

**JOINT UNITED NATIONS – HUNGARY REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR CENTRAL EUROPE
ON**

**PREVENTION OF RADICALIZATION TO TERRORISM: REGIONAL POLICY RESPONSES AND
RISK MITIGATION**

7-8 November 2019

Budapest, Hungary

**Concept Note
(as of 5 September 2019)**

Introduction

This note provides information on the Joint United Nations – Hungary Regional conference for Europe on “Prevention of Radicalization to Terrorism: Regional Policy Responses and Risk Mitigation”. The Conference will take place in Budapest, Hungary from 7 to 8 November 2019.

The Conference follows on from the first-ever United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States, held from 28 to 29 June 2018 in New York, which was convened by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to strengthen international cooperation to combat the evolving threat of terrorism. As Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov outlined at that conference, “terrorism is a transnational threat that cannot be defeated by any single government or organization. It needs a concerted multilateral response at global, regional and national levels”.

The Secretary-General announced his intention to convene the next High-Level Conference in June 2020 and that in the lead-up to the conference, the United Nations would liaise with Member States to organize regional events on key thematic issues to sustain momentum in our collective efforts.

The Regional Conference in Hungary will seek to build upon the discussions of the 2018 High-Level Conference, with three plenary thematic sessions, each providing an opportunity for participating Member States to consider the practical implementation of relevant aspects of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Opening Session: Prevention of radicalization to terrorism through holistic policy responses and risk mitigation

The importance of strengthening international cooperation and a holistic approach to prevent radicalization to terrorism has been widely recognized by the international community. General Assembly resolution 72/284 for the Sixth Review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy emphasized the importance of improving prevention and addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, preventing and countering incitement to commit terrorist acts, preventing radicalization to terrorism and recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters, developing and implementing risk assessments on returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) and their families, and prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration efforts, consistent with international law.

Session I: Addressing terrorist narratives through preventive strategies

The fight against terrorism is often portrayed as a battle for the ‘hearts and minds’ recognizing that structural factors are not sufficient in and of themselves to account for terrorist radicalization. Terrorist narratives, framing real or perceived grievances and skilfully tailored to appeal to different audiences depending on, inter alia, gender, age, socio-economic status and geography, are a powerful driver of radicalization to terrorism. They provide meaning, justification, and legitimacy to elicit sympathy, support for and recourse to terrorist violence. Modern information and communication technologies have eased their spread across borders and their appeal is reinforced through interpersonal relationships.

Resolution 72/284 for the Sixth Review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy encouraged Member States to engage with relevant local communities and non-governmental actors, where appropriate, in developing tailored strategies to counter the violent extremist narrative that can incite recruitment to terrorist groups and the commission of terrorist acts and to address the conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism. The Security Council in its resolution 1624 (2004) called for a comprehensive approach to countering incitement to commit acts of terrorism. The Council’s resolution 2354 (2017) further stressed that the international community should develop the most effective means to counter terrorist propaganda, incitement and recruitment, including through the Internet, in compliance with international law, including international human rights law.

The UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism presented in 2016 by the Secretary-General puts forward more than 70 recommendations to Member States and the United Nations System to address the underlying conditions that drive individuals to radicalize to terrorism, in line with the first and fourth pillars of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. One of the seven priority areas identified in the Plan of Action relate specifically to tackling the manipulative messages of terrorist on Internet and social media, including through strategic communications. The General Assembly in its resolutions 70/291 and 72/284 recommended that Member States consider implementing relevant recommendations of the Plan of Action. The Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council has also provided guidance by developing a “Comprehensive International Framework to Counter Terrorism Narratives” (S/2017/375) and the Addendum to the Madrid Guiding Principles to Stem the Flow of Foreign Terrorist Fighters adopted in December 2018 (S/2018/1117).

This session will address the following key questions:

- What progress has been achieved and what are the gaps in monitoring and understanding terrorist narratives and their relative importance in driving radicalization to terrorism?
- How can the complementary efforts of governments, industry and civil society effectively counter the misuse of modern information and communication technologies to spread terrorist narratives, while upholding freedom of expression?
- What are good practices for effectively engaging local communities and non-governmental actors in developing tailored strategies to counter terrorist narratives?
- What role does accountability for acts of terrorism and upholding the rights and needs of victims play in undermining terrorist narratives?
- What is the relationship between terrorist narratives and the broader phenomenon of hate speech, and what are the implications in terms of prevention?

Session II: Assessing and mitigating the risks posed by returning foreign terrorist fighters

Over 12,000 foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) are thought to have travelled from Western and Eastern Europe to Iraq and Syria. Many had already returned before the territorial collapse of ISIL and more could seek to do so, or to relocate to other countries. So far, there have been fewer returns than anticipated but the threat is real. These individuals have gained training, battlefield experience and contacts. Some FTFs have already been involved in the organization of terrorist attacks on European soil. The sheer numbers involved and difficulties in collecting evidence makes it challenging for Member States to identify, monitor and bring all suspected FTFs to justice. Those successfully prosecuted could spread radicalization in prison and pose a threat upon release. Family members of FTFs stranded or in detention in Iraq and Syria, including spouses and children, also present a range of specific challenges for Member States.

