

Concept note

Special meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Committee with Member States and relevant international and regional organizations on “Preventing Terrorists from Exploiting the Internet and Social Media to Recruit Terrorists and Incite Terrorist Acts, while Respecting Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms”

New York, 17 December 2015

I. Introduction

1. Terrorist groups have proved in recent years that they are particularly adept at utilizing the Internet and social media to facilitate their activities, including incitement to commit a terrorist act, radicalization to violence, recruitment, training, planning, collection of information, communication, preparation, financing and execution of attacks. In addition to Al-Qaida, one terrorist entity that has benefited significantly from ICT is the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as Daesh. ISIL and its supporters exploit the Internet as a means to broadcast its ideology and has made effective use of the vast reach and rapidly evolving communications environment provided by social media applications, which also serve as a highly effective tool for ISIL recruiters, who have succeeded in attracting a global pool of around 25,000 foreign fighters from over 100 States.

2. Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) calls upon all Member States to find ways of intensifying and accelerating the exchange of operational information, especially concerning the use of information and communication technology (ICT) by terrorist groups. It also provides that States shall refrain from providing any form of support, active or passive, to entities or persons involved in terrorist acts, including by suppressing recruitment of members of terrorist groups. Security Council resolution 1624 (2005) calls upon all States to adopt such measures as may be necessary and appropriate and in accordance with their obligations under international law to prohibit by law incitement to commit a terrorist act or acts and prevent such conduct. In its preamble, resolution 1624 (2005) recognizes the importance, in an increasingly globalized world, of cooperative action by States aimed at preventing terrorists from exploiting sophisticated technology, communications and resources to incite support for criminal acts. Security Council resolution 2178 (2014) calls upon Member States to act cooperatively when taking national measures to prevent and counter terrorists' exploitation of technology, communications and resources to incite support for terrorist acts, while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms and in compliance with other obligations under international law.

II. Objective of proposed special event

3. The objective of the proposed event will be for the Committee, Member States, and relevant international and regional organizations 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 Government and the private sector, with a view

to preventing and combating the relative ease with which terrorists utilize cyberspace for terrorist purposes. It is expected that participants in the special meeting will recommend a set of strategies to guide States and the private sector in their efforts to prevent terrorists from exploiting the Internet and social media to recruit terrorists and incite terrorist acts, while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms.

III. Format of discussions

4. The special meeting will be preceded by a series of CTED-organized preparatory technical sessions. The special meeting will follow a “presentation and discussion” format to encourage interactive discussion among participants and will focus on two key aspects of the exploitation of ICT by terrorists: (i) current threats and challenges related to the exploitation of ICT by terrorists; and (ii) the need for collaboration between the public and private sector to promote safety and positive speech.

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

6. Participants in the special meeting will be requested to raise issues and questions that relate to the above two aspects of terrorist exploitation of the Internet and social media, only. As there will not be sufficient time to hear written statements, participating delegations will be requested to submit 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.

7. The series of CTED-organized preparatory technical sessions will focus on the principal gaps in Member States’ capacities to implement resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005) that may hinder States’ and other stakeholders’ abilities to prevent terrorists from exploiting the Internet and social media, while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms; the approaches and measures they have developed/implemented to address them; as well as the successes and remaining challenges, and how to address them. These sessions will be held with the participation of Members of the Committee, interested Member States, relevant international and regional organizations, and representatives of civil society, academia and the private sector, prior to the special meeting. Rapporteurs will be appointed to ensure that the discussions held during the technical sessions are addressed in the relevant sessions of the special meeting.

IV. Panellists and Rapporteurs

8. Proposed rapporteurs and panellists are indicated in the provisional agenda. CTED will submit a more detailed list, closer to the date of the event. Members of the Committee or CTED experts will be invited to serve as rapporteurs. Representatives of Member States, relevant international and regional organizations, and other experts will be invited to serve as panellists. Because civil society, academia and the private sector play an important role in Internet and social media matters, representatives of those sectors will also be invited, upon the Committee’s approval, to take part in the meeting.