

## PRESS RELEASE

### *EXPERT BRIEFING ON THE INTERSECTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND GAMING held at the United Nations Secretariat in New York*

*New York, 6 December 2024* – The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) held an expert briefing entitled, “*New Quest Unlocked*” to explore the intersection of gaming and violent extremism. The event was organized in partnership with the Permanent Missions of Japan and the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations.

The online gaming world and its adjacent platforms have become a significant global community, connecting millions across borders. While gaming offers a traditional staple for entertainment for millions of young men and women, it also provides a space where violent extremists and terrorists can exploit the anonymity and immersive features of the gaming community to raise funds for the recruitment and radicalization of vulnerable individuals. As violent extremist tactics in digital spaces evolve, they often outpace traditional surveillance methods, complicating efforts to detect subtle yet harmful influences.

Understanding the intersection between gaming and violent extremism is therefore essential for developing fit-for-purpose prevention strategies that tackle the root causes of radicalization within these environments.

The expert briefing brought together representatives from the Extremism and Gaming Research Network (EGRN) and the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT), to discuss the interlinkages between violent extremism, gaming and other technology platforms such as social media. It also highlighted the need for “all-of-society” collaborative efforts to prevent exploitation of digital platforms.

In the opening session, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan, **H.E. Mikanagi Tomohiro**, highlighted that “*There is an increasing number of terrorists who are exploiting information and communication technologies and tools, such as online games [...]. In order to learn these new trends and take measures against them, this event will enable us to better understand the situation surrounding online games and terrorist activities. [...]. We cannot consider appropriate measures without knowing the threat, and understanding the threat is a first step towards working together to address this issue*”.

**Ms. Hanaa Bouchikhi**, Chargée d’Affaires a.i., of the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco echoed this sentiment, stressing that *“Together, we can create safer, reliable, and more resilient digital environments that embrace the value of tolerance, and co-existence for the benefit of the future generations”*.

UNICRI and UNOCT announced the launch of a new joint study on the intersection of gaming and violent extremism in Africa, the fastest-growing market for mobile gaming. The research will compare trends on the continent to other regions in the context of technology access, socio-political factors, and regulatory frameworks.

UNICRI’s Acting Director, **Mr. Leif Villadsen** stated that *“This study aims to better understand the industry, the community, the tactics used and the gaps and challenges in our own understanding of this threat landscape across the continent. Having mapped this landscape, we will then turn our attention to translating the findings into concrete actions, developing and implementing evidence-based programming designed to support local investigators in Member States in Africa and beyond”*.

**Mr. Steven Siqueira**, Deputy Director of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Center (UNCCT) in UNOCT, welcomed the collaboration and stressed the need to respect human rights, stating that *“The Global Digital Compact, adopted during the Summit of the Future, recognizes these dual realities of the digital age and calls for a unified global commitment to ensure that digital spaces are safe, inclusive, and aligned with human rights principles.”*

The event also featured two panel discussions, representing perspectives from content creators, journalists, researchers, social media, and government. Panellists shared their insights on the threats and solutions for creating safer and more inclusive gaming environments. Discussions also focused on content moderation and the sharing of best practices for preventing harm, fostering positive engagement, and implementing proactive approaches to make gaming spaces safer.

UNICRI and UNOCT will release their new joint study on the intersection of gaming and violent extremism in Africa in early 2025.

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#### **For more information**

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