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Culture of peace

A world against violence and violent extremism

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report sets out how the United Nations system has supported and contributed to the comprehensive implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/241](#), entitled “A world against violence and violent extremism”. This system-wide effort received renewed impetus in 2018 with the establishment of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact. The report also includes concluding observations and recommendations on how the partnerships between the United Nations and Member States, regional organizations and other key actors can be further strengthened to tackle violent extremism and help to create more peaceful, inclusive and tolerant societies.

* [A/74/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. The present report is issued pursuant to General Assembly resolution [72/241](#), entitled “A world against violence and violent extremism”, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its seventy-fourth session on the implementation of said resolution and to recommend ways and means by which the United Nations system and the Secretariat could assist Member States, upon their request and within existing resources, in generating public awareness about the dangers of intolerance, as well as in fostering understanding and non-violence.

2. The growing and insidious threat of violent extremism is one of the most significant challenges facing the international community. In recent months, horrific attacks against places of worship and other soft targets have claimed many innocent lives, spread fear and contributed to growing polarization and intolerance around the world. Some of those attacks have fed off each other and led to retaliatory violence and discrimination, playing further into the narratives, tactics and agendas of violent extremists.

3. At a time of increasing tensions between nations and divisions among people, there has also been an alarming increase in hate speech directed at racial, national, ethnic and religious communities, non-believers and women, which threatens human rights and undermines the common goal of promoting just, peaceful and inclusive societies. Hatemongers and violent extremists continue to exploit the Internet and social media to spread their poisonous narratives, foment divisions and incite and glorify violence.

4. Violent extremism is a varied and evolving phenomenon that manifests itself in different ways around the world. It cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group. The full spectrum of violent extremism therefore needs to be addressed, including the growing threat posed by far-right and supremacist groups if the alarming escalation of hate-based violence is to be tackled.

5. While nothing can justify violent extremism, it must also be acknowledged that it does not arise in a vacuum. Narratives built on perceived or actual grievances, promised empowerment and sweeping change become attractive where human rights are violated, good governance and the rule of law are ignored, anxieties are left unaddressed and aspirations are being crushed.

6. Member States have the primary responsibility for tackling violent extremism, hate speech, xenophobia and other forms of bigotry. Preventing violence is a commitment and an obligation under the principles and values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments. Member States must ensure that any measures taken to combat violent extremism conducive to terrorism, as well as incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence, comply with their obligations under international law, including international human rights law.

7. The Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism ([A/70/674](#)) provides a comprehensive framework to address the drivers of violent extremism in the context of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The Plan of Action stresses the importance of fully engaging and empowering women, young people and local communities to build resilience against violent extremism conducive to terrorism. In its resolutions [70/291](#) and [72/284](#) on the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review, the General Assembly recommended that Member States consider the implementation of relevant recommendations of the Plan of Action, as applicable to the national context.

II. Implementation of resolution 72/241 by the United Nations system

8. Thanks to the Secretary-General's reform of the United Nations counter-terrorism architecture, the implementation of resolution 72/241 by the United Nations system has benefited from a more streamlined and better coordinated institutional framework to prevent and counter violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

9. In line with its mandate from the General Assembly, the Office of Counter-Terrorism of the United Nations provides policy and coordination leadership to ensure that due priority is given to tackling violent extremism in the context of promoting and supporting the comprehensive and balanced implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy by Member States. The launch of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact in December 2018 was another major step forward in strengthening the collective approach of the United Nations, while respecting existing mandates. To date, 36 United Nations entities, in addition to the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organization, have become members of the Compact.

10. Within the new Global Compact framework, the Secretary-General chairs a high-level action group to spearhead the implementation by the United Nations of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism in an integrated and collaborative manner that draws on the strengths and expertise of all relevant entities. The Office of Counter-Terrorism acts as the secretariat for the high-level action group and chairs a Global Compact working group on preventing and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism, with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations as vice-chairs. This is one of eight revitalized and streamlined working groups established under a coordination committee chaired by the Under-Secretary-General of the Office of Counter-Terrorism to oversee the implementation of the Global Compact, based on the thematic priorities of Member States and aligned with the four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

11. Through joint capacity-building projects, joint resource mobilization and enhanced information-sharing, Global Compact entities have been able to leverage their comparative advantages and enhance their support to Member States in order to make an impact on the ground in terms of preventing and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

A. Overview of United Nations projects and initiatives to address violent extremism

12. In its resolutions 70/291 and 72/284, the General Assembly encouraged United Nations entities, in line with their mandates, to implement relevant recommendations of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, including by providing technical assistance to Member States upon their request. This work is guided by the principle of national ownership, whereby Member States have the primary responsibility for tackling violent extremism and take the lead, while the United Nations provides support.

