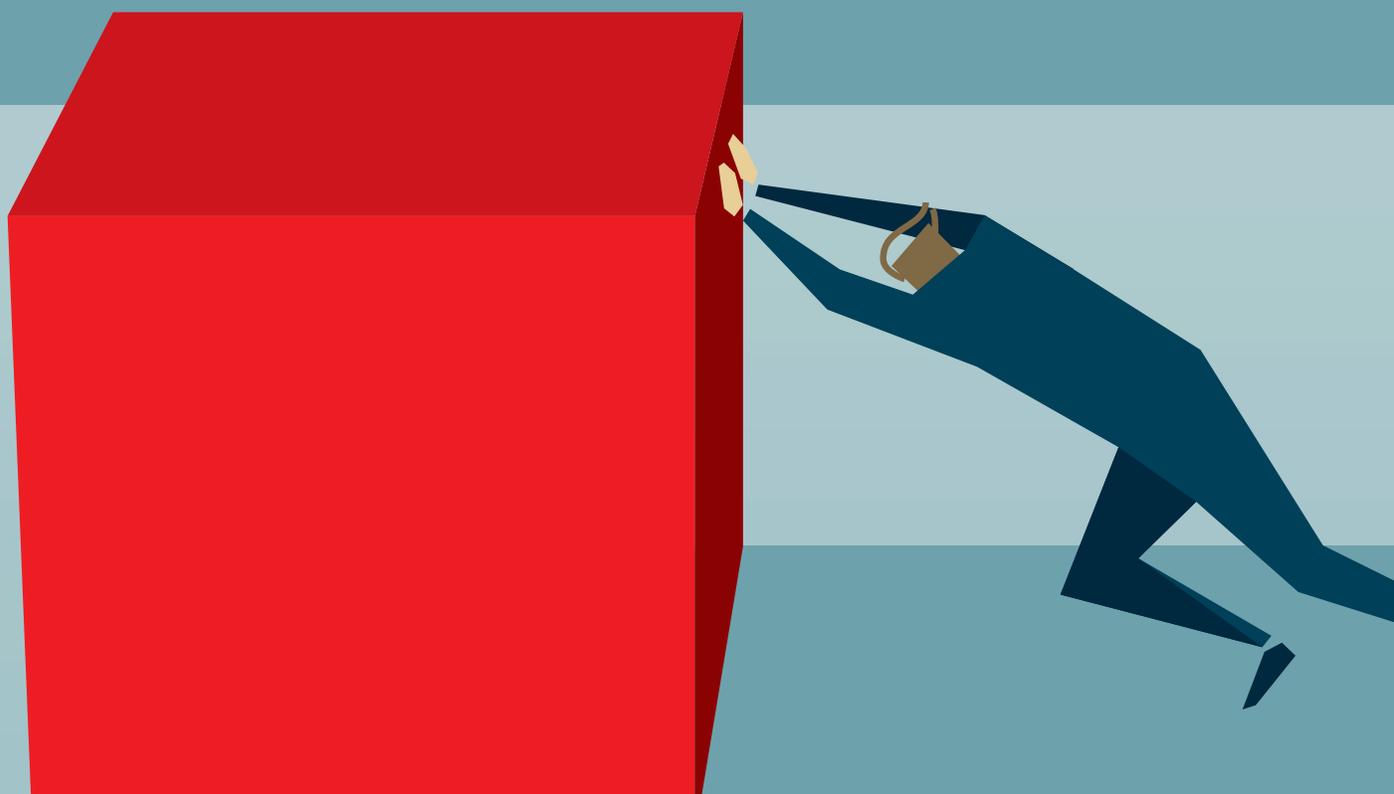




*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

Assessing Progress Made, and the Future of Development Approaches to Preventing Violent Extremism

Report of the United Nations Development Programme Second Global Meeting on Preventing Violent Extremism, 'Oslo II'





*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

United Nations Development Programme

Oslo Governance Centre
Kongens gate 12, 0153 Oslo, NORWAY
www.undp.org

Copyright © UNDP 2018. All rights reserved

UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in nearly 170 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations.

Design & Production: Phoenix Design Aid A/S, Denmark



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

Assessing Progress Made, and the Future of Development Approaches to Preventing Violent Extremism

Report of the United Nations Development
Programme Second Global Meeting on Preventing
Violent Extremism, 'Oslo II'

23-24 May 2018
Fornebu, Norway

I. Acknowledgements

UNDP's Oslo Governance Centre is grateful to all those who participated in the 'Oslo II' meeting, as well as in the development of this report.

The opening statements made by Nicolas Astrup, Minister for International Development for Norway, Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator, Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, Somia Okoued, State Minister of Sudan as well as a video message from Jayathma Wickramanayake, United Nations Secretary General's Envoy on Youth, contributed to the content of this report. The lead author was Jide Okeke. In addition to UNDP colleagues in Oslo, New York and the regional hubs, thanks are due to a number of participants for specific inputs to this report.

