

The White House Summit to Counter Violent Extremism
Ministerial Meeting
February 19, 2015

Statement

Ministers from more than 60 countries, the High Representative and Vice President of the European Union, the United Nations Secretary-General, the Secretaries General of the Council of Europe, the League of Arab States, Organization of American States, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the African Union's Peace and Security Commissioner, and representatives from civil society and the private sector met today in Washington during the Ministerial segment of the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) to develop a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder action agenda against violent extremism and to chart a path for progress that will include a leaders-level summit on the margins of the United National General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2015.

In the course of wide-ranging discussions, participants, *inter alia*,

- condemned the recent terrorist attacks in places such as Afghanistan, Denmark, Egypt, France, Kenya, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen, as well as in Iraq and Syria and other countries, underscoring the need to resolve crises and prevent new conflicts that provide opportunities for terrorists to flourish, and intensify efforts to counter the recruitment and radicalization to terrorist violence, including those who are willing to conduct attacks in their home countries and those who travel overseas and join terrorist groups, including Da'esh, al-Qa'ida and its affiliates, Ansar Al-Sharia entities, Boko Haram, and al-Shabaab.
- underscored their commitment to countering violent extremism in all of its forms and manifestations that lead to terrorism, as well as addressing the drivers of this extremism, and stressed that the term "violent extremism" like "terrorism," should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization, or ethnic group, and reaffirmed their determination to stand against any manifestation of religious-based discrimination wherever it may reveal itself.
- reaffirmed that intelligence gathering, military force, and law enforcement alone will not solve – and when misused can in fact exacerbate – the problem of violent extremism and reiterated that comprehensive rule of law and community-based strategies are an essential part of the global effort to counter violent extremism and, like all measures aimed at addressing the terrorist threat, should be developed and implemented in full compliance with international law, in particular international human rights law, international refugee law, and international humanitarian law, as well as with the principles and purposes of the UN Charter.
- reaffirmed the central role of the UN in efforts to address violent extremism and the comprehensive framework that the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy offers for addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, and acknowledged the

commitments in UN Security Council Resolution 2178, welcoming the attention in the resolution to the role of communities in countering violent extremism.

- recognized that violent extremists may seek to destabilize governments and sow internal frictions within societies and underscored the importance of upholding and preserving democratic principles, and promoting the rule of law to address these challenges.
- emphasized that effectively preventing the spread of violent extremism in different communities requires localized, specialized, and expanded efforts, thus reinforcing the need to further empower youth, families, and women, as well as religious, cultural and education leaders, and all other concerned civil society actors, and to adopt tailored approaches, including those sensitive to local cultures and religious beliefs, to addressing this phenomenon.
- noted the importance of ensuring that civil society has an enabling environment to develop, promote, and advance comprehensive solutions to address violent extremism and that laws and policies designed to address violent extremism should not be used to stifle enjoyment of freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and association or movement.
- welcomed the opportunity to share good practices and efforts to mobilize expertise, resources, and political will, and effective strategies and programs to counter terrorist recruitment and radicalization to violence.
- highlighted the need to explore how development and other relevant foreign assistance can contribute to addressing populations at risk of cooptation or recruitment by violent extremists and the conditions conducive to radicalization to violence.
- underscored the need to build secure and resilient communities that reject and condemn violent extremism, including by expanding the role of youth and women, and by strengthening cooperation between the local police and the community and, where relevant, community-security force relations.
- recognized that marginalized communities and protracted conflicts can provide fertile ground for violent extremism, and emphasized the need to resolve outstanding conflicts and focus more on addressing social, economic, and political marginalization as part of a wider effort to ensure government responsiveness to the needs and grievances of their populations,
- considered how to best cultivate economic, vocational, and educational opportunities for members of communities that are vulnerable to recruitment and radicalization to violence, and in this context, stressed the important contribution that the private sector can make to stemming the spread of violent extremism, which affects businesses globally, disrupts markets, and hurts workers and the supply chains on which businesses depend on and that communities rely on to furnish goods and services