13. All United Nations assistance to Member States in addressing violent extremism is based on fundamental respect for human rights and the rule of law and must comply with the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces. The United Nations is committed to integrating gender

aspects in its efforts and ensuring that all its activities in this regard are gender-sensitive and reflect the human rights, needs, agency and leadership of women. The Secretary-General has also instructed the United Nations system to prioritize engaging and empowering young people as partners in efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism, which will help with delivering the ambitious United Nations Youth Strategy.

14. Through the Global Compact, the Office of Counter-Terrorism has mapped 410 projects that have been completed or are being implemented by the United Nations at the global, regional and national levels to support Member States in preventing and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism. These projects cover all seven priority areas of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism: 64 projects are aimed at fostering dialogue and conflict prevention; 94 are focused on strengthening good governance, human rights and the rule of law; 55 are related to engaging communities; 60 are focused on empowering young people; 32 seek to increase gender equality and empower women; 87 seek to improve education, skills development and employment facilitation; and 42 cover strategic communications, the Internet and social media. In terms of the geographical scope, 104 projects are global, while 133 are regional and 173 are national. Finally, 167 specific projects are focused on Africa, 73 on the Middle East and North Africa, 102 on Asia, 16 on Europe and 13 on the Americas.

15. In its resolution [72/241](#), the General Assembly highlighted the thematic areas for action by the international community discussed in sections C to J below, many of which were also reflected in the seven priority areas of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

B. United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech

16. As a complement to the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, the Secretary-General launched the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech on 18 June 2019, which was developed following an inter-agency consultation led by his Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. The Strategy and Plan of Action set out concrete measures to enhance the efforts of the United Nations to support Member States in tackling the root causes and drivers of hate speech, in line with the Secretary-General's prevention vision, and implementing effective responses to the devastating impact of hate speech on societies, in collaboration with civil society, the private sector and other partners. They also fully reflect international human rights norms and standards, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression. They leverage existing United Nations initiatives, including those linked to the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence ([A/HRC/22/17/Add.4](#), appendix). Indeed, addressing hate speech is everybody's responsibility and a goal better achieved by leveraging collaboration and cooperation. To follow up on the Strategy and Plan of Action, the United Nations will organize in the near future a ministerial-level conference on the role of education in addressing and building resilience against hate speech.

C. Strategies to address the causes of violent extremism

17. In its resolutions [70/291](#) and [72/284](#), the General Assembly invited Member States and regional and subregional organizations to consider developing national and regional plans of action to prevent violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism, in accordance with their priorities. United Nations entities have increased

their efforts to provide support in this regard, upon request. In 2018, the Office of Counter-Terrorism published a reference guide on developing national and regional action plans to prevent violent extremism, in which it outlined overarching, substantive and procedural principles derived from good practice for the development of national and regional plans to prevent violent extremism. The Office also launched a global programme, in a strategic partnership with UNDP, to facilitate the provision of technical assistance, upon request, for the development and implementation of such plans.

18. The United Nations has thus supported the League of Arab States, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Caribbean Community, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, Southern African States and Central Asian States in developing their regional plans and strategies to counter terrorism or to prevent and counter violent extremism. The United Nations has also provided support to a growing number of requesting Member States, including Chad, the Central African Republic, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, the Philippines, Somalia, the Sudan, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, by helping them to develop and implement national plans of action.

19. As articulated in its strategic framework entitled “Preventing violent extremism through inclusive development and the promotion of tolerance and respect for diversity”, UNDP is supporting development efforts that target the root causes and structural drivers of violent extremism. The focus of its preventive approach, as outlined in its global programme on development solutions to prevent violent extremism (2017–2020), is on the relationship between peaceful societies and inclusive development, the rule of law and human rights, anti-corruption efforts, good governance, civic engagement and political participation, and on addressing the horizontal inequalities that fuel radicalization that can lead to violent extremism. For instance, the UNDP Regional Service Centre for Africa has developed a six-year regional project on “Preventing and responding to violent extremism in Africa: a development approach”, which is designed to address the immediate, structural and underlying factors that foster the growth of violent extremism.

20. The core mandate areas of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, namely the prevention and resolution of conflict and sustaining peace, are geared towards preventing the emergence of conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism and seek to support resilient societies and responsive Governments. The Department follows a comprehensive approach to support the efforts of Member States to prevent violent extremism that extends beyond traditional peace and security issues, and it seeks to analyse and help to address the underlying drivers of violent extremism, such as marginalization, exclusion and inequality. Much of the Department’s core peace and security work in the field is carried out by means of special political missions, some of which, along with peace operations led by the Department of Peace Operations, are deployed in environments characterized by the presence of violent extremist elements.

