



**REGIONAL CONFERENCE
ON
COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

Deepening Cooperation in Countering Violent Extremism

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

**VENUE: KENYATTA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE (KICC),
NAIROBI, KENYA**

DATE: THURSDAY 25th TO 28th JUNE 2015

Overview

1. The Regional Conference on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in Africa was held in Nairobi on 25th- 28th June 2015 under the theme *Deepening Cooperation in Countering Violent Extremism*. The conference was hosted by the Government of the Republic of Kenya, and organised by the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government.
2. In attendance at this four day meeting were more than 500 delegates, including officials from 22 African governments, and 15 other governments that are important partners to Africa in combating violent extremism. Also participating were leaders from United Nations bodies such as the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), UN Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and pan-African regional institutions including the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, regional bodies, county and local government, civil society, religious authorities, the private sector, and academia.
3. Held at the Ministerial level, the conference was a follow up to the February 2015 White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism, and convened pursuant to United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2178 (2014) on enhancing international and regional cooperation to counter violent extremism (CVE). The outcomes of the regional conference as contained here-in will inform the Summit-level deliberations, scheduled on the side-lines of the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2015.

OBJECTIVES

4. The regional conference sought to increase awareness on, and insight of, the phenomena of violent extremism from an Africa-informed perspective, and to promote collaboration across the wide spectrum of actors from the government, civil society and the private sector at the local, national, regional and global levels. To achieve this, the meeting interrogated nine thematic areas – through expert-led panels and discussion group sessions for two days that build to a ministerial segment on the 3rd day of the conference. A fourth day training session for NGOs and government technical staff was organised to enable reflections on modalities of taking the outcomes of the meeting forward.
5. Demonstrating the strong political commitment of Kenya, the 2 days of expert presentations was opened by H.E. William S. Ruto, Deputy President of the Republic of Kenya, and H.E. Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H., President and Commander in Chief of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Kenya delivered a keynote speech, during the ministerial segment of the conference.

BROAD CONCLUSIONS

6. Participants:
 - a) *Noted* that violent extremism is a defining challenge for Africa and the world today and that it has no religion, no race, no ethnicity and nor culture. The recent experience in many African countries reveals that the threat of violent extremism is growing exponentially, wreaking havoc on economies, and causing widespread social upheaval, including growing inter and intra-faith intolerance. It is also threatening the rule of law, pluralism and causing political instability particularly in fledgling democracies. Indeed in many cases

it poses an existential threat to nation-states and the world order as it is known today.

b) *Further noted* the determination of the extremists to change the world as we know it today. In this regard, participants condemned the attacks on Tunisia (which left 39 people dead); Somalia (that left 35 AMISOM peacekeepers dead); France (that injured one person) and Kuwait (for the first time) that took place on the second day of the meeting; and reaffirmed a collective determination to bolster their efforts towards combating this vice.

c) *Acknowledged* that violent extremism is a transnational challenge that requires a trans-national response. As such, International solidarity, cooperation and vigilance is crucial in countering violent extremism.

7. **ON THE TYPOLOGIES AND DRIVERS OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN AFRICA:**

Participants;

a) *Appreciated* the opportunity afforded by the conference to deepen understanding on the growing complexity of the drivers and typologies of violent extremism as it manifests in multiple domains. Further, participants underscored that whichever way violent extremism manifests, its deleterious impacts on the political, economic and social order, as well as the wellbeing of communities and families, can no longer be gainsaid.

b) *Noted* that radicalization feeds into, and is closely tied to, violent extremism and terrorism, both of which can only be fully understood in the interplay of spheres in which extremism manifests, and in unpacking the *modus operandi* of extremists.

- c) *Observed* that drivers of violent extremism are multifaceted, and include fanatical ideology and the promise of material incentives, state fragility that is characterized by poor service delivery and porous borders.
 - d) *Concurred* that violent extremism, in particular Islamic fundamentalism, is part of a global political project that is driven by an ideology of self-affirmation rather than a reactive phenomenon (e.g. against oppression or marginalization)
8. Based on the discussions on the drivers and typologies, participants recommended a number of measures:
- a) The necessity to resist the political goal of extremist of imposing a perverted form of Islamist globalization, as well as their social goals, informed by a devaluation and rejection of secularism in management of public affairs, and other normative universalist precepts such as democracy, human rights, women's rights, freedom of religious practice and association, and even the abolition of slavery;
 - b) The imperative to confront the threat with a robust, adaptive and collaborative preventive efforts, including sharing of lessons learnt and best practices, with a view to destroying the radicalization pipeline and shrinking the pool for recruitment;
 - c) All actors to ensure that the voices of victims of violent extremism, who have first-hand knowledge of the glaring gap between the claims by attackers and the consequent reality, should be at the heart of messaging and narratives promoting de-radicalisation and de-legitimisation of extremism, and;

d) That notwithstanding different positions, interpretations of the drivers of extremism, spheres of work and domains of action, the participants shared a common aspiration to see an Africa that is better able to decisively tackle violent extremism.

