# Towards a Comprehensive Implementation of UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia

*Addressing Conditions Conducive to the Spread of Violent Extremism and Terrorism*

## 21-22 May 2018

## Astana, Kazakhstan

## Organized by UNOCT-UNCCT and UNRCCA

## Summary of Discussions

**The Context**

What are some of the main conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism and terrorism in Central Asia, and what are some effective measures to prevent these conditions from spreading? Based on the recommendations stemming from the 2016 UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE), what could be some good practices and challenges for designing, implementing and monitoring such plans in the region?

To provide an opportunity to respond and exchange information on these questions, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism-the UN Center for Counter Terrorism (UNOCT-UNCCT) together with the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) organized a two-day workshop on "Addressing Drivers of Violent Extremism and Conditions Conducive to the Spread of Terrorism" on 21-22 May 2018 in Astana, Kazakhstan. The workshop was part of Phase III of a project implemented since 2010 in support of the Joint Plan of Action (JPoA) to implement the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia which was adopted in November 2011 in Ashgabat. The JPoA was reviewed at a High-Level Meeting chaired by the UN Secretary General António Guterres in June 2017 and a new phase of the Project was designed based on the needs and demands expressed by Central Asian governments.

The approximately 70 participants of the Astana workshop included 4-5 delegations from each of the Central Asian countries, namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, as well as Afghanistan. They represented the Prosecutor's Offices, Committees on Religious Affairs, National Security Committees, Ministries of Interior and Ministries of Labor and Social Affairs and Migration Services, in addition to two representatives of civil society per country. The Russian Federation sent two representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as observers. Other participants included representatives of regional organizations (OSCE, ODIHR CIS, CSTO, SCO/RCTS), international organizations (UNRC/UNDP Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, UN DPI, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNODC, UNOHCHR, UN Women as well as ICRC, IOM) in addition to experts from the International Center for Counter Terrorism (ICCT)– the Hague and the Max Planck Institute - Leipzig.

The workshop consisted of three major parts: An Introductory Part 1 gave an opportunity for representatives of governments to briefly present their progress and challenges in implementing pillar 1 of the JPoA in Central Asia and for international and regional organizations to present their areas of support. Part 2 was devoted to moderated discussions around thematic areas of relevance to the region namely: 1) prevention and resolution of conflicts including in Afghanistan; 2) tackling socio-economic drivers of extremism, 3) building community resilience and empowering women and the youth as agents of change; 4) promoting human rights/good governance to alleviate marginalization and exclusion and 5) countering the use of social media and the Internet for terrorist purposes and developing effective counter-narratives. Part 3, on the second day, consisted of exchanges of good practices on the preparation, implementation and monitoring of national strategies and National Action Plans (NAPs) on PVE/CT using experiences from Central Asia and beyond.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Progress and Challenges in Implementing Pillar 1 of the JPoA

Central Asia was the first region to adopt a Joint Plan of Action for the implementation of the UN Global CT Strategy in 2011. All countries are working to improve their policies for employment, education, conflict prevention and countering the challenges of terrorism and extremism, including through amendments to criminal codes and harmonization of national legislation with relevant international standards .Security-based practical support to combatting terrorism is provided by organizations such as CIS, CSTO, SCO, UNODC and OSCE, including through anti-terror exercises, exchanges of information and data, support to border security and management, capacity building for law enforcement bodies and support to legislation and the criminal justice system.

While traditional security-based approaches remain priority, governments are increasingly recognizing the need to put focus on prevention. Increasing numbers of international and regional organizations are also now devising PVE projects in Central Asia, mostly devoted to youth, community projects, job creation, education, women's empowerment, capacity building for civil society etc. This requires improving tools of coordination to avoid duplication.  A number of research and guidance materials have been developed which serve as tools for trainings and capacity building activities in the region.

## Conflict prevention including the stabilization of Afghanistan

Discussions concentrated on the need to regulate and prevent conflicts, given that vacuum of power and state failure become conditions conducive to the spread of extremism and terrorism. Central Asian countries are in favor of supporting the stabilization of Afghanistan through supporting economic projects which can act as incentives for growth and conflict diffusion. In addition, there is still a need for political solutions, including regional ones, given the linkages between transnational networks of terrorists and extremists in the region. Increasing numbers of Central Asians are now fighting in Afghanistan.

Another common concern is the potential return of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) to Central Asia, and the challenge this poses for border control, prosecution, and rehabilitation, especially of women and children who have grown up in conflict zones.  More work is also needed on religious education and work with religious leaders in order to promote a correct understanding of Islam. Participants expressed hope for better cooperation among Central Asian countries using the new platforms for regional dialogue created recently.

## Addressing socio-economic drivers and promoting social inclusion

Discussion concentrated on the socio-economic motivations and drivers of extremism and taking stock of development responses to PVE.  While more research is needed, existing studies on profiles of those radicalized from the region show them as being from peripheral areas that have suffered from marginalization (such as migrants abroad), with lower levels of secular education and low levels of religious literacy. Employment is often the most cited reason for joining. Not poverty as much as lack of dignity, marginalization and social exclusion have pushed people to join violent groups.

Response strategies could be either PVE-specific or PVE-relevant interventions.  PVE-specific interventions are intended to directly impact the prevention of radicalization but are difficult to measure and evaluate. Broader PVE-relevant interventions fall in the area of sustainable development. Their relevance to long-term PVE objectives is also difficult to measure and there is not much evidence from past evaluations. Communities should not be stigmatized if they become subject to PVE programs. In other words, participants recognized the challenge of tackling the PVE agenda through socio-economic

and governance interventions. At the same time however, they recognized that a security-based response is not enough or even adequate. They discussed ways that interventions could have more impacts on the prevention agenda: Improving specificity and targeting in programs and identification of vulnerable groups, without however stigmatization; Individualizing programs, even though developing and implementing them would be difficult; Ensuring that programs target the needs and motivations of men and women separately; Combining socio-economic interventions with psycho-social factors ones in order to tackle the psychology of extremism; Developing critical life skills, including critical thinking, for young people to resist propaganda; Designing programs that are long term and regional, etc.

**Building resilience in communities, engaging youth groups and women as agents of change**

Discussions focused mainly on how women should become agents of change in their communities to prevent, detect and address radicalization. Participants discussed the need to distinguish between women as passive and active followers of extremist activities and terrorist groups. Passive participants in violence include women who don't always have choices, and who follow their male family members, rather than leaving their families. Active members are those who engage in violent groups out of their own will, sometimes to fight for some ideal, and other times to find a better life, including for generating income. Even though gathering evidence for prosecution is difficult in general, the question of women extremists or returnees raises additional challenges. They need to be subjected to different types of rehabilitation and reintegration programs which take into consideration their gender roles within the family and community in order to avoid new cycles of violence.

Efforts should be put on working with women as agents of change because they have the potential to work with their communities and impact decisions of their family members, without stigmatizing and alienating them. A number of examples were provided to this effect from Central Asian experiences. Recommendations included the need to ensure that PVE NAPs also pay attention to women's needs and roles and to ensure better representation of women in security sectors and LEBs; Developing specific alternative narratives and messages for women given their realities and motivations to join; Understanding the crisis of masculinity in transition societies and its impact on radicalization; And understanding the special needs of children subjected to violence who are now returning from conflict zones.

