



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

19 August 2016

Excellency,

I have the honour to transmit herewith my summary of the key messages and recommendations from the High-Level Thematic Conversation on Children and Youth affected by Violent Extremism, which I convened on 3 June, 2016.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mogens Lykketoft'.

Mogens Lykketoft

To All Permanent Representatives
and Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

Children and Youth Affected by Violent Extremism

3 June 2016, Trusteeship Council Chamber, UN HQ, New York

President's Summary

Objective and format

The President of the General Assembly convened a High-level Thematic Conversation on Children and Youth Affected by Violent Extremism, on Friday 3 June 2016, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The event included a high-level opening segment and four high-level interactive panel discussions with key representatives from Member States, UN system, civil society and academia. The programme is attached.

The main objective of this high-level thematic conversation was to give Member States an opportunity to contribute to the ongoing debate on preventing and countering manifestations of violent extremism. The focus of the event was children and youth, given that they are the future of society. Also, as failure to protect, respect and promote the rights of children and youth creates an environment that may be conducive to violent extremism and radicalization.

Furthermore, the conversation sought to identify the push and pull factors driving young people to join violent extremist groups and on how to address real and/or perceived grievances.

Finally, the event was an occasion for all concerned to contribute to the comprehensive stock-taking of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy during its 10-year review and further, the consideration of the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

The following contains the key messages and recommendations arisen from the High-level Thematic Conversation.

Summary

"Preventing Children and Youth from Radicalization"

Speakers discussed the "push and pull" factors that may lead to radicalization and violent extremism and shared good practices that can promote rehabilitation and social integration of children and youth involved in acts of violent extremism. Many stressed out the need to tackle the building blocks of violent extremism, as being more important than military action. Moreover, it was noted that when addressing "push and pull" factors, one should also be provided with positive alternatives, a greater sense of purpose.

Interventions noted that it is important to spell out the common values, assumptions and principles that stand the best chance of achieving real, sustainable progress in the fight against violent extremism. These efforts are crucial in providing a comprehensive, long

term plan for countering radicalization. Speakers also noted that the international community must better and more effectively communicate common values of peace and justice, and must stand together against the intolerance and hatred which is spread by extremist groups.

A number of Member States stated that they unequivocally condemn the misrepresentation of Islam, by saying that no crime and violence is justified in the name of religion. Moderation in Islam and its associated values of humility and compassion are values that the extremists are lacking completely.

"From radicalization to Violent Extremism"

Speakers addressed the importance of engaging and empowering young people. Member States and other key stakeholders should not only work for young people – they should work with them.

Young people are subjects, not objects. The international community has a duty to unleash the great potential of young people to promote peace, development, justice and understanding.

Participants stressed the strategic importance of quality education to counter violent extremism -- noting that we must provide young women and men, across the world, with access to quality education, with the skills to think critically, with media literacy to reject hatred, with competences for dialogue and tolerance, with aspirations to become global citizens. Speakers also noted that investing in technical and vocational training is key to engage youth in countering violent extremism.

It was also noted that radicalization requires a multi-disciplinary approach and that there is no profile for someone who will be radicalized. Some stated that what leads to radicalization is the lack of a sense of belonging or the failure of the social contract: to obtain a job and to achieve respect. Many factors can come into play — self-esteem and social circumstances, what's happening in the world, economic, social and political instability. Checklists don't work. It's not police or intelligence services who can detect that someone is becoming radicalized. It's the families, the teachers, the social workers, the religious leaders.

"Deradicalisation, Rehabilitation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration"

The panel focused on sharing good practices and persisting challenges in promoting rehabilitation and social integration of children and youth who already got involved with violent extremism and crime, as well as in the response of criminal justice systems.

Speakers noted that emphasis is shifting to addressing the underlying causes that lead people to join extremist groups, within a framework of respect for human rights and dignity, balancing out military and law enforcement responses.

It was stressed out that radicalization is a process, and does not always end up in violence. Thus, young people who tend to radicalization should not be treated as terrorists. Repression is not effective, and they should be treated with respect. In this respect, it is important to include parents, teachers, social workers, and other relatives.

"Rightly, or wrongly, the youth feel that that contract no longer works for them and are now in search of an alternative of a dream." Unfortunately, Daesh is offering the opportunity to pursue the dream in a negative way. Speakers echoed the call for a sustainable preventive approach to countering extremism.

"Multi-stakeholder Efforts"

A number of initiatives were mentioned as worthwhile examples. For example, the main goal of the Saudi Deradicalization Program, which is to return extremists to the "true Islam." The program employs intensive religious instruction by deconstructing extremists' interpretation of the Holy Qur'an. Furthermore, the examples in Indonesia and Singapore, where rehabilitation programs based on the Saudi Arabian model have been established. Counseling and evaluation follows religious instruction.

Others noted that initiatives based on constructive means of dissuading people from expressing their beliefs or frustrations violently, promotion of religious tolerance, bolstering young people's resistance to recruitment, and equipping both convicted terrorists and prison officials with non-violent conflict resolution skills, are extremely important programs.