21. Special political missions and peace operations play an important role in addressing the drivers of violent extremism by supporting inclusive political processes that help to address grievances, facilitate local reconciliation and assist national authorities with establishing and strengthening accountable and effective institutions involved in the rule of law and security issues. For example, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali helps to reinforce the security and safe and humane custody of high-risk prisoners, which minimizes the risks of radicalization and violent extremism in prisons. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) supported the development and implementation of the national strategy and action plan of Somalia for preventing and

countering violent extremism. UNSOM also provided strategic policy advice with regard to the disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration of former Al-Shabaab combatants. To support the development of regional technical capacity, the African Union, in collaboration with the Department of Peace Operations, the World Bank and the United Nations Office to the African Union, developed specific operational guidance on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and its linkage with countering violent extremism. As part of the third phase of the regional project entitled “Joint Plan of Action for the Implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia”, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, the capacity-building arm of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, organized a regional workshop on addressing conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism and terrorism in Central Asia, in Nur-Sultan, in May 2018.

22. Understanding the complex relationships between women, gender and violent extremism is critical to prevention efforts. Women are not exclusively victims; they play various roles and some actively support violent extremist groups by grooming and recruiting others, raising funds and participating in violence. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), in collaboration with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, has conducted gender-sensitive research on the drivers of radicalization leading to terrorism among women and on the impacts of counter-terrorism strategies on women’s human rights and women’s organizations. In February 2019, the Executive Directorate published a trends report entitled “Gender dimensions of the response to returning foreign terrorist fighters: research perspectives”. UN-Women also promotes conflict-resilient and tolerant societies able to address the drivers of violent extremism conducive to terrorism through prevention efforts that facilitate the participation and leadership of women and the protection of their rights.

D. Respecting and protecting human rights and the rule of law

23. The United Nations has been unequivocal in upholding that all legislation, policies, strategies and practices to prevent and counter violent extremism conducive to terrorism must respect and protect universal human rights and the rule of law. This includes respect for freedom of beliefs, freedom of expression, in particular by the media and on the Internet, and freedom from discrimination of any kind. The United Nations continues to encourage Member States to focus measures to address violent extremism on the actual conduct of individuals and groups, rather than the beliefs or opinions that they hold. When the efforts of Member States disregard the rule of law and violate international law, they not only contradict the values that they seek to uphold, but they may also fuel violent extremism conducive to terrorism. On the contrary, when Member States embrace international human rights norms and standards, promote good governance, uphold the rule of law and eliminate corruption, they help to build social cohesion, promote tolerance and reduce the appeal of violent extremism.

24. United Nations entities have provided technical assistance to Member States to ensure that their efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism conducive to terrorism fully respect and protect human rights and the rule of law. For example, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has worked with the Legal Aid Council of Nigeria to deliver training to defence counsels to ensure that Boko Haram suspects in the country are brought to trial with due process. UNODC is also strengthening the capacity of the judicial anti-terrorism unit and specialized anti-terrorism chambers in Niger to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate terrorism cases effectively while respecting human rights.

25. In June 2018, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) launched its *Guidance to States on Human Rights-compliant Responses to the Threat Posed by Foreign Fighters*, developed through the Global Compact, which provides concrete guidance to Member States in their efforts to implement Security Council resolutions [2178 \(2014\)](#) and [2396 \(2017\)](#). The publication includes a chapter on preventing and countering violent extremism and incitement to terrorism with advice on human rights.

26. The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism has continued to gather, request, receive and exchange information on alleged violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism. In her latest report to the Human Rights Council ([A/HRC/40/52](#)), she highlighted the misuse of security measures to prevent and counter violent extremism against legitimate activities protected by international law, especially those undertaken by civil society and human rights defenders.

27. In July 2018, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre established the comprehensive Victims of Terrorism Support Programme to stand in solidarity with victims, better support and promote their rights and needs and make their voices better heard in order to contribute to resilience and prevention. The Centre also published the “Handbook of good practices to support victims’ associations in Africa and the Middle East” to strengthen knowledge and understanding of how to support victims in such a way as to prevent violent extremism. A similar handbook will follow for Asia.

E. Preventing violence against women

28. Women of all ages are also deliberate targets of violent extremist acts. Violence against women and girls has become a common tactic for violent extremist groups to generate revenue, terrorize, suppress and subjugate entire communities, including through the use of sexual violence and sexual slavery, forced marriages and preventing access to education. In many instances, women have been coerced or persuaded to join violent extremist groups and to engage in violent acts, while some do so out of their own conviction.

29. The United Nations is committed to preventing all violence against women and promoting the rights, participation, leadership and empowerment of women in policies, strategies and programmes to prevent and counter violent extremism conducive to terrorism. This includes supporting women-led civil society organizations that are actively tackling violent extremism by building social cohesion, tolerance and community resilience and leading efforts to de-radicalize and reintegrate former violent extremists. One of the eight Global Compact working groups is focused on adopting a gender-sensitive approach to preventing and countering terrorism, under the chairmanship of UN-Women.

30. UN-Women has highlighted the important role of women in preventing and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism, the targeting of women’s human rights by terrorist groups and the impact of counter measures on women’s rights and women’s organizations. It has also implemented research projects to explore different aspects of women’s roles in preventing violent extremism and the impact of violent extremism in East Africa, the Sahel, Central Asia, the Balkans and South and Southeast Asia. UN-Women supports women-led civil society organizations to strengthen trust and interaction with security sector actors and processes. Together with OHCHR, it has developed a guidance note on gender mainstreaming in programmes to prevent violent extremism.