We would also like to extend our thanks to our many partners, including the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, as well Hedayah, the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), RESOLVE, International Alert, Mercy Corps, Search for Common Ground and many other organisations which contributed to the second global meeting and to this report in various ways.

Finally, we appreciate the support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in partnering with us in the successful conduct of the second global meeting on preventing violent extremism.

Table of Contents

- I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**2
- II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**4
- III. INTRODUCTION**.....6
- IV. ASSESSING PROGRESS MADE SINCE THE FIRST GLOBAL MEETING ON PVE:
AN EMERGING COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE ON PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**.....7
- V. OSLO II GLOBAL MEETING: CROSS CUTTING FINDINGS**..... 11
 - A. Rule of Law and the Human-Rights Approach in PVE..... 11
 - B. Need for Inclusive and Multisectoral Approaches 11
 - C. Gendered Approach to PVE..... 12
 - D. Interlinkages Between PVE, the 2030 Agenda and the Sustaining Peace Agenda..... 13
 - E. Consistency between Conceptual Understanding and Practice of PVE 13
 - F. Increased Locally Rooted Research, Documentation, Policy and Programme Responses..... 14
- VI. OSLO II GLOBAL MEETING: THEMATIC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**..... 15
 - A. Understanding and Addressing Drivers of Violent Extremism 15
 - B. Reintegrating Returning and Disengaged Fighters 16
 - C. Working with the Media and Communication to Address and Prevent Violent Extremism..... 18
 - D. Building Gender-Responsive Approaches to PVE 19
 - E. Developing and Implementing National and Regional Action Plans on PVE 20
 - F. Young People’s Role in PVE..... 21
 - G. Learning from Faith-Based Organisations and Religious Leaders..... 23
 - H. Measuring Effectiveness in PVE Programming 24
- VII. CONCLUSION: ROAD AHEAD FOR PVE WORK** 26
- APPENDIX I : AGENDA**..... 27

II. Executive Summary

This report provides an analytical reflection of the content, observations and recommendations of the second global meeting on preventing violent extremism ('Oslo II' meeting), 'Assessing Progress Made and the Future of Development Approaches to Preventing Violent Extremism', held on 23-24 May 2018 in Fornebu, Norway. After an introduction, it contains four further sections: the first section provides a synopsis of the critical milestones that have been achieved primarily by UNDP as well as other relevant stakeholders since the first global meeting held in March 2016. The second section provides an overview of cross-cutting findings that emerged from the meeting. The third section represents thematic findings based on the various sessions held during the meeting. The final section provides a brief conclusion on the way forward for PVE work.

Building on the first global meeting, the Oslo II meeting was organised jointly by UNDP and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take stock of progress made, share experiences and distil lessons on policy-development, research and programming on preventing violent extremism (PVE). The meeting revealed that progress has been made on research and knowledge production on preventing violent extremism especially in the areas of: drivers of extremism, youth perceptions and the recognition of the roles of young people in PVE, reintegration of disengaged fighters and returnees, the role of media including online pathways to radicalisation, gendered analysis of violent extremism as well as the role of women. In addition, formal and informal partnerships have emerged on PVE between the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders. United Nations Member States are also championing the development and implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs) on PVE, including through the mechanism of the Group of Friends on PVE and through the twin resolutions on sustaining peace by the General Assembly (A/RES/70/262) and the Security Council (S/RES/2282). Furthermore, UNDP is leading the process of developing tools that could be adapted across contexts, to measure the impact of PVE programming. As a result of these developments, the Oslo II meeting reinforced the view of an emerging PVE community of practice.

Despite different methodologies and thematic focus often adopted by PVE community of practice, there are broad agreements on the principles that underpin PVE work, based on an understanding that PVE work is closely aligned with both the 2030 Agenda and sustaining peace agendas. There is emerging consensus on: the centrality of rule of law and rights-based approach to PVE; promoting an inclusive and multi-sectoral approach; integrating gender in PVE; and the importance of locally rooted research and documentation on PVE.

The many recommendations that emerged from the Oslo II meeting are documented in the main body of this report, at the end of each section. However, some **key recommendations** across the thematic areas are as follows:

- a. Focus interventions locally, at city and municipality levels, supported by research on local drivers of conflict and peace, and link local initiatives and activism to national and international efforts;
- b. Conduct more research and analysis on reintegration and rehabilitation trends and forms, including on the various types of returnees and their specific needs;
- c. Media and communication are a critical component of PVE, and lessons should be drawn from current programmes, including initiatives implemented by the private sector;



Photo Credit: UNDP Oslo Governance Centre

- d. Support local women's peacebuilding organisations and their initiatives with sustained funding, as they are at the forefront of preventing extremism and have the necessary trust from their community, as well as skills and knowledge of the context to implement effective and sustainable initiatives;
- e. Put the end-users of NAPs at the centre of the process, with the international community playing a supporting role;
- f. Ensure that funding mechanisms are structured to support young people and their leadership, including by engaging with the philanthropic community and via advocacy efforts with donors;
- g. Recognise that working with religious actors requires special expertise, sound religious literacy and a capacity to collaborate with a diverse range of faith-based actors.

