



---

# VIRTUAL COUNTER-TERRORISM WEEK

---

6-10 JULY 2020

## **Interactive Discussion IV: Prevention of Violent Extremism and Strengthening Social Cohesion: Investing in Youth-led and Youth-driven Initiatives to build Resilient Societies**

9 July, 11:30 – 13:00 EST

### **Concept Note**

In anticipation of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations, the Secretary-General called for a strong focus on listening to the global public on ‘the future we want’, especially to the voices of young women and men. Listening to youth and partnering with them is all the more vital as they have been dramatically impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, which has triggered an unprecedented ‘global education crisis’, thrown millions out of work and threatened their livelihoods. The pandemic risks exacerbating systemic challenges faced by young people and grievances known to be exploited by terrorists to radicalize, incite and recruit. Young people, their perspectives and agency, must be at the centre of efforts to recover from the multifaceted consequences of the pandemic and build inclusive and peaceful societies, resilient to the appeal of violence, including terrorism.

The General Assembly, in its resolution for the sixth biennial review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, encouraged Member States to empower youth by including youth in decision-making processes and considering practical ways to include them in the development of relevant programmes and initiatives aimed at preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism. Similarly, Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) urged the inclusion of youth in efforts to counter violent extremism conducive to terrorism. Accordingly, youth empowerment was identified as one of the seven priority areas in the United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

In his landmark speech on counter-terrorism in November 2017, the Secretary-General called for an investment in youth as a major element of any prevention strategy, noting that they are an overwhelmingly positive asset to our societies. The United Nations Youth Strategy he launched in September 2018 includes among its priorities that the United Nations system will seek to expand opportunities for young people ‘to use their skills and



---

# VIRTUAL COUNTER-TERRORISM WEEK

---

6-10 JULY 2020

networks to develop and foster counter-narratives to messages of violence, extremism and radicalization.’

There are comprehensive initiatives to prevent and counter violent extremism conducive to terrorism (PCVE) within the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, which follow a gender-sensitive and human rights-based approach. Among these, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism launched in early 2020 two new programmes that seek to engage and harness the energy of youth for prevention – a Youth Engagement and Empowerment programme, through its United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT), and a programme to leverage sports in PCVE. Together with UNCCT’s PCVE Policy Assistance and PCVE through Strategic Communications programmes, this provides a comprehensive response to the malicious, yet strategic investment that terrorists make in youth.

This interactive session will discuss the crucial role of young women and men in PCVE, by providing a platform where good practice initiatives of Member States, regional organizations and civil society organizations can be cross-examined with United Nations efforts.

## Key issues to be addressed:

- *What are the challenges young women and men are facing in enhancing social cohesion and community resilience in the COVID19 recovery phase? What are the particular gendered challenges and how can they be addressed?*
- *How can we mobilize the positive experiences of young women and men and leverage their impact as real partners in prevention?*
- *How can we best support and reinforce youth-led PCVE initiatives?*
- *How can we prevent violent extremism conducive to terrorism by building young women and men’s resilience and finding gender responsive and human rights-based solutions, including through promoting education, cultural identities, tolerance, sports, gamification activities, and supporting livelihoods and national capacities?*