31. In order to develop the evidence base for new programming efforts related to gender aspects to address violent extremism, UNDP published a global study entitled *Invisible Women: Gendered Dimensions of Return, Reintegration and Rehabilitation* in January 2019, in partnership with the International Civil Society Action Network and in response to a pressing need for action-oriented research on the roles of women and the work of women-led organizations in reintegration and rehabilitation processes. The study considers the experiences of women and women-led organizations as critical lessons for the design and implementation of effective measures against violent extremism.

32. UNODC seeks to mainstream gender perspectives, eliminate discrimination and strengthen respect for women's human rights across the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of terrorism cases. This includes a specific focus on accountability for sexual and gender-based violence committed by terrorist groups and assistance for victims. In May 2019, UNODC published the "Handbook on gender dimensions of criminal justice responses to terrorism", in which it addressed legal and policy frameworks, as well as good practices, for investigating and prosecuting terrorism offences more effectively by incorporating a gender perspective.

33. UNESCO has supported Member States in adopting, reviewing or strengthening legal frameworks for media from a gender equality perspective for preventing incitement to hatred and any form of gender-based stereotyping and violence in the media, including in ways that may lead to violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

F. Advancing sustainable development

34. The interdependence between preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism and promoting sustainable development is increasingly recognized. Sustainable development cannot take hold in countries where there is endemic violence or conflict. Violent extremism, hate speech and other forms of bigotry aggravate perceptions of insecurity and can lead to repeated outbreaks of violence that hinder inclusive economic growth. By exploiting development challenges, such as inequalities, poverty and poor governance, violent extremist groups exacerbate these grievances and create a vicious cycle of decline, which particularly affects marginalized groups.

35. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is one of the most effective and catalytic frameworks available to Member States for preventing conflict and violence of all kinds, especially Sustainable Development Goal 16 on building peaceful, just and inclusive societies. An increase in levels of inclusion and tolerance in communities can lead both to better governance and to societies better able to withstand violent extremist ideologies and to challenge those who espouse them.

36. The United Nations has supported Member States in mobilizing efforts to eradicate poverty and illiteracy, tackle climate change and reduce inequalities, both within and among nations, in order to leave no one behind, which contributes to preventing violent extremism. UNDP helps to ensure that national and regional plans of action to prevent violent extremism fully integrate a sustainable development approach. It assisted the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin Commission with the development of the Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region, which was adopted in August 2018. The strategy includes a pillar related to preventing violent extremism that focuses on the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, reinsertion and reintegration of persons associated with Boko Haram.

G. Contributing to education and skills development

37. The Secretary-General strongly believes that providing high-quality education and skills development opportunities is one of the most effective ways to empower young people and prevent and counter violent extremism. The United Nations is supporting Member States in delivering programmes and policies that promote global citizenship education, tolerance and respect for diversity and human rights. For example, UNESCO is implementing globally more than 150 activities to prevent violent extremism, through education, the empowerment of young people, communication and information and the defence of cultural heritage.

38. In Iraq, UNESCO has launched the first phase of its initiative “Reviving the spirit of Mosul”, which involves training more than 500 teachers to help to prevent violent extremism through an inclusive and integrated vision for recovery and reconstruction based on culture and education. In June 2018, UNESCO collaborated with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to produce the publication entitled *Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education – Guidelines for Policymakers*, which contains suggestions for building the resilience of young people against anti-Semitic ideas and all forms of intolerance and discrimination. UNESCO has also launched a joint project with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre on preventing violent extremism through youth empowerment in Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, which is supporting local initiatives driven by young people in the fields of education, science, culture and the media to equip young people with the knowledge, tools and skills that they need to counter radicalization and violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

39. The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre has expanded its efforts to leverage vocational training in order to impart skills that build resilience to violent extremism conducive to terrorism and increase employment prospects for young people. It has partnered with the International Labour Organization and national agencies to train more than 370 technical and vocational training institutes in Bangladesh and Pakistan on effective skills development, job placement, civil engagement, tolerance and inclusion, so that they may help young adults to secure decent employment to support their families. In Pakistan, the Centre has also delivered direct training to young juveniles in prisons on marketable trades, such as electrical maintenance, tailoring and motorcycle mechanics. It is planning to expand this initiative upon request to other countries in South and Southeast Asia, as well as in the Middle East, North Africa and the Horn of Africa.