**Strengthening good governance, human rights and the rule of law**

The session looked at why and how promoting good governance, human rights and rule of flaw could help prevent grievances, which in turn could lead to engagement with violent extremist groups. Participants argued that anti-terrorism measures that fail to respect human rights are counter-productive given that they play into the hands of terrorist recruiters and can become a condition conducive to terrorism. Not only does torture violate the trust between communities and law enforcement bodies, turning people away from supporting states' CT efforts, it could also be ineffective in the long-term as evidence received through torture could be misleading and unreliable. CT measures that reinforce stereotypes through profiling are also counter-productive because they undermine trust between authorities and the public and may contribute to the radicalization of individuals and groups who are wrongfully targeted. Excessive information gathering and surveillance also leads to information overload and diverts scarce resources away from core tasks of CT investigations and CT policing while breaching trust between states and citizens. They are also a waste of financial resources as there is no evidence of their effectiveness.

Participants also noted that violations of human rights in prisons have been known to contribute to radicalization in Central Asia. Prisons, they argued, should not perform only punitive functions but should also play an important role in prevention and rehabilitation. There is a need for psychological

support, training and education, as well as rehabilitation programs in prisons.

**Countering the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes**

The second day started with a two-hour session on the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes and ways to develop counter/alternative narratives. When it comes to responses, the expert noted three main approaches: 1) taking down extremist content; 2) using the Internet to disrupt terrorist activities and monitor their communication; and 3) using the web to spread counter-narratives.

In the discussions that ensued, participants discussed the challenge of collaborating with private companies in order to regulate, block or remove content from the Internet. As removing content after it is reported can take a long time, a Central Asian media NGO  with much experience in the region mentioned that it would be better to develop the skills and capacities for local moderators to self-regulate the Internet locally from illegal content.  He also urged Central Asian authorities not to hesitate to develop and post content in order to counter the negative propaganda that was widespread. Other participants warned that regulating or controlling the Internet should not lead to violation of rights to information etc.

Overall, there is much interest in how to develop counter- and alternative narratives and messages but little experience in Central Asia.  Some countries have been working together with civil society organizations on organizing both on and offline information campaigns, including discussions with former extremisms, dissemination of religious debates, media spots warning young people about the threat of recruitment by terrorists and violent extremist groups etc.. Participants noted the importance of language and local dialects, and the use of young people and religious Ulema to enhance the credibility of the messages rather than if they simply came from state authorities or international organizations. Participants called for more technical workshops to be devoted to this subject

**Exchanges of information and good practices on PVE/CT National Action Plans**

The rest of the second day was devoted to experience sharing on developing national PVE/CT strategies and Action Plans based on experiences in the region and globally.  Central Asian countries shared their experiences with the PVE NAPs, specifically on 1) the preparation process and how inclusive it was, 2) the content of their plans and 3) implementation mechanisms, including budgeting, monitoring and communication strategy.   Kazakhstan is implementing a Program on Countering Religious Extremism and Terrorism for 2018-2022, coordinated by the National Security Committee, which is being financed both from central government budget and funds at the local level. The Program of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on Countering Extremism and Terrorism for 2017-2022 and its Action Plan is being coordinated by the   State Committee of Religious Affairs. It seeks financing by donors. The Tajikistan National Strategy on Countering Extremism and Terrorism for 2016-2020 is being coordinated by the General Prosecutor's Office, and is expected to be financed from the central and local budgets as well as from donor sources. Turkmenistan has no Plan of Action yet but is in discussions with international organizations to launch a preparation process. Uzbekistan in the process of development of a multi-year comprehensive NAP. For the moment, the coordination of CT and PVE activities is the responsibility of the National Security Committee.

From these experiences, the following analysis can be drawn:
- The majority of CA countries use definitions of terrorism and extremism as they are described in their national legislation as well as in the basic documents adopted by the SCO.
- LEBs and national security apparatus are increasingly moving towards the prevention agenda. This opens up many possibilities for improved coordination and communication for a Whole of Government approach.
- As some most CA NAPs include broad development type interventions such as poverty

eradication and gender equality, it is difficult to gauge how they will directly impact PVE.
- The Whole of Society approach is understood mostly as government cooperation with religious organizations, women's committees and youth groups, less with academia or private sector.
- Funding remains a main problem in the region. Most CA states rely on international organizations or local governments to be able to cover most of the funding for such initiatives.
- Few countries have communication strategies.
- More capacity building support is needed to understand M&E indicators for NAP and how the impacts of PVE programs be measured.

## Part I: Progress and Challenges in Implementing Pillar 1 of the JPoA

*The Threat*

In the speeches made by Central Asian government officials in the opening sessions, there were different opinions as to what constitutes the main security threat: Some government representatives were especially concerned about **threats from outside**, i.e. jihadist international terrorism, international criminal activities in the region, conflicts in the neighborhood, the establishment of an ISIS/Daesh front in Afghanistan, and the eventual return of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) from the liberated lands of Syria and Iraq to their countries of origin in Central Asia. They put more emphasis on border control and security-based law and order solutions.

The CSTO representative noted that the common goal of countering international terrorism can be helped by unifying approaches and forming a genuinely global antiterrorist coalition that would work together on the basis of mutual trust and common goal without double standards. He noted that one of the steps in this direction could be through considering to adopt the draft Code of Conduct on the Achievement of a World Free from Terrorism promoted by the Republic of Kazakhstan, which in January 2018, was presented at UN headquarters and supported by many countries

The need to support peace and stability in **Afghanistan** as a way to prevent the growth of radicalization in the region featured in a number of speeches. Afghanistan, it was stressed repeatedly, should become an opportunity and not a threat, and that required further investments into the economy, including regional economic projects.

The problem of **recruitment among migrant workers** also worried a number of delegation representatives from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. They were interested in exploring ways to engage migrant populations before, during and after their labor migration as they deemed these populations to be the most vulnerable. A number of speakers called for a regional approach to the question of migration in addition to bilateral treaties.

Other speakers pointed out to **radicalization from within** and stressed on more development or governance type solutions. They stressed on the dangers of **recruitment among the idle youth** that may be uneducated, unemployed and marginalized. Youth strategies need to be developed, they argued, correlating education with employment and providing opportunities for participation. They further stressed on the need to counter widespread **ignorance on religion** which was being used by recruiters.

There were also concerns among law enforcement bodies on how to control or regulate the **Internet** to prevent it from being used by recruiters. They showed specific concerns about the problem of cyber crime and preventing terrorists' use of new information and communication technologies. While most efforts have been put on blocking webpages, some countries have taken a more proactive role in trying to propagate against hateful narratives.

Despite the variety of studies that have been produced in the past few years, it became clear that there is still a need for a comprehensive and **credible analysis** of factors and trends that contribute to the development of extremism and the ideology of terrorism in Central Asia.

*The Response and the Support*

Central Asia was the first region to adopt a comprehensive **Plan of Action** for the implementation of the UN Global Counter-terrorism Strategy in 2011. At the Astana meeting, the need for continued regional cooperation was reiterated by all representatives. A number of delegations also noted the need to expand the regional strategy to Afghanistan with which they shared common threats from transnational networks of terrorism, drug trafficking and crime.

All countries are working to improve their policies for employment, education, conflict prevention and countering the challenges of terrorism and extremism, including through amendments to criminal codes and harmonization of national legislation with relevant international standards The criminal code of Kazakhstan includes 25 articles on combatting terrorism. In Uzbekistan, acts of terrorism are outlawed under Article 155, while the Law on Countering Terrorism recognizes financing of terrorism as a terrorist activity. As discussed in Part 3 below, most Central Asian countries have also developed **National Action Plans** (NAPs) and strategies on PVE or countering of terrorism, each with their own understandings of the phenomenon and related to their own national priorities.