Resolution 72/284 for the Sixth Review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy underscored the importance of a whole-of-government approach to rehabilitation and reintegration, recognizing the role that civil society organizations can play in this regard. The General Assembly noted that children may be especially vulnerable to radicalization to violence and in need of particular psychosocial support, such as post-trauma counselling, and stressed that children need to be treated in a manner that respects their rights and protects their dignity, in accordance with applicable international law. Through its resolution 2396 (2017), the Security Council called on Member States to develop and implement comprehensive risk assessments for suspected FTFs and their accompanying family members, and to consider appropriate prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration (PRR) measures in compliance with international law.

The Addendum to the Madrid Guiding Principles adopted in December 2018 by the Counter-Terrorism Committee provides guidance for the development of risk-assessment tools to identify individuals who demonstrate signs of radicalization to violence and intervention programmes, including with a gender perspective, and without resorting to profiling based on discriminatory grounds prohibited by international law. The Addendum underlines that PRR strategies and protocols should be timely, appropriate, comprehensive and tailored, taking into account gender and age sensitivities/factors, comprehensive risk assessments, the severity of the crime(s) committed, available evidence, intent and individual culpability, the support network, the public interest, and other relevant considerations or factors, as appropriate, and in compliance with domestic and international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law. The Addendum further elaborates on the need for risk assessment and mitigation measures to manage inmates convicted of terrorism-related offences, foster their rehabilitation and reintegration, and establish appropriate post-release monitoring, support and protective measures.

This session will address the following key questions:

- How effective have Member States been in strengthening their capacities and cooperation to identify, apprehend and bring suspected FTFs to justice, in line with international law, including human rights and humanitarian law? What challenges and gaps persist?
- What methodologies and capacities have Member States developed to assess and mitigate the risks posed by suspected FTFs, as well as convicted terrorism-related offenders in detention and after release?
- What progress have Member States achieved in developing gender and age-sensitive rehabilitation and reintegration programmes in custodial and non-custodial settings?

- How are Member States addressing the situation of children associated to European FTFs to ensure their rehabilitation and reintegration into society?
- What are good practice examples of government engaging with local authorities and communities affected by FTF departures to mitigate the risks posed by potential returns?

Session III: Engaging youth in preventing and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism

Empowering youth to act as peacebuilders is a key step to preventing their involvement in violent extremism conducive to terrorism. Young people, including previously radicalized youth, can work as role models and engage their peers in peaceful conflict resolution and addressing grievances in their communities. The Security Council in its resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) recognized the positive role young women and men play in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security, and positions youth and youth-led organizations as important partners in global efforts to oppose violent extremism and promote lasting peace. Alongside the empowerment of youth, women's leadership, participation, equal treatment and physical security are crucial for making societies more peaceful and resilient in the face of terrorism.

Moreover, the General Assembly, in its resolution 72/284 on the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review, noted the important and positive contribution of youth in efforts to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism conducive to terrorism, as well as for the promotion of peace and security. Member States, United Nations entities, regional and subregional organizations and relevant actors were encouraged to consider instituting mechanisms to involve youth in the promotion of a culture of peace, tolerance and intercultural and interreligious dialogue and to develop, as appropriate, an understanding of respect for human dignity, pluralism and diversity. Resolution 72/284 also encouraged Member States to empower youth through the promotion of media and information literacy by including youth in decision-making processes and considering practical ways to include youth in the development of relevant programmes and initiatives aimed at preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

This session will examine how young people can build partnerships together with other actors in their communities, national governments and regional organizations, to strengthen the resilience of their peers, families and communities against violent extremism conducive to terrorism. Discussion will explore the most effective strategies for governments to engage and support youth, including in peripheral and cross border contexts. The session will also consider how gender equality the empowerment of young women and girls can contribute to prevention.

This session will address the following key questions:

- Young people are a positive asset to society and are on the frontline of prevention. What are the good practices to prevent them from being radicalized and recruited by terrorists?
- How can the positive force that young men and women represent in social and economic innovation be harnessed to prevent and counter violent extremism conducive to terrorism?
- What are the lessons learnt and good practices to reach out to and engage effectively marginalized youth and young women as positive agents in safeguarding their peers and communities from terrorist radicalization?

- How can we strengthen the participation of youth in the development of policies and programmes aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism?
- What are the limitations in the ways youth are currently engaged in prevention and opportunities to bolster partnerships?
- How can sports be a means in the prevention of violent extremism conducive to terrorism?

DRAFT