40. Since 2016, the Young Peacebuilders programme of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations has trained young women and men from Western Africa, the Middle East and North Africa in an intercultural dialogue and peacebuilding experience. The programme is aimed at supporting the growth of networks of young peacebuilders who are equipped with the tools necessary to address negative stereotypes, prejudice and polarization in order to build more inclusive and peaceful societies and tackle the drivers of violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

41. The UNODC Education for Justice initiative, adopted at the Thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, seeks to prevent crime and promote a culture of lawfulness through activities designed for primary, secondary and tertiary education. This initiative has produced 14 university counter-terrorism modules, including on preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism, and a guide for teaching counter-terrorism courses to undergraduate and postgraduate students.

42. In 2018, UNDP worked with national and local agencies in Nigeria to identify 100 vulnerable young people, who participated in a two-week programme covering

such issues as leadership, civic responsibility, conflict prevention, human rights and sexual and gender-based violence. Central and local youth councils in Kosovo have teamed up with UNDP and United Nations Volunteers to run an employment project for young people in five municipalities. The councils view their work as directly related to wider efforts to address local drivers of violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

43. Together with UNESCO and the League of Arab States, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre is implementing a project to promote dialogue, tolerance and openness through media to counter narratives associated with terrorism in the Arab region. This project will leverage the role of media to create a climate for enhanced dialogue, respect and mutual understanding by fostering media and information literacy among 240 young people, developing advocacy campaigns and improving the journalistic standards, knowledge and awareness of 260 media professionals.

44. Human rights education is essential to the long-term prevention of human rights abuses and violent extremism conducive to terrorism. In September 2018, OHCHR was mandated by the Human Rights Council to prepare a plan of action for the fourth phase (2020–2024) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, dedicated to young people. In consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including young people networks and organizations, OHCHR is now producing this plan of action, which will provide guidance for the development of effective national strategies and programming with regard to human rights education for young people.

H. Community engagement in countering violent extremism, including by strengthening ties between communities and emphasizing their common bonds and interests

45. Promoting community engagement can play an important role in countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism and tackling other forms of intolerance, discrimination and violence. It helps to build confidence at the community level, provide platforms for intercultural and interfaith dialogue and enable grievances to be identified at an early stage. The United Nations recognizes that violence and violent extremism conducive to terrorism will only be addressed by adopting a comprehensive and inclusive approach, involving all parts of society. Religious leaders and faith-based organizations, civil society, women, young people, the media and the private sector all have an important role to play in promoting tolerance and respect for cultural and religious diversity and developing and implementing measures to challenge the corrosive narratives and hate speech of violent extremists.

46. In peacekeeping settings affected by violent extremism, civil affairs components are working with local communities to prevent and mitigate communal conflict and to promote social cohesion and reconciliation through a broad range of activities, such as dialogue and reconciliation forums, trust-building between communities, sports and social activities. In addition, civil affairs components are working on improving communication between communities, local authorities and security forces by supporting the establishment of community-based early warning mechanisms to prevent tensions from escalating into violence. The implementation of innovative approaches, such as community-violence reduction projects, promote social cohesion and economic opportunities as a means to prevent the recruitment by armed groups of young people at risk.

47. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations has implemented an Intercultural Innovation Award initiative in partnership with the BMW Group, which is aimed at identifying and providing monetary and in-kind support to highly innovative

grassroots initiatives for alleviating identity-based tensions and conflict around the world. These projects promote intercultural dialogue and understanding, thereby making vital contributions to prosperity and peace. The Youth Solidarity Fund of the Alliance has provided seed funding to initiatives led by young people to promote long-term constructive relationships among people from various cultural and religious backgrounds in order to promote more peaceful societies. The Alliance provides youth organizations selected under the Youth Solidarity Fund with in-depth training, technical assistance and networking opportunities to strengthen the implementation of funded projects.

48. UNDP supports women, young people, religious leaders and their organizations as champions in preventing violent extremism and helps to create opportunities for their active participation in building social cohesion at the community level. In the Sudan, the “Youth breathing spaces” initiative was launched as part of the UNDP “Partnering Against Violent Extremism” project with the aim of promoting youth agency and social cohesion. The initiative focuses on establishing local spaces of dialogue where young people can safely express their thoughts, design activities and engage their peers and other community members in preventing violent extremism. In the Philippines, UNDP is assisting the mayors of eight vulnerable municipalities in Lanao del Sur Province in developing effective early warning and response platforms. Faith-based and traditional leaders, security services and civic groups are working with local government officials on analysing information from their communities and organizing appropriate responses.

49. The Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect of the United Nations has continued to support the implementation of the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes, which contains detailed recommendations to prevent and counter incitement to violence, enhance dialogue and collaboration and contribute to building peaceful, just and inclusive societies. In October 2018, the Office co-organized a training event for journalists in the Central African Republic on the prevention of incitement to commit atrocity crimes. In March 2019, it launched the pilot for a new programme entitled “Fostering peaceful and inclusive societies: the role of religious education” in Bangladesh, which focuses on how religious education can help to uphold the concepts of pluralism, respect for diversity and inclusive citizenship. The meeting was attended by 75 participants from a range of secular and religious education institutions and resulted in a commitment to establishing the first interfaith council of Bangladesh.