III. INTRODUCTION

In March 2016, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Oslo Governance Centre organised a global meeting on *Preventing Violent Extremism by Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity*. The 'Oslo I' meeting brought together 135 experts and practitioners from national governments, civil society, multilateral institutions, academia and think-tanks from across 47 countries, and served as a substantive contribution to UNDP's development of this area of work, as well as an opportunity to validate the organisational strategy paper [Preventing Violent Extremism through Inclusive Development and the Promotion of Tolerance and Respect for Diversity](#). This strategy paper provided a conceptual understanding of UNDP's approach to preventing violent extremism (PVE), and subsequently informed the development of the UNDP Global Programme on Development Solutions for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (2017-2020), currently being implemented.¹ It also contributed to the development of the UNDP Strategic Plan (2018-2021), which makes explicit reference to PVE as part of its result framework.

Two years on, UNDP and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs convened a second global meeting to take stock of progress made, share experiences and distil lessons on policy-development, research and programming on PVE. This meeting took place at the Quality Expo Hotel in Fornebu, Norway, from 23 to 24 May 2018. It brought together 170 experts, practitioners from national governments, regional organisations, civil society, academia and think tanks. The meeting was opened by Nicolas Astrup, Minister for International Development for Norway, Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator, Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, Somia Okoued, State Minister of Sudan as well as a video message from Jayathma Wickramanayake, United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. The agenda is contained in Annex I of this document.

This report provides an analytical reflection of the content, observations and recommendations from the Oslo II meeting. It contains four further sections: the first provides a synopsis of the critical milestones that have been achieved primarily by UNDP as well as other relevant stakeholders since the first global meeting drawing from both the high-level opening statements as well as the technical discussions. The second section provides an overview of cross-cutting findings that emerged from the meeting. The third section represents thematic findings and recommendations based on the various sessions held during the meeting. The final section contains a brief conclusion on the way forward on PVE work.

¹ See 'Preventing Violent Extremism through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity' Global Meeting, 14-16 March 2016, Oslo Norway, http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/global-policy-centres/oslo_governance_centre/pve.html accessed on 1 November 2017.

IV. ASSESSING PROGRESS MADE SINCE THE FIRST GLOBAL MEETING ON PVE: AN EMERGING COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE ON PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Since the Oslo I global meeting, a burgeoning community of practice on PVE – both globally and within UNDP and the wider United Nations system – has emerged, with tangible results in research, policy and programming. The following were highlighted during the meeting as evidence of the progress that has been made since the first global meeting on PVE:

First, the knowledge base on drivers of violent extremism has evolved and expanded. A major contribution was made by the 2017 UNDP report '[Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment](#)', which was globally recognised as a significant contribution to the evidence about violent extremism. It was based on primary research conducted through interviews with 495 former fighters from Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, IS and other violent extremist groups. Key findings from this study highlighted the way in which governance challenges are at the core of these drivers. In particular, the role of the state as a push factor to violent extremism was noted by 71 percent of respondents who identified 'government action', including 'killing of a family member or friend' and 'arrest of a family member or friend' as being the critical event that finally pushed them to join a violent extremist group. While controversial, these findings helped draw further attention to the limitations and counter-productive impacts of security-driven response strategies to violent extremism, especially where these take place with little regard for adherence to human rights and international humanitarian law.

Other important studies that have emerged since the Oslo I global meeting have also underscored how prolonged and unresolved conflicts allow violent extremist groups to exploit deep-seated grievances, find safe havens and wield territorial control that could allow for planning, recruitment and resourcing of terrorist acts. In addition, policy research on youth perceptions and the recognition of the roles of young people in PVE,² reintegration of disengaged fighters and returnees,³ the role of media including online pathways to radicalisation, gendered analysis of violent extremism as well as the role of women have also been conducted. While research gaps remain, and the challenge of linking evidence to timely, high-quality programming and policy interventions also persists, these research studies are generating the required evidence that is needed to help inform systematic, coordinated and effective interventions against violent extremism.

2 UNDP forthcoming report (July 2018) titled "Frontlines", on the role of young people in addressing and preventing violent extremism and UNDP case studies summarizing focus group discussions held in Kosovo (as per UNSCR 1244(1999)), Pakistan and Yemen in the context of the development of the Youth, Peace and Security Progress Study (link: www.youth4peace.info/ProgressStudy).

3 See Barrett, Richard (2017) 'Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees' The Soufan Centre, www.thesoufancentre.org accessed on 20 January 2018.