Representatives of law enforcement and national security committees expressed their gratitude for the support they received from regional organizations such as the CIS, the CSTO, the SCO, the UNODC and the OSCE, practical support in the fight against terrorism based on security. Such support includes anti-terrorist exercises, the exchange of information and data on terrorist groups, assistance in conducting search operations, support in the protection of borders, and so on. The CSTO, for example, supports the creation of a single list of banned terrorist organizations in the format of CSTO member states. The SCO adopted the Convention on Combating Extremism, which gave a definition that most Central Asian countries have ratified and uses. Up to this point, more than 4,000 people have been included in the consolidated list of the SCO for tracing terrorists. Central Asian governments have gained more support for **capacity building, training and exchange of experience** between law enforcement agencies (LEA).

In the area of **legislation** and strengthening of the criminal justice system, Central Asian states are receiving support from the CIS Anti-Terrorism Center (ATC), the UNODC Terrorism Prevention Branch (TPB) and the OSCE for improving their legal framework, preparing model laws, harmonizing laws with international conventions, implementing international legal instruments against terrorism etc..

While traditional approaches to combatting terrorism and violent extremism remain as the main response mechanisms in the region, governments are increasingly recognizing the need to put focus on **prevention** in what they called 'a complex approach'. This attention has opened up new possibilities for adopting a **Whole of Society** approach (cooperation and coordination with the civil society) in addition to a **Whole of Government** one (coordination among different sectoral ministries/agencies).

Amplified attention paid to the prevention agenda has translated into a substantial increase in the number of UN agencies and regional organizations working on **PVE projects** in Central Asia, mostly devoted to youth, community projects, job creation, education, women's empowerment, capacity building for civil society, etc. A number of organizations, such as OSCE, UNDP, UNRCCA, EU, UN Women, UNODC, are also involved in supporting the preparation of **National Action Plans** which will be discussed in Part 3. While some fields are saturated with donor support, other areas have more limited attention, including **prisons** (mostly the domain of UNODC and OSCE), **reintegration of former extremists,** as well the important area of **dialogue with and among religious leaders**.

As the number of agencies involved in the PVE agenda in the region has increased, so has the need for **improved coordination** in order to avoid duplication. To this end, the work of the UNRCCA/UNOCT to prepare a **Mapping** of activities of UN and regional organizations on PVE as well as the **Matrix** of the activities of regional and international organizations in support of the JPoA are important tools to identify gaps and areas of potential collaboration and duplication.

A number of **resources, research and guidance materials** have been developed by these organizations, made available both in Russian and English. They include, among many others, the UNESCO's Teacher's Guide on managing classroom discussions in relation to PVE and radicalization for teachers and A Guide for policy-makers that helps prioritize, plan and implement effective and appropriate education-related actions contributing to national PVE efforts as well as a Youth-Led Guide on prevention of violent extremism through education. They also include the UNODC publications on the role of the justice system to tackle the recruitment of children, the UNODC handbook on prevention of radicalization to violence in prisons, the OSCE/ODIHR manuals on protecting human rights while countering terrorism and the series of studies on violent extremism launched by the UN Women's Europe and Central Asia (ECA) Regional Office, including in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Based on these tools and guidebooks international and regional organizations have been organizing a number of t**rainings and capacity building activities** in the region.

These resources bring up the need for a regional **depository** of the information and resources accumulated in the region. In addition to the mapping exercise carried out by UNOCT/UNRCCA, a new **regional network** has been established by the UNODC's TPB and Regional Office for Central Asia (ROCA) backed by a website (www.capve.org) serving as a resource tool for experts, policymakers and professionals working on PVE in the region.

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**Part II) Thematic Areas: Threats and Responses to Conditions Conducive to the Spread of Violent Extremism and Terrorism**

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**A) Conflict prevention including the stabilization of Afghanistan as a measure to prevent the spread of terrorism and violent extremism**

The session, moderated by Valentin Bogatyrev of the Analytical Consortium "Perspektiva", concentrated on the need to regulate conflicts – and prevent future ones – given that chaos, vacuum of power and state failure become conditions conducive to the spread of extremism and terrorism. Participants gave as example the aftermath of the civil war in Afghanistan in the 1990s that gave rise to new insurgent groups such as the Taliban, and the aftermath of the war in Syria which gave rise to ISIS/Daesh.

Central Asian countries are in favor of supporting the stabilization of Afghanistan through economic projects which can act as incentives for growth in the war-torn country as well as in the region. They also call for increased security cooperation, given their fears about the presence of terrorist groups such as an ISIS/Daesh front and their potential expansion into the region, even though this threat may be seen as exaggerated by some analysts. The Afghan representative recalled about the presence of international, including Central Asian fighters in Afghanistan, concluding that the deeply interconnected transnational networks operating in the region required a regional approach. Some participants noted that violent extremism should not be used as an excuse for interfering into other countries' internal affairs. Others noted that without a political solution within Afghanistan itself, there would not be any stability even with the help of Central Asian states. Everyone agreed that military measures were not enough.

Another common concern in the region is the potential return of FTFs to Central Asia, a big challenge both for officials and communities to which they are returning. Government participants wanted to find out more about ways to rehabilitate foreign fighters/returnees, especially women and children, after their eventual return. Should border controls be strengthened to prevent their return, or should they be returned to face prosecution or be used as examples to deter others from radicalization? Closing borders to returning FTFs and their families will increase radicalization among children, argued a participant. Once back, the challenge is to identify their crime for prosecution and their eventual rehabilitations in the communities, including employment etc. As one participant noted, stigma surrounding the FTFs who had left also affects their families within their communities. They also need help.

While international terrorist groups in Afghanistan and trained FTFs present major threats to the region, participants also mentioned the need to intensify domestic policies for prevention of radicalization in the first place. Tackling radicalization cannot be solved through military solutions: it requires measures to increase the literacy of the population, create jobs and socially protect populations to take them out of social exclusion and isolation.

As the majority of extremists in the region are acting under quasi-Islamic slogans, participants noted the need to intensify religious education. More work is needed to intensify religious education and work with religious leaders in order to promote a peaceful and correct understanding of Islam. Governments have taken a number of initiatives recently: Tajikistan has introduced courses on the history of religions, Islam and the culture of tolerance into the curriculum. Uzbekistan has established a Center for Islamic Civilization, the Imam Al-Bukhari Research Center in Tashkent, and is expanding Islamic studies in universities and schools, while preparing to revive Bukhara as a major capital of Islamic culture and education ground for the Ulema of the region. In Afghanistan, efforts are underway to develop counter-narratives for students of Madrassas. Among international and regional organizations however, there is limited engagement with faith communities or projects on inter- or intra-religious dialogue.

Participants expressed hope for better cooperation among Central Asian countries, including on prevention of extremism and terrorism, with the changes in the foreign policy of Uzbekistan. They pointed to the increasing scale of platforms for regional dialogue created recently through the Samarkand Conference (November 2017), or the Dushanbe conference (May 2018) as well as the meeting of CA leaders in Astana (March 2018) and how these high level meetings contribute to the prevention of terrorism and violent extremism. Regional dialogue and joint solutions are needed on a host of issues related to the prevention of violent extremism and countering terrorism in the region: Enhancing border security, devising a regional migration strategy, launching a regional dialogue among Islamic scholars on countering radicalization, etc. Beside the creation of a joint database on terrorists and terrorist organizations, Central Asian countries need to also strengthen their common vision about joint preventive actions. Instruments such as the JPoA and the Ashgabat Declaration as well as collaboration through the platforms of the UNRCCA, CIS, CSTO, SCO and OSCE provide such opportunities.