50. The Office of Counter-Terrorism is developing an engagement strategy towards a more systematic approach to consultation with civil society organizations to ensure that the views of civil society are fully reflected in United Nations policies and programmes for preventing and countering terrorism and the underlying spread of violent extremism. This strategy is exploring good practices from other Global Compact entities and will lead to recommendations on how the Office of Counter-Terrorism may build on and complement existing efforts.

I. Dissemination of information on tolerance and mutual respect

51. There is a clear and pressing need to disseminate information and promote positive narratives that spread a culture of peace, tolerance and mutual respect as persuasive alternatives to the oppressive and manipulative propaganda of violent extremist groups. This includes using the power of the Internet, social media and new technology to generate, through participatory approaches, public awareness of the dangers of hate speech, racism and xenophobia, and to enhance dialogue among all

religions, beliefs, cultures and people to help to prevent and counter violent extremism.

52. Through its global project “Preventing violent extremism through strategic communications”, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre supports Member States, regional organizations and civil society in countering the terrorists’ narratives of division and hate and, instead, in promoting narratives of resilience and cohesion. The project provides specialized and tailored training to improve the technical strategic communications skills of beneficiaries, such as campaign design, audience analysis and monitoring and evaluation. It also enhances the understanding of how violent extremist groups exploit strategic communications, so that Member States, regional organizations and civil society may implement effective responses. In 2018, technical assistance was thus provided through the project to the Government of the Philippines to ensure the integration of effective strategic communications into its national action plan for preventing and countering violent extremism. Activities were also carried out under the project in Trinidad and Tobago to provide opportunities for the Government and civil society organizations to scope options for working together on building effective communications campaigns and cohesive strategic narratives.

53. To generate public awareness of the needs and rights of victims of terrorism and promote their voices as powerful messengers of peace and tolerance, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre and the Department of Global Communications are producing a documentary series on victims of terrorism that profiles survivors from terrorist attacks and their efforts to transform their tragic experience in positive action. Documentaries were produced on survivors from Mali and Norway and are currently being finalized for survivors from Cameroon and Chad. The Victims of Terrorism Support Portal of the United Nations, which provides practical resources and information for victims, also serves as platform to highlight their voices through a multimedia section. In November 2018, the Secretary-General issued a report for the General Assembly on the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism ([A/73/599](#)), which was celebrated for the first time on 21 August 2018, with details of the United Nations work to support and advocate victims of terrorism.

54. The work of Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate on countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism encompasses the challenge of countering terrorist narratives, in line with Security Council resolution [2354 \(2017\)](#), recognizing that such narratives are a key tactic used to incite, radicalize and recruit people into committing terrorist acts. The Directorate gathers information on good practices for countering terrorist narratives and shares them with Member States and other international partners, including at annual meetings of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1373 \(2001\)](#) concerning counter-terrorism. In the addendum to the guiding principles on foreign terrorist fighters ([S/2018/1177](#), annex), the Committee urged States to promote peaceful alternatives to the narratives of foreign terrorist fighters, address underlying drivers and engage with a wide range of actors, including through the participation and leadership of young people and women, families, religious, cultural, education and local community leaders, other civil society actors, victims of terrorism, the media and private sector entities. Through the Global Compact, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre and the Directorate are compiling good practices, recommendations for effective monitoring and evaluation and a toolkit for Member States, civil society and other key stakeholders for engaging in countering terrorist narratives, both online and offline.

55. The Department of Global Communications has continued to raise global awareness of and support for non-violence, respecting human rights and promoting tolerance. Using its multilingual traditional and digital media platforms and the global network of United Nations information centres, the Department promoted the work

of the United Nations system on preventing violence and fostering understanding and dialogue among civilizations. These activities were often linked to the commemoration of international observances, such as the International Day of Peace, the International Day of Non-Violence, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the International Day for Tolerance.

56. PLURAL+ is a joint initiative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the International Organization for Migration launched in 2009 that invites young people to submit original and creative videos focusing on pressing social issues, including migration, diversity, social inclusion and the prevention of xenophobia. By supporting the global distribution of multimedia productions submitted by young people, PLURAL+ recognizes young people as powerful agents of positive social change in a world often characterized by intolerance and cultural and religious divisions. The #SpreadNoHate initiative of the Alliance continues to engage global media in a dialogue on hate speech and the sharing of lessons learned to promote counter narratives in both traditional and new media.

57. #ExtremeLives is a partnership that combines the development expertise of UNDP with the networking and outreach capacity of Facebook to produce a video series of real-life stories and perspectives on violent extremism in Asia. From radicalization to violence to rehabilitation, to topics such as the role of news corporations and social media, refugees fleeing violence and migrant workers preyed upon by terrorist groups, #ExtremeLives has helped to raise awareness of the dangerous spread of violent extremist ideologies by reaching more than 13 million people in 2018.