Photo Credit: UNDP Oslo Governance Centre

Second, the United Nations system has improved its coherence, partnership and coordination on PVE – internally within the United Nations system – as well as with other partners. As part of wider United Nations institutional reform, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) was established through the adoption of General Assembly resolution 71/291 on 15 June 2017. UNOCT was tasked with five main functions, namely, to: provide leadership on the General Assembly counter-terrorism mandates entrusted to the Secretary-General from the United Nations system; enhance coordination and coherence across 38 Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force entities to ensure the balanced implementation of the four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy; strengthen the delivery of United Nations counter-terrorism capacity-building assistance to Member States; improve visibility, advocacy and resource mobilisation for United Nations counter-terrorism efforts; and ensure that due priority is given to counter-terrorism across the United Nations system and that the important work on preventing violent extremism is firmly rooted in the Strategy. As part of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, UNDP and UNESCO are co-chairing the working group on Preventing Violent Extremism and Conditions Conducive to the Spread of Terrorism, which is composed of 22 United Nations entities. To further strengthen the prevention agenda on violent extremism, UNDP and UNOCT signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in preventing violent extremism on 23 May 2018 (at the opening session of the Oslo II event).⁴ This MoU builds on earlier engagements between the two organisations and will serve as a basis for joint initiatives on PVE going forward.

⁴ Details of the MoU can be accessed via: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2018/Heads-of-UN-Office-of-Counter-Terrorism-and-UNDP-Strengthen-Collaboration-to-Prevent-Violent-Extremism.html>

There has also been a formalisation and strengthening of UNDP partnerships with other relevant organisations working on PVE. On 22 September 2017, UNDP and the International Centre of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism, *Hedayah*, signed an MoU aimed at strengthening work on PVE, particularly through the provision of strong, informed and efficient support to requesting governments in the development and implementation of national action plans on PVE. Other organisations such as the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), RESOLVE, International Alert, Search for Common Ground, Mercy Corps, Penal Reform International, and many civil society organisations are working collaboratively with UNDP and across the United Nations system, conducting evidence-based research and delivering innovative approaches toward preventing violent extremism.

Third, United Nations Member States have played a leading role in advancing the PVE agenda. On 28 September 2017, the Group of Friends on PVE was launched under the leadership of Jordan and Norway. This platform provides political support to efforts by UNOCT and the United Nations system in general in the field of PVE and creates a venue for sharing lessons learned and best practices around various topics pertaining to PVE. It also provides a forum for discussion and coordination between United Nations entities, governments, civil society, religious leaders and other stakeholders. The Group holds regular meetings in New York at ambassadorial and expert level and is currently composed of 40 United Nations Member States.

Working with states in the prevention of violent extremism has been a priority for UNDP especially in the last two years. On 15 January 2016, the Secretary-General presented his [Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism](#) to the General Assembly. The Plan of Action encouraged each Member State to consider “developing a national plan of action to prevent violent extremism, which sets national priorities for addressing the local drivers of violent extremism and complement national counter-terrorism strategies”. It also called for a strengthened role of regional and subregional organisations including through the provision of technical assistance to Member States in their respective subregions or regions in building capacity for PVE and supporting effective cooperation. On 12 February 2016, the General Assembly adopted resolution 70/254, which *inter alia* welcomed the initiative by the Secretary-General and took note of his [Plan of Action](#). In a subsequent resolution, 70/291 adopted on 1 July 2016, the General Assembly recommended that “Member States consider the implementation of relevant recommendations of the Plan of Action, as applicable to the national context”.

Several Member States are developing (NAPs) on PVE, including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Central African Republic, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Nigeria, Lebanon, Tajikistan, Tanzania and Somalia. In developing their respective national plans on PVE, many of these countries have collaborated with the United Nations, civil society including youth organisations, movements and networks, and research institutions in diverse ways based on national capacity and needs. In addition, regional organisations such as the African Union (AU),⁵ the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)⁶, European Union⁷ and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have developed or are developing regional plans consistent with the United Nations Plan of Action on PVE. UNDP has been providing support through country offices and through various research studies and needs assessments, at the request of Member States and IGAD, in the development and implementation of NAPs.

5 See United Nations Secretary-General Report on “Strengthening the Partnership between the United Nations and African Union on peace and security in Africa, including on the Work of the United Nations Office to the African Union”, dated 30 August 2017 <http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/sgreports/2017.shtml>

6 On 20 September 2017, ASEAN Member States adopted a Declaration to “Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism” in Manila, Philippines.

7 The European Union has long been working on Counter-terrorism, but the basis for its PVE work is its May 2014 “Revised Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism”. See <https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs>

Fourth, the twin resolutions on sustaining peace by the General Assembly (A/RES/70/262) and the Security Council (S/RES/2282) are mutually reinforcing to specific PVE interventions. These resolutions together represent an important evolution in global policy frameworks on promoting positive peace, in their focus on sustaining peace “at all stages of conflict and in all its dimensions”. The concurrent resolutions further stressed the need for a comprehensive approach “to transitional justice, including promotion of healing and reconciliation, a professional, accountable and effective security sector, including through its reform, and inclusive and effective demobilization, disarmament and reintegration programmes, including the transition from demobilization and disarmament to reintegration, are critical to consolidation of peace and stability, promoting poverty reduction, rule of law, access to justice and good governance, further extending legitimate state authority, and preventing countries from lapsing or relapsing into conflict”. These commitments to sustaining peace are consistent with various PVE interventions that are currently being implemented through the UNDP global and regional programmes as well as by other relevant stakeholders.