9. ON LOCAL ARCHITECTURE AND DYNAMICS OF RADICALIZATION AND RECRUITMENT:

Participants;

a) *Noted* that local networks of radicalization and recruitment, which work at the behest of home-grown violent extremist and terrorist outfits, including Al-Shabaab and Boko-Haram, are inspired by the global violent religious extremism enterprise, most prominently driven by Al-Qaeda and Islamic State in Iraq & Syria (ISIS).

b) Observed that these local networks primarily exploit historical grievances held by vulnerable groups that may feel alienated, socially, economically and politically.

c) Increasingly, these networks recruit professionals and empowered individuals via idealized notions such as the establishment of a dominant global caliphate.

10. Based on the discussions, participants recommended the following measures to address the challenges of radicalization and recruitment;

a) The need to tighten the weak links in CVE by bridging the gaps in trust between communities and security agencies, and enhancing partnership between the state, civil society and the private sector;

b) All CVE stakeholders robustly challenge organised radicalisation nodes and networks. Where laws are broken in the process of

radicalisation, law enforcement must be robustly brought to bear, and;

- c) The avoidance of sub-optimal approaches such as collective blame, punishment and profiling based on faith.

11. ON DELEGITIMIZING VIOLENT EXTREMIST NARRATIVES:

Participants;

- a) Underscored the urgency of affected countries and communities to deflate the perverted narratives by extremist and entrench the correct messaging that promotes the values of plurality, universalism, democracy, freedom and tolerance as the basis of our common humanity.
- b) Discussed the need to focus on strengthening inclusive strategies and sharing experiences at all levels, and to adopt strategies that deepen the observance of shared core values underpinned the regional conference.
- c) Participants identified five essential elements of a successful CVE initiative including building of **Capability, Resilience, Adaptability, Collaboration and Knowledge (CRACK)**.

12. After intense discussions, participants recommended that to surmount the challenges posed by perverted extremist narratives, there is need for;

- a) Much broader action beyond what state institutions alone can do. It was noted that such action should be two-fold. On the one hand, it entails working together to **delegitimize narratives** that promote violent extremism.
- b) Need to engage at the various levels, including within the Islamic fraternity, between the community and the government, between national, regional and global actors.

- c) Reinforced social and political messaging; publicly, persistently and extensively anchored in constitutionality, human rights, pluralism, and democracy as key to delegitimising violent extremist narrative.
- d) Informed responses by a coherent and persuasive strategic narrative, recognizing that the enemy comes in the form of a network and is not a conventional hierarchical outfit. The network should therefore be disaggregated and corresponding appropriate means be allocated to target specific segments.
- e) Commitment to expanding the **engagement with different strategic audiences** locally, nationally, regionally and internationally.

13. ON THE ROLE OF PRIVATE SECTOR IN COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM:

Participants;

- a) *Observed* that violent extremism impacts the private sector in many ways, including asset losses and increased costs of doing business.
- b) *Noted* with concern that private sector financial infrastructure and innovations in technology and social media often inadvertently aid operations of extremists.
- c) *Welcomed* the growing keenness on the part of the private sector to be part of the efforts towards combating violent extremism.

14. Drawing on discussions on this matter, participants recommended that to surmount the challenges posed by violent extremism in the private sector;

- a) There is need to step up contribution to CVE efforts, including through cooperation in technological innovations to strengthen capabilities of security agencies.
- b) There is need to step up collaboration with relevant government agencies in stemming financial flows to extremists, and that;
- c) There is need for enhancing resource mobilization for corporate social responsibility programmes that benefit communities.

15. ON EFFECTIVE NGO PROGRAMMING FOR CVE:

Participants;

- a) Underscored the value of close collaboration between government and Non-State Actors (NSAs) working with communities (including NGOs, CBOs) in the re-energized fight against violent extremism.
- b) Observed that NSAs possess vital knowledge to promote community and family centered approaches that can equip these basic units of social organization to be at the forefront of CVE.
- c) Noted that messaging in CVE is more effective when the message carriers are authentic, high-trust institutions such as grassroots-focused organizations that can rebut the language of mass indoctrination and mobilization used by extremists.

16. Participants recommended that to address challenges faced by NSA's in tackling CVE ;

- a) There is need for utilizing transparent criteria to support NGOs and CBOs employed in effective local CVE work to scale their efforts for maximum effect.

- b) Develop and roll out continuous programs for information on best practices between states, sub-national governments and NGOs/CSOs.
- c) Create safe 'points-of-contact' for concerned family members, friends and neighbours of radicalised individuals, and, support knowledgeable and credible local NGOs and CBOs, to reach out to them for the sake of de-radicalisation

17. ON PROMOTING RESEARCH AND LEARNING FOR EVIDENCE - DRIVEN CVE ACTION:

Participants;

- a) Stressed that CVE strategies need to be anchored on evidence based research which would enable discovery of trends, linkages and patterns of support, and provide invaluable help to decision makers for evidence based action.
- b) Noted the dearth of conceptual clarity and methodological rigour in existing research on violent extremism in Africa. This is in part due to the lack of funding for primary research, which in turn has contributed to researchers opting for simpler and cheaper research methodologies.