- emphasized the need to intensify efforts to counter violent extremist messaging and narratives, including through social media, particularly in order to effectively counter the techniques and strategies being used by Da'esh and other terrorist groups to recruit.
- acknowledged the importance of identifying and amplifying credible and authentic voices, expanding religious and other education that promotes tolerance, peace, and achieving justice through non-violence, and supporting the role of victims of terrorism in highlighting the human cost of violent extremism and “formers” in providing a convincing alternative to violent extremist narratives.
- stressed the need to build mutual respect and understanding among people of different faiths and cultures and recognized the importance of expanding ongoing efforts to promote inter-faith dialogue, people-to-people engagements, and academic and cultural exchanges, including for the purpose of ensuring respect for all religions, religious values, beliefs, and cultures.
- recalled the UN Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18¹ as an important tool to counter radicalization to violence, marginalization, and alienations; and called for its effective implementation by the international community as a means to deprive radical groups and individuals of any justification for violent extremism on the grounds of ethno-religious stigmatization and discrimination.
- encouraged the UN, including through the UN Counter-Terrorism Center (UNCCT), and other multilateral bodies, including regional organizations, to intensify efforts to identify and address the local drivers of violent extremism, as part of wider effort to strengthen international cooperation in this area; in this context they welcomed the efforts the Global Counterterrorism Forum, in particular the good practices it has developed which can serve as a valuable basis for guiding further action and developing non-binding, concrete guidance and tools for effectively preventing and countering violent extremism.
- highlighted, in particular, the efforts of two innovative international initiatives focused on empowering local actors to address the challenge of violent extremist – the *Hedayah* Center in Abu Dhabi and GCERF (the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund) in Geneva.

Emphasizing the importance of the action agenda against violent extremism outlined during the Ministerial meeting, participants underscored their intention, individually and collectively and on a voluntary basis, to make concrete progress on its implementation, including through a multi-stakeholder process that will culminate with a leaders’ summit against violent extremism on the margins of the 2015 meeting of the UN General Assembly. As in other multi-stakeholder processes such as the Open Government Partnership, it was understood that civil society representatives can participate on an equal basis with governments and the private sector during this process.

¹Titled “Combatting intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief.”

In this regard, follow-on efforts should include, *inter alia*, a number of work-streams, with each to be led by one or more participating delegation and to involve interested meeting participants and other relevant stakeholders.

These work-streams include:

1. Promoting local research and information sharing on the drivers of violent extremism in all of its forms and on how to counter them;
2. Strengthening the role, while preserving the independence, of civil society, in particular youth and women, in countering and preventing violent extremism;
3. Strengthening community-police and community-security force relations, on the basis of respect of human rights, as part of a holistic strategy to counter and prevent the spread of violent extremism;
4. Using strategic communications, including via social media, to counter violent extremist messaging – and delegitimize the violent extremist ideology – and build a global movement to offer positive, alternative pathways for vulnerable groups, especially youth and women;
5. Elevating the role of credible and authentic religious voices that support tolerance and non-violence and more broadly promoting educational initiatives to build resilience against extremist recruiting;
6. Preventing radicalization to violence in prisons and rehabilitating and reintegrating violent extremists;
7. Identifying and funding political and economic opportunities for communities that are vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment to violence; and
8. Exploring how development and other relevant foreign assistance can contribute to addressing areas at risk of cooptation or recruitment by violent extremists.

Among the follow-on regional and/or thematic summits, events, and other initiatives in key locations around the world that will, *inter alia*, help make progress on these work-streams, include ones planned for Albania, Algeria, the AU, Australia, Denmark, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Norway, OSCE/Vienna, and Singapore (the East Asia Summit Symposium). Further, and consistent with the desire to make better use of existing multilateral platforms, there was support for utilizing in particular the upcoming activities of the UN as well as the Global Counterterrorism Forum, and regional organizations, to advance this effort. In addition to these government and multilateral organization-led multi-stakeholder initiatives, interested representatives of the private sector and civil society were encouraged to organize independent activities aimed at making progress on one or more of the work-streams.

In conclusion, participants will meet in September in New York on the margins of the UNGA to share progress achieved since this Ministerial meeting and to provide an opportunity for leaders from governments, multilateral organizations, civil society, and the private sector to announce strategies and concrete programs and initiatives aimed at addressing the drivers of violent extremism.