Flowing from the normative level frameworks, the linkages between violent extremism and violent conflicts have received increased attention as part of the prevention agenda. The joint United Nations and World Bank study ‘[Pathways to Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflicts](#)’ that was published in early 2018 highlights how various underlying factors have contributed to the increased intensity and number of violent conflicts, as well as associated fatalities, and the fresh urgency this denotes for the prevention agenda. The rapid spread of violent extremism must be understood in this wider context of global insecurity, with violent extremist groups flourishing in contexts that have been affected by longer-term violent conflicts. The goal of ‘preventing violent extremism’ provides a powerful rationale for resolving current and preventing new violent conflicts, as well as for the promotion of sustainable peace.

Fifth, the urgency of the PVE agenda has led to increased attention on programming responses and ‘what works’ in various PVE interventions. Contributing to this area of practice, UNDP, in collaboration with International Alert, launched a toolkit on 9 March 2018, on [Improving the Impact of Preventing Violent Extremism Programming: a Toolkit for Design, Monitoring and Evaluation](#). The objective of the toolkit is to provide practical resources on how to measure effectiveness of PVE programming. It is designed as a living document for UNDP practitioners and partners who are working on programmes that are either specifically focused on PVE or have PVE-relevant elements to them. It draws on best practices for design, monitoring and evaluation in complex conflict contexts, adapting these for PVE programming. The toolkit includes modules, processes and approaches as well as an indicator bank that can be used by UNDP staff or others, with national and community-level partners and as part of strengthening monitoring and evaluation capacities.

Overall, it appears that the complexities of violent extremism have supported deepened engagement among policymakers, practitioners and researchers. The coherence, coordination and cooperation that are developing across this broad constituency of stakeholders are striking. These collective efforts are consistent with the momentum around the broad United Nations reform agenda in general and represent the emergence of a PVE community of practice. While some conference participants argued that security approaches to tackling violent extremism were regaining dominance in some contexts, many felt that the need for security and development responses to be combined was now well understood. While methodologies, approaches, and scope of work around PVE remain diverse, consensus around the key principles underpinning the field of work also seems to have become established over the past few years.

V. OSLO II GLOBAL MEETING: CROSS CUTTING FINDINGS

a. Rule of law and the human-rights approach in PVE

The United Nations has renewed its commitment to supporting Member States to formulate and implement national PVE policies consistent with the rule of law and international human rights standards. In this regard, Pillar IV of the [United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy](#) explicitly focuses on the importance of rights-based approaches, setting the overarching relevance at the highest level. The [CTITF Working Group on Promoting and Protecting Human Rights and the Rule of Law while Countering Terrorism](#) was established to support efforts by Member States to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law in the context of countering terrorism. In addition, the Human Rights Council (HRC) resolution '[Human rights and preventing and countering violent extremism](#)' urged states to "ensure that any measures taken to prevent and counter violent extremism comply with all their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law". On 21 July 2016, OHCHR issued a report on [best practices and lessons learned on how protecting and promoting human rights contribute to preventing and countering violent extremism](#). In the [Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism](#), the Secretary-General stresses the need for accountability and combating impunity. In doing so, he called for vigilance in ensuring that states' efforts to address violent extremism respect the rule of law. PVE interventions within the framework of human rights and the rule of law must ensure that existing national oversight and accountability mechanisms as well as other national remedies are activated, accessible and appropriately executed.

b. Need for inclusive and multisectoral approaches

The promotion of a comprehensive approach to addressing violent extremism is discernible in three areas: first, there is a growing alignment between countering violent extremism and preventing violent extremism. States are merging both CVE and PVE in the discussions and policy thinking on the development and implementation of NAPs, which are sometimes described as C/PVE. This is still a work in progress and there is a need to ensure a balanced approach that does not seek to privilege security over development approaches to addressing violent extremism. The second and related aspect is the alignment between short- to medium-term, and long-term visions in the synergy between CVE and PVE. For instance, promoting education on religious tolerance without breaking the cycle of poverty and unemployment may be counterproductive. Similarly, providing a conducive environment for political participation without tackling other related drivers of violent extremism such as corruption could also be problematic. Achieving a comprehensive plan for such a complex phenomenon requires balancing and integrating short-term priorities with long-term and sustainable responses.

