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Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, and thank you to the United Nations and the Swiss government for gathering us here for such an important discussion. Our hearts are with those who endured attacks by violent extremists in Belgium, Pakistan, Mali, Turkey, Nigeria, the Ivory Coast, and elsewhere around the world just over the last month. The United States applauds the UN for its efforts and the Secretary General for his leadership in crafting this Plan of Action. I am confident that the importance of prevention in the broader discussion on violent extremism is not lost on anyone in this room.

To be effective at prevention, we must understand more deeply the drivers of violent extremism and how these come together in communities to create support – sometimes tacit, sometimes explicit – for violent extremism organizations and acts of violence. The Secretary General's Plan of Action speaks to the reality of this problem – it is global in nature but with local manifestations, and so it will take the efforts and resources of all of the member nations to prevent it.

The Plan of Action also rightly conveys that, to be effective, our efforts to curb the drivers of violent extremism cannot focus exclusively on the individual and his or her reasons for committing acts of violence. Our efforts must address the dynamics occurring at the community level that may create an enabling environment for some –not all – individuals and groups to employ violence in the name of exclusionary, and therefore extreme, ideologies.

Our collective approach to these community-level dynamics has been incomplete. The overwhelming majority of resources spent on violent extremism in recent years has been focused on stopping individuals from conducting terrorist acts in the period just before it occurs, or undermining the operational effectiveness of existing violent extremist organizations. While we can all understand this imperative, we have an equal imperative to get further upstream and address the dynamics that make a community more vulnerable to violent extremism. Preventing this problem at the community level means examining the various levels of support, tacit and explicit, the push and pull factors, the critical actors, and the resiliencies – all the characteristics that can stop violent extremism from spreading from one community to the next. This is what the Secretary General's Plan of Action calls us to do.

The U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development are working together to develop a joint strategy to counter violent extremism by focusing on prevention. Other agencies in my government are developing a strategy for how the United States handles these issues domestically. One of the pillars of our State and USAID strategy is expanding partnership to understand the drivers of violent extremism and mobilizing support for creative interventions.

As a result of last year's White House and regional summits on violent extremism, we have launched two important global partnerships: the RESOLVE and Strong Cities networks. The RESOLVE Network, which stands for Researching Solutions for Violent Extremism, seeks to promote opportunities for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to come together both locally and internationally to build effective and sustainable responses to the drivers of violent extremism. The Strong Cities Network is an effort to bring together mayors and sub-national authorities to share expertise and build capacity to develop localized CVE strategies, and it currently includes 38 cities from around the world.

My bureau in the Department of State, the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, is supporting the RESOLVE Network and the emphasis on community-level prevention by conducting research and analysis on the drivers of violent extremism and the factors that contribute to community resiliency. We have identified regional and global drivers that correlate with higher risk, but we recognize that in any community a combination of risk factors can come together in unique ways to create a higher risk of support for violent extremist organizations. I would like to share with you seven findings from our analysis:

- First, state-sponsored violence correlates highly with the emergence of violent extremist organizations. Countries with above-average levels of state-sponsored violence double their risk of a violent extremism organization emerging. Countries with the highest levels of state-sponsored violence quadruple their risk of a violent extremism organization emerging.

- Second, low levels of voice and accountability – a measurement of political rights and civil liberties are significant predictors of increased

levels of state-sponsored violence, which is associated with both the onset and escalation of violent extremism.

- Third, analysis of survey data in Africa, the Middle East, and South and Central Asia shows the complex role that religion plays. Those who are more devout, who feel religion plays an important role in their daily lives, are _less_ likely to support violent extremism, while those with an exclusionary supremacist view are _more_ likely to support violent extremism.

- Fourth, similar survey data suggests that individuals who have personally been forced to pay bribes for basic services were more likely to support violent extremism. In the same study, no evidence was found that general views about government corruption were associated with reports of violent extremist behavior, suggesting that it is personal experience of corruption, rather than general perceptions of corruption, which contributes to violent extremism.

- Fifth, this finding on corruption highlights the complicated relationship between economics and violent extremism. Terrorists are no more likely to be poor or unemployed or come from poorer countries. Based on an analysis of survey data, those who are extremely poor are significantly less likely to support violent extremism than those who are not extremely poor. In some cases, however, a negative outlook regarding personal economic conditions is associated with violent extremist behavior.

- Sixth, perceptions of government discrimination against ethnic or religious groups may be associated with violent extremist behavior. This finding is supported by a number of studies that indicate

that perceptions of injustice and the belief that one's religion or identity is under threat can drive violent extremism.

- And last, the presence of intra-state conflict and inter-state conflict are common factors that have a significant association with violent extremist activity.

To help practitioners take these general findings and determine more exactly the particular mix in specific communities, we have developed assessment tools and frameworks. These will help tell us which drivers are more important in particular areas so that we can better target our programmatic and diplomatic interventions.

This will not stop every individual from adopting exclusionary ideologies of hate and committing acts of violence; but examining the drivers can help us understand which communities are suffering under a toxic mix of conditions that will mutate groups into VEOs under the right circumstances. Increased knowledge and understanding will lead to more successful prevention interventions and a more complete collective approach.

Over the last several months, since the release of the Plan of Action, we have heard from a number of States that the Plan should have included more emphasis on potential drivers of violent extremism such as historical injustices of colonialism, protracted conflict, foreign occupation, destruction of State institutions, and the denial of self-determination. While these criticisms may be motivated by a number of reasons, we must substantiate our assumptions – and their relevance to particular contexts – through research. Evidence-based interventions can help improve

impact, ensure that we do not exacerbate the problem, and increase efficiency in our use of scarce resources.

The Secretary General's Plan of Action and discussions here today are important steps in building momentum toward a more complete approach that may help better protect our communities. Let us work together to ensure that the Plan receives a strong endorsement by the General Assembly in June during the review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Thank you all very much for being here, and I look forward to the discussion.