J. Protecting religious places, shrines and cultural sites

58. The alarming recent attacks on places of worship around the world, which have claimed innocent lives, ravage communities and exacerbate religious and cultural tensions. The United Nations remains fully committed to assisting Member States in protecting religious places, shrines and cultural sites so that they may remain places of sanctuary and peace. In March 2019, the Secretary-General asked his High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations to develop a plan of action for safeguarding religious sites to help to prevent attacks and guarantee the safety of worshippers. The Alliance is now working with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that the plan of action reflects their views and expertise.

59. UNESCO has worked to promote a culture of citizenship, mutual and intercultural understanding and human rights through the safeguarding of cultural heritage and the promotion of cultural diversity. It spearheads the implementation of Security Council resolution [2347 \(2017\)](#) on the protection of cultural heritage, religious sites and artefacts from destruction and smuggling by terrorist groups during armed conflict. In this regard, the Director General of UNESCO presented the first implementation report of that resolution to the Council in November 2017 ([S/2017/969](#)), which included information on efforts by Member States to strengthen mechanisms and train specialized personnel to protect cultural heritage, curb illicit trafficking in cultural property and fight violent extremism conducive to terrorism. UNESCO also leads educational and cultural programmes, such as the World Heritage Education Programme and the Unite for Heritage global coalition, to engage young people in protecting heritage and celebrating cultural diversity.

III. Concluding observations

60. The reform of the United Nations counter-terrorism architecture, including through the creation of the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the launch of the Global

Compact, has enhanced the ability of the United Nations system to implement General Assembly resolution [72/241](#) and support Member States in countering and preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism. This is clearly set out in the recent report of the Secretary-General on options on ways to assess the impact and progress made in the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy by the United Nations system ([A/73/866](#)), submitted pursuant to Assembly resolution [72/284](#) adopted during the sixth biennial review of the Strategy. However, a renewed focus by the United Nations, Member States and other key actors working together in close partnership in the following areas could help to raise public awareness of the dangers of intolerance and violent extremism and foster understanding and non-violence.

61. It is vital that the international community enhances multilateral cooperation to tackle the interrelated challenges of polarization, intolerance, violent extremism and terrorism. The Secretary-General remains committed to using the universal membership and convening power of the United Nations to build consensus and mobilize collaborative and practical efforts against all forms of violence and hatred. One of the thematic sessions of the first United Nations High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States, which the Secretary-General convened in New York in June 2018, was on strengthening global action to prevent violent extremism conducive to terrorism, including by engaging young people and preventing misuse of new technology and the Internet. Under the leadership of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the United Nations is building on this momentum by partnering with several Member States to deliver a series of regional conferences on key thematic issues. Regional conferences with a focus on violent extremism conducive to terrorism and radicalization to terrorism are being held throughout 2019 in Mongolia, Kenya, Hungary and the United Arab Emirates. These regional conferences will feed into the second United Nations High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States and the first-ever Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism, in June 2020. These events are expected to inspire a series of other counter-terrorism-related activities during “Counter-Terrorism Week”.

62. All efforts to promote tolerance and respect for diversity and to prevent the spread of violent extremism conducive to terrorism should adopt inclusive whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to ensure shared ownership by all branches of Government and deliver effective strategies and translate into successful interventions that reach the most marginalized. The role of civil society in meeting these challenges therefore needs to be supported by Member States by creating and maintaining an enabling environment, including a legal framework that protects and promotes human rights, notably freedom of association, freedom of expression and non-discrimination. The United Nations stands ready to support these efforts and is committed to promoting the participation of civil society actors, including in the context of its own work on preventing and countering terrorism. It is vital to support the broad ranges of efforts that help to address the drivers of violent extremism, although they may not be explicitly identified as such, recognizing concerns that this labelling can be seen as stigmatizing and counter-productive.

63. The Secretary-General has repeatedly stressed the need to harness the creativity and energy of young people in confronting these challenges. They should be fully involved in all aspects of policy development and implementing activities to tackle violent extremism conducive to terrorism at the global, regional, national and local levels, as set out in the Amman Youth Declaration of 2015 and Security Council resolutions [2250 \(2015\)](#) and [2419 \(2018\)](#). With the rise of misinformation and disinformation on social media and the Internet, young people need to be educated and empowered to recognize and reject manipulative narratives, xenophobia and hate speech, which can all fuel online radicalization leading to violence.

64. Member States need to include women's voices and experiences and seek greater consultation with women's organizations when developing strategies and programmes to tackle intolerance, violence and the broad spectrum of violent extremism. Besides ensuring that all efforts are gender-sensitive and address the human rights of women, funding for gender-specific responses is crucial, in particular those led by women's organizations. The United Nations remains committed to allocating a minimum of 15 per cent of all funding relating to peace and security to initiatives that promote gender equality and women's empowerment, and it calls upon Member States and regional organizations to make a similar commitment.