The third aspect of the growing emergence of a comprehensive approach is in the area of partnerships. Partnerships based on multidimensional approaches and the multi-stakeholder involvement of civil society, youth organisations, movements and networks, women's groups and faith-based organisations remain a critical requirement for successful interventions in preventing violent extremism. Within the United Nations system and in the framework of the ongoing United Nations reform, there is an essential requirement for proper coordination, coherence and cooperation amongst relevant United Nations entities. It is the recognition of this need that informed the signing of the MoU on Cooperation between the UNDP and the Office for Counter-terrorism on 23 May 2018, on the margins of the Oslo II meeting.

c. Gendered approach to PVE

Over the last decade and since the first global meeting on PVE in 2016, there has been a growing consensus on the importance of a gendered approach to PVE, accompanied by an expanding body of research and evidence to support the implementation of gender-sensitive interventions in the PVE sphere. A common thread shared by extremist groups is that their evolution has been coupled with attacks on gender equality and the rights of women and girls—rights to education, to public life and to decision-making over their own bodies. Yet, the roles women occupy in extremism settings are complex. They may be perpetrators of violence themselves, supporters or family members to extremists. Finally, women act as peacebuilders and human rights defenders, including through women's organisations, using their understanding of culturally specific issues and on-the-ground gender dynamics, influence in families and communities, and skill at mobilising social capital to act as interlocutors for peace. Adopting a gendered approach is critical: to expand the effectiveness of PVE programming by ensuring it addresses the unique needs and concerns of women affected by violent extremism; to assess gender dynamics and masculinities as root causes and drivers of extremism; and, finally, to leverage and grow the potential of women's organisations and women activists engaged in PVE at the frontlines.

Despite decades of work on the women, peace and security agenda, the integration of gender into the C/PVE sphere is a relatively new phenomenon, with traditional counter-terrorism measures often taking a gender-blind approach. Progress has been made, however, in particular via the adoption of UNSCR 2242 and the inclusion of gender in both the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Extremism and the UNGA fifth review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. While these normative advances are significant, a great deal of work remains to fully mainstream gender into PVE efforts. 'Gender' is all too often interpreted as 'just add women', which leads to the tokenisation of women in security processes rather than a genuine effort to work towards systemic change and remove societal barriers to women's empowerment. More work is needed to ensure that women and women's organisations are at the centre of the PVE effort, including by inviting their participation in the design of PVE programmes, policy and strategy. Moreover, there is a need for action-oriented research and evidence on the gendered dynamics of violent extremism and of the gendered impact of PVE interventions.

To respond to these outstanding issues and give women's organisations a voice in PVE policy and programming, UNDP carries out its work on gender and PVE in partnership with a number of organisations, including, for example, the International Civil Society Action Network and its structures the Women's Alliance for Security Leadership (WASL) and the Global Solutions Exchange (GSX). These organisations bring together women's rights and peace practitioners, organisations and networks actively engaged in preventing extremism and promoting peace, rights and pluralism. To ensure that gender and PVE programming builds on the experiences of women and grassroots women's organisations, UNDP, in partnership with ICAN, is conducting a research initiative on gendered dimensions of disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration. The intention of the initiative, which will be launched on the margins of the 2018 United Nations General Assembly, is to inform a new generation of gender-sensitive, evidence-based PVE policy and programming within UNDP and beyond.

d. Interlinkages between PVE, the 2030 Agenda and the Sustaining Peace Agenda

As noted by Achim Steiner during his opening statement, we are witnessing a new era in the United Nations, where the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Strategy interacts with Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the adoption of Agenda 2030, the international community recognised that peaceful and inclusive societies cannot be achieved without sustainable development, and vice versa. Most of the SDGs – such as elimination of poverty (Goal 1), zero hunger (Goal 2), quality education (Goal 4), gender equality (Goal 5), reduced inequalities (Goal 10), decent work and economic growth (Goal 10) as well as sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11) – are all collectively relevant to promoting durable solutions for the prevention of violent extremism. However, Goal 16, which urges us to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, provides the governance underpinning for PVE-specific interventions. Even though this linkage between PVE and SDGs is generally accepted, more work is required to clearly articulate the mutually reinforcing nature of both spheres of work.

e. Consistency between conceptual understanding and practice of PVE

The body of experience developed over the last two years has confirmed UNDP's institutional understanding of the building blocks that should inform local, national, regional and global strategies for PVE. These are laid out in UNDP's corporate strategy 'Preventing Violent Extremism through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity', which identified 11 building blocks for the prevention of violent extremism (in line with the United Nations Secretary-General's Plan of Action for Preventing Violent Extremism), namely:

- i. Promoting a rule of law and human rights-based approach to PVE;
- ii. Enhancing the fight against corruption;
- iii. Enhancing participatory decision-making and increasing civic space at national and local levels;
- iv. Providing effective socio-economic alternatives to violence for groups at risk;
- v. Strengthening the capacity of local governments for service delivery and security;
- vi. Supporting credible internal intermediaries to promote dialogue with alienated groups and reintegration of former extremists;
- vii. Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment;
- viii. Engaging youth in building social cohesion;
- ix. Working with faith-based organisations and religious leaders to counter the abuse of religion by violent extremists;
- x. Working with the media to promote human rights and tolerance;
- xi. Promoting respect for human rights, diversity and a culture of global citizenship in schools and universities.

The validity of these key building blocks has been underscored by recent experience – however, further efforts to creatively and cumulatively expand interventions that are designed around these building blocks are also needed.