18. Participants recommended that to address challenges in researching extremism, there is need for:

- a) Bridging the dis-connect and mutual distrust between the community of researchers working on violent extremism, and practitioners;

- b) Enhanced support by government, private sector and development partners for multidisciplinary research that transcends existing “us versus them” dichotomies;
- c) Establishment of well-resourced and dedicated counter-terrorism centers of excellence and research units in local universities, and;
- d) Clarification by policy makers of the areas in which research outputs are required, to enable conduct of locally relevant and actionable research, and increase prospects for implementation of resulting recommendations.

19. ON THE ROLE OF MEDIA AND INTERNET IN CVE:

Participants;

- a) Observed that whereas traditional media operates within a framework regulated by the state, and is bound by laws, tradition and culture to be fair and balanced; its scope is diminishing with the advent of the new media;
- b) Noted that the social media and internet (new media) is open to both mainstream society as well as to extremists, and largely operates outside the confines of regulation and moderation;
- c) Further noted with deep concern the phenomenon of self-radicalization through the new media, including in hitherto safe places such as schools, social centres, religious institutions and prisons;
- d) The social media is predisposed to flagrant abuse and renders states vulnerable because, *inter alia*;
 - (i) It is difficult to counter the “de-bordering” power of cyberspace.

- (ii) Information distribution and access is democratized, thus allowing anyone, including those uninhibited by ethical considerations to be journalists/correspondents.
- (iii) The internet is increasingly used as a tool of geo-political manipulation, for spreading insurgency and de-legitimizing governments.
- (iv) The internet is “a curse of the modern”, providing a powerful tool for communication but also serving as an agent of negative extremist influence through, glorification of violence and the deconstruction of social mores.

20. After discussions, participants recommended that to enhance the role of media and internet in effective CVE, there is need to;

- a) Explore good practices in the use of internet, related technology and the media in countering violent extremism;
- b) Do more to reduce the ability of extremist groups abusing social media and internet for messaging, mobilization and recruitment, and;
- c) Strike a balance between encouraging the growth of internet use for constructive development and information dissemination, and safeguarding societal and national norms, security and culture.

21. ON DEVELOPING NATIONAL CVE PLANS:

Participants;

- a) Noted that National Counter Violent Extremism plans should reflect a multiagency approach within government, involve collaboration with effective civil society actors, and be aligned to broader peace and security agendas at national, regional and international levels.

22. Participants recommended that the development and implementation of a national CVE plan should;

- a) Be inclusive, holistic (incorporating hard and soft methods), informed by locally appropriate messaging delivered by authentic, high-trust institutions and individuals;
- b) View CVE from both religious and cultural lenses, and consider reforming religious education to incorporate comparative religion, and inform training of clerics for the purposes of promoting authentic religious values;
- c) Offer pathways away from violent extremism through dialogue, outreach and addressing the social and economic conditions that provide pull factors to extremism. Progress in these lines of action should be closely monitored and characterized by accountability to a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

23. **ON EFFECTIVE PARTNERING IN CVE:**

Participants;

- a) Stressed the importance of partnering more effectively and building a framework for joint strategizing, noting that violent extremist groups are themselves partnering, learning from one another, and even franchising. A good starting point is to progressively narrow the “trust deficit” between governments and civil society organizations.
- b) While welcoming the passing of UN Security Council Resolution 2178(2014), participants observed that globally and regionally, much still remains to be done to create strong, lasting and effective partnerships in intelligence and experience sharing, developing a learning and research culture that feeds CVE, and undertaking the

community-level developmental efforts that undermine the appeal of violent extremism.

24. Participants recommended that for enhanced and effective partnership;

- a) The United Nations and Regional Organisations should step up their concrete efforts and capabilities to support national CVE initiatives particularly in encouraging the sharing of best practices, supporting local and national research;
- b) The multilateral system should develop or improve mechanisms that prevent the flow of foreign fighters, ensure that violent extremists and terrorists are unable to exploit refugee hosting and movement programmes, and give added support to countries hosting refugees fleeing violent extremism and terrorism;
- c) The central role of the government in security and particularly CVE needs to be emphasized;
- d) Called for avoidance of parallel structures in CVE efforts for synergy and coherence, and;
- e) Underscored the importance of monitoring and evaluation in order to track progress and follow through in order to see what works and what challenges remain to be surmounted.

CONCLUSION

25. Welcomed the diversity of the actors in the conference as a solid base on which to build the necessary and collaborative interaction for the full legitimacy of decision-making within nation-states and communities and agreed to explore areas of partnership that can quickly bear fruits as well as longer-term investments in CVE.

26. Finally, the participants reaffirmed their collective commitment to continue to deepen their engagement to tackle violent extremism, promote transformation of societies and economies, and to advance the pursuit of fair, just and tolerant societies in which all can live a life of dignity and opportunity.

NAIROBI, 27TH JUNE 2015