**B) Addressing socio-economic drivers and promoting social inclusion**

The discussion in this session, moderated by Ozonnia Ojielo, UNRC/UNDP Resident Representative in Kyrgyzstan, concentrated on looking at the socio-economic motivations and drivers of extremism and taking stock of development responses to PVE.

*Drivers*

As the moderator's introduction stated, recent research on radicalization among Central Asian labor migrants in Russia as well as other studies conducted by UNDP in other regions all point to the fact that recruits often come from borderlands or peripheral areas that have suffered from marginalization. They

tend to have lower levels of secular education and low levels of religious literacy. Employment is often the most cited reason for joining and core needs at the time of joining are employment, security, water/electricity and education. They tend to have limited confidence in institutions, little trust in politicians and security apparatus, and hold faith leaders in high esteem.

Illegal and uneducated migrants abroad face wider vulnerabilities that are more easily exploited. At the same time, participants argued that the stigmatization and securitization of labour migrants can in turn lead to social exclusion and foster grievances.

Participants gave other examples of socio-economic drivers among Central Asian extremists. A civil society member, who has many years of experience working on radicalization in communities, mentioned that she had never come across a single case where religion had been the motivation. Most either had financial problems, or had been rejected and lacked love and confidence, which they sought by joining extremist groups.

One conclusion that stood out in the discussions was that it is not just about just poverty, but the lack of dignity, marginalization and social exclusion that pushes people to join violent groups. From such findings, it becomes clear that unresolved grievances combine with social and economic exclusion to enable easy recruitment. Grievances (push factors) are exploited by extremists, who then lure others with promises of job opportunities and other pull factors.

There has to be a better understanding about the tipping point when grievances over horizontal inequalities become conditions for violent extremism and terrorism. Participants agreed that there was a need to carry out more research into these connections and launch more widespread conversations.

*Responses*

Broad conclusions were drawn from such findings in terms of building resilience to recruitment. They included: The need to enhance the role of community leaders, civil society groups, religious leaders, and families to build resilience against violent extremism; Increasing the level of education and employment and correlate them together; Recognizing the positive influence of religion and supporting traditional Islam; Enhancing the role of local governance authorities; Increasing the effectiveness of states to offer social protection and opportunities. The Turkmen representative for example talked about the development of sport and education programs on promoting national values among young people. In Uzbekistan, more attention has been paid recently on creating employment, especially among young people, through promoting small businesses and entrepreneurship, organizing job fairs etc..

Participants discussed the advantages of PVE-specific or PVE-relevant interventions. PVE-specific are those interventions specifically designed in response to violent extremism, with the intended results in this domain stated and measured. Such interventions are new in the region and it is too early to measure their impact on actually reducing violent extremism or the risk thereof. PVE-relevant interventions, on the other hand, are more broad and mainstream, may not necessarily envisage explicitly intended PVE results but have direct or indirect impact. Most interventions in the category of 'prevention' either by the states of the region or by organizations, such as UNDP, fall into this category. They include support to economic development and job creation, livelihoods enhancement, public service provisions, governance and peacebuilding, rule of law, etc. In other words, they fall within the sustainable development strategies of the states and the non-security social sectors.

While such socio-economic and governance interventions are designed to enhance the well-being of populations, their relevance to long-term PVE objectives have not been measured either and there is not much evidence from past evaluations. Not only in Central Asia but worldwide there is still much work that

needs to be done on finding evidence of the effectiveness of policies on tackling grievances that could become conditions conducive to violent extremism. There is also a risk associated with branding programs or components of programs as PVE relevant.

In other words, participants recognized the challenge of tackling the PVE agenda through socio-economic and governance interventions. At the same time however, they recognized that a security-based response is not enough or even adequate in preventing or combating violent extremism. There are nonetheless ways that interventions could improve in order to find better convergence between sectoral interventions and P/CVE outcomes. Discussions among participants pointed to the following recommended methods:

- *Targeting:* The majority of interventions are designed to reach a generalized at-risk population with counter messaging but more work is needed for defining and ensuring that projects will actually reach the right people. This requires improved specificity and targeting in programs and identifying vulnerable groups, without however stigmatization.

- *Individualizing:* It is difficult to attribute a single reason for engagement with violent groups as each path is individual. Pathways to extremism are different and for each individual they are unique. Each case has to be looked at separately. Participants discussed how this raises the need for more individualized programming, even though developing and implementing them would be difficult, time consuming and potentially more expensive. Individualized or targeted programs however run the risk of stigmatization of population groups (such as women, youth, migrant workers etc.) and this should be avoided.

- *Engendering:* Overall, there is limited gendered analysis of the socio-economic drivers of violent extremism, including in Central Asia. PVE interventions that have properly integrated gender-sensitive and conflict-sensitive analysis in the design can in the very least do no harm. As men and women have different motivations for joining extremist groups, it is also important to take such understandings into consideration for better outcomes.

- *Empathizing:* In addition to socio-economic interventions, participants also raised the need to pay attention to the work of psychologists. There is much work to be done on psycho-social factors, especially with children either in or out of school, helping them cope with fears, poverty, deprivations, violence etc.. This type of work also become much more pertinent in the context of children returning from conflict lands.

- *Skills building*: The theme that was repeated in most session turned out to be investment in the education sector. Participants argued for the need to correlate better the education system with the demands of the labor market. As UNESCO argued, there is also a need to build skills through formal and non-formal education in order to give young people, especially from vulnerable groups, the opportunity to find their paths through technical and vocational trainings. At the same time, there is an urgent need to develop cognitive, socio-emotional and entrepreneurship skills, including critical life skills and critical thinking at formal and non-formal education levels by using Education for Sustainable Development, Global Citizenship Education, Media and Information Literacy, ICT Education and other approaches, for young people to resist propaganda.

- *Patience:* In order to have an impact on PVE, participants agreed that long-term solutions are needed. While a number of initiatives have been launched for economic development in the region, they need to be maintained and become sustainable, in order to trickle down to create employment which then can turn people away from violence and bring stability and peace. Short-term solutions were not viable.

- *Eradicating corruption:* Participants also warned against the dangers of letting corruption in the public administration system go unchecked. Corruption can create distrust among the population, and lead to serious frustration and desperation that could in turn lead to aggression and violence.

- *Thinking regionally:* While PVE interventions need to be implemented at the national and especially local levels, regional approaches could be useful both directly and indirectly. Central Asian countries share more or less the same predicaments when it comes to conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism and terrorism. They could therefore benefit from better exchanges on lessons learned etc. Furthermore, issues such as investments into regional economies, intra-religious dialogue and training for religious leaders, coordinating policies concerning migration, etc. are all questions that could be looked at through good neighborly policies.

## C) Building resilience in communities, engaging youth groups and women as agents of change

The session on women, youth and communities, moderated by Elaine Conkievich, UN Women Representative Kazakhstan, also solicited much interest, although many participants mentioned they would have liked to see women and youth in different sessions as both deserved attention on their own. Discussions then focused mainly on how women should become agents of change in their communities to prevent, detect and address radicalization.

*Drivers*

The moderator started by pointing out the need to distinguish between women as passive and active participants of extremist activities and terrorist groups. Passive participants include women who have no choice and follow their male members of families. They represent the stereotype of women who have restricted knowledge and rights. To tackle this problem, more education and interventions for gender equality are needed in order to empower them to make their own choices. The other category of women are active members, those who engage in violent groups out of their own will, sometimes to fight for a cause or ideal, and other times to find a better life, to gain emancipation, or to generate some income. Among these are women – and youth- who have been disenfranchised, who have no coping mechanisms, and feel that they have no other outreach. This also explains why so many women in Central Asia have been migrating for work.