Photo Credit: UNDP Oslo Governance Centre

f. Increased locally rooted research, documentation, policy and programme responses

The importance of locally rooted empirical research has increasingly underpinned the approach to research and programme implementation by governments, United Nations entities and other stakeholders at country level. The 2017 UNDP report 'Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment', the UNDP film *IMAN*, which is based on real events related to violent extremism in Sudan and the Middle East, as well as the various programmes being implemented across more than 60 countries by UNDP are examples of locally informed, evidence-based research and programmatic choices. This emphasis on local-level research is also providing significant data to support the policy choices of governments. However, there is a continued need for more context-specific, localised and time-bound studies to contribute to the evidence base and shape and influence policy decisions and programming choices.

VI. OSLO II GLOBAL MEETING: THEMATIC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides an overview of the thematic findings that emerged from the sessions and meetings, including key recommendations for the PVE community of practice.

a. Understanding and addressing drivers of violent extremism

An overarching theme of the session devoted to stock-taking of the drivers of violent extremism was the ongoing need to **challenge assumptions about violent extremism**, such as what may be seen as an overemphasis on jobs and employment as solutions, and the assumption that engagement in violence necessarily stems from a desire to inflict harm. Research presented showed that, in many cases, participation in extremist violence comes from 'positive' motivations, such as a belief that one is fighting injustice, protecting one's community or sacrificing oneself for the greater good. Participants also discussed the **danger of misperceptions and stereotyping distorting the discourse on violent extremism**, in particular the risk of fuelling Islamophobia by framing violent extremism narrowly and the additional alienation created by the stigmatisation and polarisation of identity groups.

Participants highlighted the need for more localised research that is context-specific and time-bound. Such research should study why some communities are more vulnerable than others, and the factors that contribute to resilience and social cohesion. Hard-to-reach border areas were reasserted to be particularly important future sites for promoting development.

Solutions that emerged from the session included inviting youth to participate in civic engagement opportunities, which reduces their likelihood to join extremist groups. Engaging key figures such as community leaders, civil society groups, religious leaders and families also proved productive in preventing radicalisation. Good practices were shared from Kyrgyzstan, where UNDP works with workplace foremen to support their role as authority figures who can deter radicalisation among their employees and act as bulwarks for stability and advice.

Several participants highlighted the need to distinguish **PVE-specific interventions**, designed in response to VE in a particular country with explicit results in this area, and **PVE-relevant interventions**, which intend to have an impact on VE but are not exclusively designed with VE in mind.

Challenges include the potential of military actions and state responses reversing development gains and, at the same time, the danger of development responses being ineffective if basic security conditions are not met. Young people and young women in particular continue to be largely excluded from PVE programmes – often, they are considered beneficiaries rather than engaged as full partners. Finally, there is a need for sharper tools and methodologies to measure impact, such as the [Toolkit on Monitoring and Evaluation for PVE](#) developed by UNDP.

Participants stressed the need to take a rule-of-law and human-rights approach to all PVE work, in particular when working with the security sector. Since abusive practices by state actors are one of the leading factors triggering recruitment, rule-of-law-based solutions must be an essential component of solutions. This includes asserting intolerance for state actors that abuse power or use corrupt measures and supporting the creation of space for people to express dissent without fear of retaliation, for instance by promoting a healthy civil society.

Overall, a recurring theme was the need to **promote dignity in PVE interventions**, not just countering drivers, but articulating what we are ‘for’ as a community. **Approaches should prioritise the promotion of a sense of purpose, the importance of pluralism, and respect for human rights and equality.** In relation to economic development, this includes ensuring that economic policies and systems give meaning and are fair and inclusive. In education, it involves not simply providing education, but changing the type of education provided: one that is relevant for a rapidly evolving job market, promotes critical thinking and creativity and teaches competencies for inter-cultural understanding.

Key recommendations that emerged from this session include:

- Focus development solutions on promoting a sense of significance, purpose and dignity in people’s lives, not only on providing employment or education;
- Implement holistic PVE programming: touching on structural, relational, cultural and personal aspects. This will require moving past a sectoral, siloed approach to development;
- Integrate security and development pillars using the framework of the SDGs;
- Conduct both conflict *and* peace analysis, as, even in the most difficult contexts, there are courageous people doing great work.
- Take a human-rights- and rule-of-law-based approach to both development and security;
- Focus interventions locally, at city and municipality levels, supported by research on local drivers of conflict and peace, and bring local initiatives and activism into the national and global spheres.

b. Reintegrating returning and disengaged fighters

Participants identified the need **for a more sophisticated and differentiated understanding of trends related to return and reintegration**, which have garnered increasing interest as conflict dynamics have shifted – in particular in Iraq and Syria. Just as there are country- and individual-specific reasons for recruitment, so approaches to reintegration will need to be varied and responsive to these specific trajectories. Research is also required to build an understanding on the different reintegration needs of fighters depending on their level of war trauma, age, gender, reasons for joining an extremist group and economic status. UNDP’s and ICAN’s upcoming research on the *Gendered Dimensions of Reintegration and Rehabilitation* is an example of a research initiative that looks at the needs of women returnees and the role of gender in reintegration and rehabilitation processes.