Speakers also noted that it is important to work with the mothers of extremists, to build their capacity in critical thinking, to be told what the indicators are if their child goes the wrong way, because it is always a mother who registers the first sign of resignation, anger, and attitude and behavioral change in a child's behavior.

Speakers stressed that the communities should take ownership of this whole process of rehabilitation and reintegration of the deradicalized youth. However, one size does not fit all and local contexts should be taken into account.

Key conclusions

There seemed to be convergence of views among speakers that one size does not fit all, that there are no quick fixes, and that a long-term commitment is required.

Many stressed out that the reasons for radicalization are complex and should be looked at in specific local contexts. They often converge around a combination of ideology (including religion), grievance, identity, economic factors, and the propaganda that feeds on them. However, elements differ from region to region.

When talking about the counter narrative to prevent violent extremism, trusted voices, mothers, fathers, relatives, teachers and friends, community leaders and religious leaders must be encouraged and empowered to engage and to take ownership of the problem of violent extremism and the interventions to prevent it. States and the international community should ensure their meaningful participation. Particular attention must be given to the special circumstances in the communities in which extremism emerges.

Former radicalized youth should be seen as a useful example in seeking to prevent and fight radicalization.

Governments and international organizations, such as the United Nations, must do everything in their power to break down the political and institutional deadlocks that prevent conflicts from being resolved.

Governments and the international community need to prioritize conflict prevention, resolution, and capacity building.

Finally, challenges related to prevention of violent extremism and counter-terrorism are continuous; there is a need to adopt a preventive approach which is sustainable.

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY HIGH LEVEL THEMATIC CONVERSATION ON
CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFFECTED BY VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations

3 June 2016

OPENING SESSION	
10:00am – 10:40am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly - H.E. Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General, United Nations - H.E. Mr. Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani, Minister of Foreign Affairs, State of Qatar - H.E. Mr. Jan Jambon, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Security and Home Affairs, Kingdom of Belgium - H.E. Mr. Nasser Judeh, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan - H.E. Mr. Tiémoko Touré, Minister for Youth Promotion, Employment of Young People and Civic Service, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire - Ms. Zaad AlKhair, 17-year old Syrian Refugee (video Message).

Moderator: **Prof. Peter Neumann**, Professor of Security Studies at the Department of War Studies, King's College London (*confirmed*)

High-level Interactive Panel Discussion I: Preventing Children and Youth from Radicalization

10:45am – 11:50am	<p>The panelists will focus on a number of the “push and pull” factors that may lead to radicalization. Panelists will be asked to present examples of good preventative practices, discuss challenges, and assess effectiveness and initiative. Presenters will also be asked to address how children and youth (including young women and girls) can be key actors in building resilience within their communities and in developing remedies and solutions.</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <p><i>Confirmed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Ahmed Aboutaleb, Mayor of Rotterdam, Netherlands - Mr. Ahmed Abaddi, Secretary-General, Rabita Mohammadia des Oulemas, Morocco - Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict
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High-level Interactive Panel Discussion II: From radicalization to Violent Extremism

11:55am – 1:00pm	<p>The panel will address context and point out risk factors – global and local that could push radicalized children and youth into violent extremism. The panel will also discuss lessons learned on ways to protect the rights of children and youth and to prevent them from falling into violent extremism.</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <p><i>Confirmed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi, SG Envoy on Youth
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dr. Omar Ashour, Senior Lecturer in Securities Studies and Director of Doctoral Studies, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter, UK - Mr. Herman Deparice-Okomba, Executive Director, Montreal's Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence, Canada
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High-level Interactive Panel Discussion III: Deradicalisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration

3:00pm - 4:30pm	<p>The panel will focus on sharing good practices and persisting challenges in promoting rehabilitation and social integration of children and youth who got involved with violent extremism and crime as well as in the response of criminal justice systems.</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <p><i>Confirmed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director, UNODC - Mr. Ercan Nik Nafs, Ombudsman for Children and Youth, Vienna - Mr. Mubinoddin Shaikh (PhD candidate), former Taliban radical - Mr. Jehangir Khan, Director CTITF
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High-level Interactive Panel Discussion IV: Multi-stakeholder Efforts

4:30pm - 5:50pm	<p>The session will address current efforts undertaken by UN agencies, foundations and private sector to support Member States to effectively deal with children and youth associated with violent extremist groups, including terrorist groups.</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <p><i>Confirmed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms. Mossarat Qadeem, The Institute for Inclusive Security - Mr. Mohammed AbdulAziz Al Naimi, CEO Silatech Foundation, State of Qatar - Colonel Yahya Abu Mughaid, <i>Director of Research</i>, Prince Mohammed Bin Naif Center for Counseling and Care, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
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CLOSING REMARKS

5:50pm - 6:00pm	H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft , President of the 70 th Session of the General Assembly
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6:30 pm – 8:30 pm	Reception (East Lounge)
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