As one participant noted, men and women returning from Syria and Iraq to their homelands also fall into two categories: Victims, which includes those who have been trafficked or lured there with promises of employment, and risk categories, those who could instigate more violence and who should face prosecution. Even though gathering evidence for prosecution is difficult in all these cases, the question of women extremists or returnees raises additional challenges. Women need to be subjected to different types of rehabilitation and reintegration programs which take into consideration their gender roles within the family and community in order to avoid new cycles of violence. Yet, as one participant noted, prisons in the region are often not adapted to accommodate for radicalized women per se.

*Responses*

It is therefore important to understand individual motivations, as well as gender roles in order to design adequate interventions. Here again participants argued for more individualized approaches as well as more research in order to understand individual motivations. In addition, they urged for better understanding of women's role and applying a gender approach to the prevention of violent extremism.

When designing PVE interventions that target women, youth or communities as social categories, it may be appropriate to recall lessons learned from attempts to police or build resilience among communities. Distinction should be made between community-targeted and community-oriented approaches. Community-targeted efforts, the more traditional practice in CT and even PVE, involves the state, driven by national security priorities, targeting communities for law enforcement and intelligence-gathering efforts. Such efforts may alienate, stigmatize and marginalize communities or members of them. On the other hand, community-oriented approaches are better suited for gaining the trust of local communities, consulting with them, involving them, and ultimately responsibilizing them as stakeholders in PVE and CT efforts. Such an approach also turns communities, and the men, women and youth within them, into active stakeholders and agents of change.

Participants noted that while there should be work with women as victims of violence, including those subjected to forced recruitment, it is also important to ensure that they are not stigmatized, detached from their environment and mistrusted. As one participant who had done extensive field work for her research in Kyrgyzstan noted, families of the radicalized are often stigmatized both by the state and by their communities for whom it is a topic of shame. However, it is important to allow them to express themselves so that women can help their children.

Efforts should also be put on working with women as agents of change because they have the potential to affect their communities and impact decisions of their family members. The role of families in general and the role of women within families need to be enhanced when the agenda is on prevention. It was argued that mothers can best recognize the early signs of radicalization. Empowered women can also become leaders against tolerance to violent extremism.

By way of example, the goal of the OSCE capacity building initiative "Leaders against Intolerance and Violent Extremism (LIVE)" is to provide training for young people, women, and religious leaders who are both credible and influential in their societies, so they can pass on their skills and mobilize civil society. In Tajikistan, OSCE has also supported the government in launching a campaign on "Parents Against Terrorism", which creates awareness on extremism and provides practical advice on how to recognize and respond to early signs of radicalization.

Other concrete recommendations discussed in the session included:

- *Engendering strategies*: In the development of PVE National Action Plans, special attention should be paid to women's needs and roles. The National Strategy on Countering Terrorism and Extremism for 2016-2020 of Tajikistan for example devoted an entire section to gender equality which stipulated measures to strengthen the role of women, raise their political legal awareness, and promote the participation of women in PVE and CT activities.

- *Facilitating participation:* In Central Asia, as in many other countries, women tend to be under-represented in security sectors, law enforcement bodies and government agencies dealing with traditional approaches to countering terrorism and violent extremism. While there should be more efforts made to include them in decision making in 'hard' security sectors, more training is also needed for LEBs to understand how to cater to the specific needs of women.

- *Counter-narratives:* As women have different motivations – or realities – for joining extremist groups than men do, it is important to design specific counter or alternative narrative campaigns and messages for them. However at the moment, such a distinction is seldom made, including in countries were counter-messaging is advanced.

- *Training mentors:* Mothers often do not have knowledge on how to prevent youngsters from succumbing to terrorism and violent extremism. A good practice in this respect is the use of specially chosen and trained mentors, as is being done with success in Denmark and in Amsterdam, an idea that is being explored by OSCE.

- *Recognizing the crisis of masculinity*:  While much of the focus of gender and PVE discussions has been on women, one neglected factor is the crisis of masculinity that many young men are enduring, and which has been known to contribute to radicalization and extremism.  Much more research needs to be done on this question in Central Asia and policies and programmes must be designed to address the issue of violence from this angle.

- *De-radicalization of children:* Children coming back from conflict zones have particular emotional needs that need to be addressed less they fall into new cycles of violence. Supporters of the Islamic State paid special attention to the upbringing of the younger generation. Kids, including children of Central Asian extremists, were trained in military camps, were present at executions and were used in propaganda. In order to reverse the trauma they endured and to reverse the effects of brainwashing, it is important to create critical thinking programs to engrain alternative ways of living in peace in such children.

## D) Strengthening good governance, human rights and the rule of law

The session, moderated by Omer Fisher from OSCE/ODIHR, looked at why and how promoting good governance, human rights and rule of flaw could help prevent grievances, which in turn could lead to engagement with violent extremist groups. In other words, violating human rights while conducting counter terrorism could lead to more insecurities. As the moderator mentioned in the opening remarks, states have an obligation to protect everyone within their jurisdiction against terrorist acts, and they have an obligation to do so in compliance with international human rights law.  Anti-terrorism measures that fail to respect human rights are counter-productive, not least because a lack of respect for human rights constitutes in many ways a condition conducive to terrorism. CT measures that fail to respect HR play into the hands of terrorists and terrorist recruiters who seek to undermine security, social cohesion and human rights. At the same time, human rights-based CT measures can actually increase operational effectiveness. This understanding is at the core of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security and it is enshrined in pillar 4 of the UN Global CT Strategy, and consequently, in the JPoA of Central Asia.

During discussions, a representative of a CA government asked whether the UN had a universally accepted definition of terrorism extremism and radicalization. In guise of answer, representatives of OSCE and UNRCCA mentioned that even in the absence of an internationally agreed definition of terrorism, it is important to ensure that definitions chosen in legal and policy document at the national levels are not vague or too broad.  Overly broad definitions risk criminalizing or otherwise eliciting repressive or punitive responses to conduct that is otherwise permissible and protected under international human rights standards (including freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief etc.).

Another point raised during the session was that the prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment under international law is absolute under all circumstances. Not only does torture violate the trust between communities and law enforcement bodies, turning people away from supporting states' CT efforts, it could also be counter-productive. According to senior US officials for example, the mistreatment of detainees in Abu Ghraib prison was apparently the single most important motivating factor for terrorists and foreign fighters to travel to Iraq. Torture is also ineffective in the long-term as evidence received through torture could be misleading and unreliable because torture is known to produce false confessions. As the OSCE has remarked in its work with law enforcement officers for example, counter terrorism officers can obtain more and better information by using interview techniques that respect the rights of

suspects, witnesses and other informants. The representative of the Prosecutor's Office of Uzbekistan reiterated that torture is considered as a serious crime and law enforcement officers can be convicted up to 10 years for torturing people. People become more aggressive when they are subjected to torture.

Participants further discussed how CT measures that reinforce stereotypes, such as profiling, are counter-productive because they undermine trust between authorities and the public and may contribute to the radicalization of individuals and groups who are wrongfully targeted. They are also ineffective in themselves: Discriminatory profiling in CT policing, for example, which is based on stereotypical assumptions that a person from a certain ethnic or religious background or nationality is more likely to commit a crime, can be easily circumvented. Indeed, terrorist groups have proved the ability to reduce the likelihood of detection by recruiting people who are less likely to be stopped and searched or otherwise subjected to law enforcement action, because they do not conform to the pre-determined profiles.