65. The Secretary-General calls upon Member States to further encourage and empower bottom-up local solutions to the global challenge of violent extremism. There is clear recognition that there is no one-size-fits-all response to the drivers of violent extremism and conditions conducive to terrorism, which vary within and among countries, as well as over time. Local communities and families can contribute invaluable insights to understanding what these drivers are, how they evolve and interplay and how best to address them. This requires engaging affected groups, especially women and young people, and supporting local efforts wherever possible to bridge the gap between global initiatives, national policies and local realities. Civil society and other local actors are uniquely placed and experienced to deliver tailored and credible programmes to strengthen community resilience and turn vulnerable individuals away from violence.

66. The General Assembly and the Security Council have underscored that all efforts to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism should be grounded in international law, including international human rights law. The Secretary-General is concerned about overly broad definitions of terrorism or violent extremism that have been used on many occasions to justify criminal charges brought against political opposition parties, minorities, civil society organizations, journalists and human rights defenders. The Secretary-General urges Member States to ensure that their strategies and programmes to prevent and counter violent extremism are firmly anchored in and advance the rule of law and human rights.

67. The manipulative use of the Internet and social media by hatemongers and violent extremist groups to spread their twisted narratives continues to represent a significant challenge for the international community. The Secretary-General welcomes the progress that technology companies have made in removing and blocking terrorist content online, including the efforts of the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism and the Tech Against Terrorism initiative. However, as the terrorist attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019 tragically demonstrated, much more needs to be done to tackle the misuse of cyberspace. The Secretary-General urges Member States, the global technology sector and other key actors to enhance their cooperation to prevent the spread of violent extremist content online, without compromising human rights and the rule of law. This should include increasing efforts to understand local nuances and contextualized speech used for incitement to hate and violence around the world and reviewing the operation of algorithms and other processes that may drive users towards violent extremist content and allow it to become viral.

68. The Secretary-General is committed to scaling up the work of the United Nations to support the rights of victims and survivors of terrorism, which will assist with wider efforts to build resilience to violent extremism conducive to terrorism. Upholding their rights, highlighting their voices and providing them with support and justice are also steps that can be taken to reject the dehumanizing and divisive narratives of violent extremists. The Secretary-General welcomes the establishment of a Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism among Member States, co-chaired by Afghanistan and Spain, and the designation by the General Assembly, in its resolution

[73/296](#), of 22 August as the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief. Member States should use the Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism that the United Nations will convene in June 2020 to discuss how to enhance the support offered to victims of terrorism and how to protect and promote their rights and needs.

69. The United Nations system needs to ensure that it continues to track new violent extremism trends and constantly adapts its policies and activities accordingly in order to deliver relevant mandates. This includes exploring what can be done to support Member States further in tackling hate speech and incitement to violence across the full spectrum of violent extremism conducive to terrorism. For example, far-right and neo-Nazi groups have been using the Internet as a platform to mobilize support across borders, radicalize people and carry out attacks, threatening social cohesion and stability in many countries around the world. The Secretary-General urges Member States and other key actors to work with the United Nations to share their knowledge and experiences in tackling this growing threat, including its possible transnational dimensions. The United Nations stands ready to provide practical support to Member States and regional organizations upon request, through existing or new initiatives, based on their needs, priorities and contexts.

70. The Secretary-General is greatly concerned by the dire situation faced by thousands of people, including women and children, with links to United Nations-designated terrorist groups. Many remain stranded in overcrowded camps in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, with limited access to food, medical care, due process and other fundamental rights and services. Addressing this urgent and complex problem in line with international law is crucial to prevent and counter the further spread of violent extremism conducive to terrorism. The Secretary-General consequently directed relevant United Nations entities, under the leadership of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, to produce a set of key principles aimed at enhancing the coherence of United Nations activities in this area, so that the United Nations system may better assist Member States. These key principles are also designed to help Member States as they develop and implement policies and actions in this area.

71. The United Nations needs sustainable and predictable financial and technical resources to continue to provide effective capacity-building support and other types of assistance to meet the growing needs of Member States for preventing and countering terrorism and the underlying spread of violent extremism. The Office of Counter-Terrorism launched its consolidated multi-year appeal for 2019–2020 earlier in 2019, which includes 60 global, regional and national projects from 10 Global Compact entities, more than half of which are focused on preventing and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism. The Secretary-General calls upon Member States to respond positively to the appeal and other initiatives to enhance the support that the United Nations can provide to the countries and regions most affected by violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

72. We are at a pivotal moment in battling hatred and violent extremism. The recent disturbing uptick in violence, xenophobia, racism and intolerance around the world, including resurgent anti-Semitism, rising anti-Muslim hatred, attacks against Christians and the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities, means that the international community must respond with renewed commitment and joint action, while fully respecting human rights and the rule of law. A multilateral response is required now more than ever, and the United Nations will continue to play a key role in supporting the efforts of Member States and regional organizations to prevent violence and strengthen resilience to violent extremism at the global, regional, national and local levels.