global groups.

Local and global financing and recruitment strategies

Global developments have shaped violent extremism. Following a decline in state sponsorship of armed groups, violent extremist groups increasingly rely on private sponsorship, including from 'diaspora communities'.

The use of social media and a globalized media landscape have made it easier to construct and subscribe to narratives of global injustice and thus to create or join a 'cause' regardless of location.

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