Another point raised had to do with the practice of surveillance. The moderator mentioned that excessive information gathering, e.g. through untargeted surveillance, and excessive storing of data in contravention of data protection standards, leads to information overload and diverts scarce resources away from core tasks of CT investigations and CT policing. It is basically a waste of financial resources as there is no evidence of their effectiveness. At the same time, over-surveillance increases the risk of people being unfairly targeted and undermines general trust in the states' CT efforts. Lack of respect for human rights also undermines trust between states and may, as a result, represent serious obstacle for information sharing between countries as well as international law enforcement cooperation in countering terrorism.

The representative of UNHCR pointed out the right of people to asylum. He stressed that refugees are not the source of terrorism but rather victims as they were forced to leave their home countries because of terrorism. The influx of refugees is a humanitarian issue and not a political or security-related one.

An NGO representative from the region recalled that violations of human rights in prisons have been noted as one of the reasons why Central Asian extremists have gone over to Syria and Iraq. Her research showed that prisoners who had experienced torture while serving their sentences had more chances to become radicalized. At the same time, the absence of control in prison settings also leads to radicalization among prisoners, in particular if they are placed in cell with people convicted for terrorism. The penitentiary system should not perform only punitive functions but should also play an important role in prevention and rehabilitation.

Touching upon the issue of separate facilities for people convicted for terrorism, the UNODC representative highlighted that they promote standards of detention for convicted persons. Penitentiary institutions could be incubators for spreading terrorist/extremist ideas. An example was given when after the escape of several prisoners in 2015 in the Kyrgyz Republic, prison authorities decided to incarcerate people convicted for terrorism in separate blocs without the right to be amnestied or transferred. However, worldwide experiences are increasingly showing that the segregation of convicts does not solve the problem. Penitentiary systems should be instead reformed and managed more effectively. There is a need for psychological support, training and education, as well as rehabilitation programs in prisons.

Discussions concluded on the idea that respecting and protecting human rights can make law enforcement and CT and PVE policies and practices more effective. Moreover, by protecting human rights, states can address conditions conducive to terrorism, and prevent the spread of violent extremism. CT, PVE and the promotion of human rights are therefore complementary and mutually reinforcing objectives.

**E) Countering narrative and the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes**

The second day started with a two-hour session on the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes and ways to develop counter/alternative narratives, moderated by Donald Holbrook from the International Center for Counter Terrorism (ICCT) in the Hague.

The moderator began by setting the scene: Online 'media' and propaganda efforts now constitute a major component of terrorist campaigns, including for organizations like ISIL and Al-Qaeda, which both have developed dedicated media teams. Terrorists can exploit the Internet in two fundamental ways: 1) Individuals can use tools offered by the world wide web to support or facilitate political violence. In this sense the Internet aids the perpetrators' activities offline; 2) Individuals can also use the online environment to cause damage directly to further their interest, referred to as 'cyber-terrorism'. The Internet helps terrorists expand their reach, increase their impact and facilitate activities offline. It facilitates five main areas: 1) Communication & networking; 2) research, information gathering and distribution; 3) financing (fundraising, financial transactions, fraud); 4) recruiting new members and: 5) distributing propaganda and controlling information. The Internet is also used to support offline activities: physical encounters are crucial, but these are enhanced by online networks.

When it comes to responses, the expert noted three main approaches to combating terrorists' use of the Internet: 1) Taking down extremist content – some countries, and organizations have established dedicated units for this work; 2) using the Internet to disrupt terrorist activities and monitor their communication; and 3) using the web to spread counter-narratives.

Regarding the development of counter-narratives, the expert emphasized on the content, delivery and audience. The content could include both/either positive components (countering the appeal of extremist messages with alternative sources of belonging, significance, and personal and collective achievement), and/or negative ones (highlighting inconsistencies of the extremist messages, highlighting universally harmful outcome of terrorists' actions—in terms of victims and political consequences; highlight their internal divisions and disputes etc.).

Effective narratives also need to take into account the delivery of the message: Coherent messages consistent with actions have to be delivered by credible actors, including former extremists, who have impact with the audience. They need to be delivered through multiple platforms. They also need to target their audiences carefully. Effective counter-narrative work has to start with an understanding of at-risk audience, the reason for their vulnerability and how they are influenced before tailoring messages.

*Central Asian Experiences*

In the discussions that ensued, participants from LEBs expressed their need to learn more about updated technical methods of blocking content and collaborating with private companies such as Google, Facebook, YouTube etc. to regulate the Internet. In response, the representative of a media NGO explained the self-regulation mechanisms and communities' rules that exist within such online networks, though he noted the large amount of time and efforts needed to engage with them. Reporting a complaint against content can take up to half a year until the content is blocked and removed, he claimed. In one case, colleagues in Kyrgyzstan were able to remove a content immediately by complaining and reporting it from over 50 different IP addresses. Other instances of reporting individually took ages to be considered. He noted that it would be more efficient to develop local facilities of moderators from local communities to regulate the illegal content. Removing, and not blocking should be the solution, given that blocking only incites more interest. Resources such as https://www.techagainstterrorism.org could be used for outreach with Internet companies.

When it came to the development of counter and alternative narratives using the Internet as well as media (both traditional and social media), it seemed that there was much interest among Central Asian countries, but not as much experience. A UNRCCA representative noted that interventions have to be targeted, should not limit freedom of expression and should not be instrumentalized to go after political opponents.

As an NGO representative noted, it would be more useful to develop alternative messages of peace and positive messaging instead of countering narratives, as the very notion of countering embodies a defensive position and is not always effective. Another NGO representative explained that more positive content and narratives should be promoted as a replication of the Silk Road. Terrorists today are like the original thieves on the Silk Road. While they tried to rob caravans, they were ultimately unable to stop East/West trade and connections. Today, however, state authorities hesitate to create YouTube postings as they are concerned that their posts would immediately be followed by negative materials. Yet, he noted, it is important to elevate the image of Central Asian nations to counter the many critiques around the world who are more vocal and proactive in spreading negative propaganda. If Central Asians states and civil society themselves do not participate, reality becomes hijacked by those who want to reflect their own "truth".

An expert explained the experience of a workshop in Tajikistan in May 2017 organized by the OSCE which targeted university students from all over the republic for a training on developing counter narrative messages. The workshop brought out a number of key points to consider. First of all, it became clear that students were attuned to online propaganda and had easy access, through alternative servers and VPNs, to materials that were forbidden by law. Instead of prohibiting, bringing down or blocking content, measures not always feasible and which could solicit even more interest, it may be more beneficial to raise awareness and develop critical thinking through the education system so that young users of the Internet could decipher right from wrong themselves. In addition to critical thinking, Internet literacy needs to be enhanced through the creation of centers for the development of competency of new ICTs in order to develop local content.

The workshop, which included a practical exercise in developing campaigns, also showed the ingenuity of young people in developing alternative messages about national unity, love of homeland etc. empathy, etc. as means to counter the appeal of extremisms. An eventual cooperation between LEB s, young people and media representatives would be hugely beneficial for developing credible PVE campaigns.

