

Concept Note

Special Meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Committee with Member States and relevant international and regional organisations, civil society and the private sector on “Preventing the Exploitation of Information and Communications Technologies for Terrorist Purposes, while Respecting Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms”

New York, 1 December 2016

I. Introduction

1. Member States continue to face a significant and growing threat from the abuse of information and communications technologies (ICTs), in particular the internet and social media, for terrorist purposes. The exploitation of ICTs – and of social media platforms, in particular – has notably enabled the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings, and entities to transmit their propaganda, share training materials, engage in the illicit trade in weapons, identify potential recruits, generate funds, and carry out attacks. ISIL’s online activity has also fuelled an unprecedented growth in the number of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) travelling to Iraq, Syria and Libya, as well as to other countries, where they continue to plan and carry out terrorist attacks.

2. The Security Council, in its resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005) and 2178 (2014), recognizes the potential of abuse of ICTs for terrorist purposes and calls upon all Member States to adopt such measures as may be necessary and appropriate and in accordance with their obligations under international law. In its resolution 2129 (2013), the Council notes the evolving nexus between terrorism and ICTs, in particular the Internet, and the use of such technologies to commit terrorist acts, and to facilitate such acts through their use to incite, recruit, fund, or plan terrorist acts. The resolution directs CTED to continue to address this issue in consultation with Member States, international, regional and subregional organizations, the private sector and civil society, and to advise the Counter-Terrorism Committee on further approaches.

3. In this vein, on 17 December 2015, pursuant to the Security Council’s presidential statement of 19 November 2015 (S/PRST/2014/23), the Counter-Terrorism Committee held a Special Meeting on “Preventing Terrorists from Exploiting the Internet and Social Media to Recruit Terrorists and Incite Terrorist Acts, While Respecting Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms”. The meeting included panellists from major ICT companies, including Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and Weibo. During the meeting, a number of challenges were discussed, including the applicability of domestic laws and the powers of States to enforce them; counter-narratives; international cooperation in the context of mutual legal assistance; and freedom of expression and the right to privacy. In this regard, a number of speakers stressed the need for governments and the private sector to strengthen their collaboration and to collect, identify, and share good practices. The Chair's summary of the special meeting stated that the Committee would continue to monitor this threat; assess the implementation of resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005), 2178 (2014) in this regard; and convene further related technical meetings.

4. Most recently, in its Presidential Statement of 11 May 2016 (S/PRST/2016/6), the Security Council noted the urgent need to globally counter the activities of ISIL (Da’esh), Al Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings, and entities to incite and recruit to commit terrorist acts.

In this regard, the Council requested the CTC to present a proposal for a comprehensive international framework with recommended guidelines and good practices to effectively counter, in compliance with international law, the ways in which ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertaking and entities use their narratives to encourage, motivate and recruit others to commit terrorist acts, including with a counter narrative campaign, as well as options for coordinating the implementation of the framework and mobilizing resources from governments, civil society actors, religious, educational, and cultural institutions, local communities and private sector industry partners.

II. Objective of the proposed event

5. In keeping with the Chair's summary of the Committee's meeting last December, the objective of the proposed event will be for the Committee, Member States, and relevant international and regional organisations, civil society and private sector actors to discuss technological and law enforcement challenges and effective measures taken in this area, within the framework of the implementation of resolution 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005) and 2178 (2014), to improve cooperation between Governments, the private sector and civil society, where appropriate, with a view to preventing and countering the relative ease with which terrorists utilize cyberspace for terrorist purposes.

6. The Security Council has recognized the importance of a comprehensive approach to preventing and countering the exploitation of ICTs for terrorist purposes, including governmental action such as appropriate legal and law enforcement measures as well as public-private collaboration, self-regulation by the private sector, and initiatives by civil society and other relevant actors. In follow-up to the Committee's initial discussions, the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005), 2178 (2014) and 2253 (2015) and General Assembly Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy will be discussed together with international cooperation, and the meeting will aim to share existing good practices together with the industry's efforts in self-regulation. A number of initiatives will be considered.

III. Format of discussions

7. The Special Meeting will be preceded by a series of CTED-organised preparatory technical sessions covering in more depth the topics covered at the Special Meeting. The Special Meeting will follow a "presentation and discussion" format to encourage interactive discussions among participants and will focus on the exploitation of ICTs for terrorist purposes.

8. The Committee Chair and Vice-Chairs will act as meeting Chairs and/or moderators.

9. Participants in the Special Meeting will be requested to raise issues and questions that relate to the above four aspects of exploitation of ICTs for terrorist purposes, only. As there will not be sufficient time to hear written statements, participating delegations will be requested to submit written statements to CTED for inclusion on a dedicated event website. CTED will circulate an annotated agenda, meeting documentation and other logistical information, which will also be posted on the Committee's website.

IV. Panellists and Rapporteurs

10. Proposed rapporteurs and panellists are indicated in the provisional agenda. CTED will submit a more detailed list, closer to the date of the event. CTED experts will serve as rapporteurs.

Representatives of Member States, relevant international and regional organisations, and other experts from civil society, academia, and the private sector will be invited to serve as panellists or otherwise to take part in the meeting, as appropriate.

V. Venue and date

11. The series of CTED-organised preparatory sessions and CTC Special Meeting will be held at United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 30 November to 1 December 2016.

VI. Outcome

12. The Committee will aim to collect, identify and share recommended good practices developed worldwide to effectively counter, in compliance with international law, the ways in which ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertaking and entities use their narratives to encourage, motivate and recruit others to commit terrorist acts. The Committee will propose an approach for its future work and that of its Executive Directorate with relevant interlocutors in addressing the abuse of ICTs, in particular the internet and social media, for terrorist purposes.

VII. Communications

13. In order to document the highlights of the discussions, the Committee will issue a press release and / or hold a press conference. The event will also be highlighted on the Committee's website.