A representative of Uzbekistan noted the ongoing cooperation between state bodies and civil societies, such as Mahallas and religious organizations, on organizing both on and offline information campaigns. They include discussions with former extremisms, dissemination of correct understandings of the Quran through TV and newspapers, media spots warning young people about the threat of recruitment by terrorists and violent extremist groups etc.. More than 15,000 propaganda events have been organized against extremism, including on radio and television. In Turkmenistan, the Ministry of Religious Affairs prepares materials for dissemination. In Afghanistan, in border areas where insurgents are using mobile radios for their propaganda and where Internet networks are not working properly or people cannot access them due to poverty, the government is using TV and radio spots to explain its policies and programs, invite Islamic scholars to explain the proper meaning of Jihad, explain the Quran etc..

When it comes to the credibility of the message, participants noted the importance of language and local dialects. The use of young people and religious Ulema would enhance the messages more than if they simply came from state authorities or international organizations. The question of ownership over the message however remains a challenge. The OSCE representative in Uzbekistan shared an experience with the creation of a web portal to post all information on counter terrorism and relevant materials in Uzbekistan, but the question of ownership was not resolved. Would there be trust by the public if it were

run by LEBs?  In the final analysis, the portal was given to an NGO to maintain the site.  But will there be enough credibility if run by a CSO, and enough access to relevant materials?

In conclusion, some participants called for an entire workshop to be devoted to this subject, where more technical and practical experiences could be shared, including on the latest methods for coding, the use of encryptions by organized criminal networks, the dark web, collection of evidence from open sources etc.. In response, the OSCE mentioned  about the organization of a technical workshop at the end of June 2018 in addition to two week specialized courses that will be administered in selected Central Asian countries.

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## Part III) Exchanges of Good practices on National Strategies and Plans of Actions on PVE/CT

The rest of the second day was devoted to experience sharing on developing national PVE/CT strategies and Action Plans. It included a session where countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan shared their experiences of their Strategies/Action Plans with 1) the preparation process and how inclusive it was, 2) the content of their plans, and 3) implementation mechanisms, including budgeting, monitoring and communication strategy.

The session was followed by a longer session where Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, the UNOCT/UNRCCA consultant, shared guidelines and lessons from the analysis of overall challenges and good practices in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of PVE NAPs, while Almakan Orozobekova from the Max Planck Institute presented examples from other countries.  The session ended with a brainstorming on remaining challenges in Central Asia, followed by a discussion with Steven Siqueira, the Deputy Director of UNOCT who joined from New York on Skpe to discuss the evolving architecture on CT and PVE at the UN and how UNOCT could support Central Asian countries.

*Lessons from Global Experiences*

In his 2015 Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, the UN Secretary- General encouraged Member States to develop NAPs, which set "priorities for addressing the local drivers of violent extremism and [complement] national CT strategies where they already exist". The preparation of PVE Action plans is not a substitution for CT Strategies, but complementary. In fact, prevention measures related to the regulation of conflicts, dialogues, addressing socio-economic grievances, promoting human rights in the fight against terrorism are all duly recognized in Pillars 1 and 4 of the comprehensive UN CT Strategy and its regional JPoA adopted in Central Asia. PVE plans target the process of radicalization and recognize its roots and manifestations.

There are a number of reasons why the preparation of a PVE NAP can be beneficial:  It provides an opportunity to reflect critically on the effectiveness of past approaches and interventions; It helps define the nature of the threat, as well as aims, objectives, targets and priorities; It allocates roles and responsibilities and holds agencies accountable; It also lays the foundation for a common understanding and more systematic  dialogue with donors.

Successful PVE Plans include both security and non-security components of governments (Whole of Government) as well as provide dialogue and shared responsibilities, not just among government agencies but also in partnership with civil society, private sector, academia etc. (Whole of Society). As such, they recognize women, youth and communities not just as vulnerable subjects but also as actors of change.

The involvement of civil society organizations, private sector and academia has proven beneficial for a variety of reasons:  It widens ownership, hence improving the effectiveness of the policies and strategies by sharing responsibility for implementation and deflating resistance to top down strategies.

Consultations with and involvement of CSOs also help create mechanisms to understand the impact of policies while tapping into knowledge of local contexts, drivers, and evolving trends. CSOs have expertise and experiences, innovation and flexibility that can help recognize and tackle radicalization to violent extremism in communities.

An analysis of global experiences show that good NAPs are those that:
- Have been created based on an analysis of the situation, one that has identified threats and drivers of radicalization  and recruitment to violent extremism.
- Build on existing sectoral programs and strategies, creating bridges between security and non-security strategies (such as Sustainable Development, gender equality, youth programs, employment, sustainable development etc.).
- Set priorities for C/PVE activities and concrete, measurable goals.
- Clarify roles, responsibilities and tasks of all implementing partners.
- Make clear links between women's empowerment, participation and prevention of radicalization.
- Are allocated adequate budget for implementation, both from government budget and donor support.
- Include measurable indicators for monitoring and evaluation.
- Are accompanied by a comprehensive communication strategy to raise public awareness.
- Are regularly monitored, including with the help of civil society and academia, and are adjusted based on the results.

There are also a number of risks and challenges that need to be taken into account in the preparation and especially implementation of NAPs.  Pressure to produce them could lead to a tendency to skip the consultation process. CSOs and other partners may not have enough capacity in order to impact the agenda.  M&E indicators are often underdeveloped: they are either too broad or too precise, making it difficult to gather evidence on the effectiveness of programs. Another important problem is that of lack of budgeting for implementation: many NAPs rely too much on donor funding because they include non-security, 'soft' interventions and do not benefit from separate budgets from the State.  In the final analysis, the biggest challenge remains that of implementation:  NAPs can be adopted with broad consultation and look good on paper, but little action is taken for implementation, showing little commitment to the prevention agenda.

*Central Asian Experiences with NAP Preparation*

Kazakhstan has been implementing a **Program on Countering Religious Extremism and Terrorism for 2018-2022,** a program devised in 2013 and updated periodically. The current phase has been developed by a working group comprising of 17 ministries.  Communities, especially religious communities, were consulted in the design, and the needs of women and children were included. The Program consists of three pillars: 1) Preventive measures through raising awareness and literacy among the youth; 2) Increasing the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in detection and suppression of terror acts, through improving their capacities, improving coordination and interactions; 3) Working on the consequences of terror acts, including preparation to minimizing risks and improving efficiency of services such as medical support etc.. As a result of the first Program (2013-2017), awareness raising work increased at the local level and through the media, courses on religion were introduced in schools, counter-narratives were developed for the Internet and interactions among state institutions increased. As a result, 38 terrorist acts were prevented.  New challenges include the increase in the number of FTFs returning to Kazakhstan with extremist ideologies. As a result, the new phase of the Program puts more emphasis on reducing extremist ideas while continuing to aim to prevent terrorist acts and better respond to their consequences. The Government of Kazakhstan has allocated 209 billion Tenge for the implementation of the new Program, mostly from the central budget and 1/3 from local budget funds in specific regions. Evaluation indicators are included in the Program, and include for example, reduction of persons with radical ideas, prevention of terrorist acts, improvement of the response system etc. . As the

implementation of the Program is decentralized, local characteristics and local needs and capacities are taken into consideration in the implementation of measures at the local level.

The preparation of the **Program of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on Countering Extremism and Terrorism for 2017-2022 and its Action Plan was** supported by UNDP, UN Women and the Peacebuilding Fund. It was also an inclusive process as academia, CSOs, community and religious leaders were invited to participate in the Program formulation. The NAP defines parameters of radicalization, highlighting that it is a social problem rather than security related. It includes 9 measures, divided in 3 priorities: 1) Prevention of extremism and terrorism, 2) detection and suppression and 3) improvement of the legislative framework. Components of the NAP include improved cooperation between state institutions and CSOs on prevention, increased capacity of state bodies and LEAs to respond to PVE and radicalization, improved legislative mechanisms and regional cooperation. Primary measures identified in the NAP include research; information dissemination and outreach work; religious (theological) education; capacity building of LEBs; prevention among vulnerable groups such as prisoners, migrants and youth; as well as work with the media and the Internet. The State Committee of Religious Affairs is in charge of coordination and M&E functions, and benefits from the cooperation of agencies traditionally in charge of extremism and terrorism such as the Anti-Terrorism Center of the National Security and Department 10 of the Ministry of Interior. Funding remains a challenge as the Program is not budgeted although there is full support at the state level and some of the state agencies will fund some components (i.e. State Agency on Youth for instance may fund youth related activities). International donors and NGOs are called upon to help with the implementation of the Program. The UN Peacebulding Fund has allocated money to address PVE issues, i.e. among youth, women and prisoners.

The **Tajikistan National Strategy on Countering Extremism and Terrorism for 2016-2020**, prepared with the support of OSCE, UNDP and UN Women, is being coordinated by the General Prosecutor's Office. It contains 7 goals, 13 priority areas and 32 activities. The accompanying Plan of Action defines the mode of implementation, including responsible institutions, possible sources of funding and assessment criteria. The General Prosecutor's Office is in charge of gathering information about implementation progress and updating the President twice a year. The state launched a massive communication campaign to raise awareness about the provisions of the Program. Information was provided in Tajik, Russian and English through the media and printed versions of the NAP were disseminated to all local level authorities. A number of measures have been undertaken since adoption, including: improved work with migrants; education on religious tolerance in schools; outreach to the families of those who joined the ranks of FTFs in an effort to return them home; the registration of all mosques by the state, and changes in the Criminal Code, which prohibits citizens from joining illegal terrorist groups. It is expected that the NAP will be financed from the central and local budgets as well as from donor sources.

**Turkmenistan** has no NAP yet but is in discussions with international organizations to launch a preparation process. In the meantime, work with the youth on prevention of radicalization is being conducted as is work on the borders in order to prevent departure to conflict zones. It is not yet defined which state body would be in charge of the NAP coordination and M&E.

**Uzbekistan** in the process of developing a NAP. The program would focus on: 1) Elimination of social conditions to radicalization through provision of employment, job fair, soft loans, etc.; 2) Reinforcing national ideology and raising the awareness of the population about religion jointly with the new Islamic Academy; 3) Prevention of extremism and teaching tolerance by working with Mahalla committees, at school and with families; 4) Prevention among youth, including the introduction of courses on religion; and 5) With social media and the Internet. Uzbekistan sees the NAP as a comprehensive and long term plan to put together strategically all that is currently being done, i.e. legislation, security and non-security related sectoral strategies etc.. For the moment, the coordination of CT and PVE activities is the

responsibility of the National Security Committee. CSOs' engagement in the development of the NAP would be ensured through participation of Mahalla leaders, Youth Committees and Committees on Women's Affairs. In the meantime, the legislative base has been strengthened, including through the adoption of the 2000 Law on Terrorism Financing; the Law on Joining Terrorists Abroad and the Presidential Decree on amnesty for those misled to join terrorist organizations and who want to go back. A Draft Law on Radicalization is open to public discussion.

While **Afghanistan** is currently preparing a PVE NAP backed by an Inter-Agency Committee, it is implementing a Strategy to combat Daesh as well as laws against terrorism-related crimes and money laundering. As the country is in full combat, much of resources and attention are on counter-insurgency and counterterrorism, through increasing the capacity of Special Forces while working on capacity building and coordination between the army and air force with the help of NATO and its allies. At the same time, the Government is attempting to facilitate negotiations and a political dialogue to reach a peace agreement through the Kabul process. As terrorists are attempting to recruit mostly young people, Afghan authorities seek to put emphasis on the improvement of the education system, training for teachers and working with the media. In order to prevent recruitment of regional foreign fighters, authorities also work closely with other partners in the region, including Central Asian states.

*Some Conclusions on the Central Asian Experiences with NAP Preparation:*

- *Terminology*: The majority of CA countries use definitions of terrorism and extremism as they are described in their national legislation as well as in the basic documents adopted by the SCO. The National Strategies are backed by national laws on terrorism that stipulate the contours of what constitutes of terror acts, extremism, etc. When it comes to extremism, the implicit and explicit understanding is that the threat concerns religious extremism, with other types of political extremism not identified.

- *Whole of Government:* Increasingly, law enforcement bodies and national security apparatus are moving towards the prevention agenda. While counter-terrorism has been mostly the domain of National Security Committees, the PVE agenda has responsibilized a host of new agencies, especially Prosecutor's Generals or Committees on Religious Affairs in charge of monitoring and coordinating with the inter-Ministerial bodies. This opens up many possibilities for improved coordination and communication for a Whole of Government approach. The PVE NAPs however do not replace the concept of national security or the laws on terrorism.

- *Development or security:* As some of the Central Asian NAPs include a number of development-type interventions such as poverty eradication and gender equality, it is difficult to gauge how they will directly impact the PVE agenda. Perhaps more targeting or evidence would be necessary in order to distinguish them from general development programs. At the same time, individualization and targeting should not stigmatize groups.

- *The Whole of Society* approach is understood mostly as government cooperation with religious organizations, women's committees and youth groups. There is little evidence of the involvement of the academic community, and much less so of the private sector. In some NAPs, CSOs in general have been named as implementing partners of soft interventions, although it is not clear how they are involved in coordination with government agencies.

- *Funding* remains a main problem in the region: While counter-terrorism is decidedly funded by the state, the PVE agenda which involves more soft initiatives (such as education, job creation, gender equality, work with internet etc.) falls into the domains which are traditionally underfunded by the state budgets. Hence, CA states rely on international organizations or local

governments to be able to cover most of the funding for such initiatives. Donor funding however is ad hoc and related to individual projects/interventions of interests.

- Few countries have *communication strategies*, and those too often rely on the support of foreign donors. In countries where the governments have reached out to the public, it has been mostly to inform of the NAP top down and not always solicit bottom-up support.

- The main issue is *monitoring and evaluation*. While a number of Programs in the region have stipulated some general indicators to monitor, and specified agencies nominated to conduct regular monitoring, it remains elusive what 'success' means. The exercise is seen more as a reporting mechanism from different ministries to the coordinating body. More capacity building support is needed to understanding what M&E would entail in this field and how the impacts of PVE programs be measured.

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**Areas for Follow up**

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Throughout the workshop, participants made suggestions for concrete follow up in these areas:

- More periodic sharing of good practices, lessons learned, and challenges among countries developing/implementing NAPs.
- More capacity building initiatives for the development of monitoring and evaluation indicators to assess the impact of interventions.
- More support to regional cooperation, including on the question of migration, regional economic investment, conflict regulation, border management etc. in order to alleviate conditions conducive to the speared of extremism and terrorism as well as minimizing their risks
- More exchanges of experiences and support to dealing with the return of FTFs, including prosecution, the rehabilitation of women and children in communities etc.
- More technical workshops on the use of the Internet by terrorists, including the use of new ICTs and the development of counter- and alternative narratives.
- More in-depth studies on the drivers of radicalization in Central Asia and analysis of the effectiveness of policies and practices in thematic areas.
- More work on preventing radicalization in prisons.
- More support to training and dialogue with religious leaders and faith-based communities.
- More capacity building of the LEBs on issues related to PVE and CT.