The consensus of the session is that **approaches to reintegration must be delivered hand-in-hand with ongoing prevention work addressing the root causes of extremism in a community.** Subjective experiences are now known to be critical, while, often, these may be shaped by development drivers confounding a purposeful sense of life and a future ahead. Similarly, mental health issues are also very important and need to be addressed both as part of prevention efforts and as part of reintegration. Taking all of these factors into account, it is clear that short-term programmes focusing on reintegration will fail to deliver comprehensive results.

The role of civil society in supporting reintegration at the community level was highlighted, but it also became clear that CSOs frequently engage in this area at considerable risk to their own staff and operations. Finding creative ways to support CSO partners to mitigate these risks is crucial, for instance by providing umbrella support for promising initiatives. The Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) was highlighted as an example of a successful mechanism that mitigates mistrust between civil society and state actors.

Presentations and subsequent discussion emphasised the critical importance of placing **community engagement** at the centre of efforts to reintegrate returning fighters. The **experience derived from Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR)** processes that centralised community tolerance and acceptance of returnees, achieved through integrated interventions, offers important lessons. Enabling positive contributions from returnees to community life is a further route to achieving this. At the outset, careful assessment of risks and community receptiveness can help inform these processes.

Building on the evidence base, experiences and lessons emerging from DDR processes is a key recommendation arising from the meeting. However, differences between DDR and return and reintegration work also emerged. In particular, a traditional DDR approach is initiated by a signed peace agreement or arbitrated process, which is frequently absent in cases of returning violent extremist fighters. **In many cases, assumptions around return processes may be confounded by the likelihood that returnees will face criminal prosecution, suggesting a long time-lag between return and the possibility of reintegration.** Interventions will need to be context-specific and responsive to different trajectories in different settings, while also linking closely to work on PVE in prisons.

In some cases, there has been significant popular resistance to amnesty programmes, which, some people argue, incentivise negative behaviours. Returnees also often do not trust these processes, believing themselves to be vulnerable to possible torture and HR violations by law enforcement and security agencies. Indeed, research findings shared through the session highlighted that the 'lowest-hanging fruit' (low-level defectors) often receive the most severe punishment. Yet, the principle that perpetrators of violence must be brought to justice is likely to be important to all communities across different settings. However, it is also important to **think beyond criminal justice and to explore both formal and informal transitional justice mechanisms and what they may offer as part of reintegration and recovery in different settings.** Again, lessons from the wider field of conflict transformation and peacebuilding can and should be applied.

The issue of stateless children is a specific issue of global concern, given large numbers of children born in Iraq, Syria and other sites. The legal framework for upholding the rights of these children is unclear, as are the answers to questions that will vary state from state as to what happens to children who return with their mothers. Global attention to resolving these situations in the interests of the children must be galvanised.

Key recommendations that emerged from this session include:

- Conduct more research and analysis on reintegration and rehabilitation trends and forms, including on the various types of returnees and their specific needs;
- Implement reintegration and rehabilitation processes in tandem with ongoing prevention and development work, ensuring coordination and synergy;
- Recognise the unique access and skills of CSOs by engaging them as meaningful partners but ensure that their staff and operations are not exposed to greater threat. It is important to conduct risk assessments and promote state-civil society relationships;
- Draw on lessons learned and experiences from DDR processes, while remaining cognizant of the differences between DDR and Return & Reintegration work;
- There is a pressing need to scale up advocacy and build global attention around the issue of stateless children.

c. Working with the media and communication to address and prevent violent extremism

The session revealed an increasingly clear picture of what works and what does not work when using communication to prevent extremism. In particular, participants discussed the **use and apparent lack of impact of counter-narratives, and their potential to be counterproductive and 'do harm'**. Recent research shows that the theory that the messages, myths, promises, objectives, glamour and other enticements propagated via VE narratives can be replaced with, or dismantled by, an alternative set of communications remains an unproven assumption. Counter-narratives are frequently weak in their conceptualisation and are constructed as defensive; unlike extremist narratives, they do not create an emotional connection by tapping into grievances, deprived dignity or a sense of identity. Too many counter-narratives are effectively counter-messaging initiatives, failing to construct a compelling narrative and to command trust with the populations they are meant to reach.

The baseline of a successful communication strategy should address the key issues affecting people and work with a trusted platform or source. While there is a greater body of evidence available on what does *not* work, as opposed to what works, participants identified creating spaces for discussion, talking and dialogue, both interpersonally and at scale through media initiatives as the most promising area. There is growing evidence that initiatives that generate discussion can have impact on the drivers of extremism, such as identity, efficacy, agency, and political participation. However, further research is required to assess whether these approaches are effective for directly preventing violent extremism.

Beyond counter-narratives, there is a limited evidence base in general on the connection between communication and extremism. For instance, the link between consuming online extremist content and offline violent activity remains contested. The evidence conversation is siloed among the security, military and defence community, the strategic communications community, and the development community. There is much to be learned from other areas of communication, such as political communication and health communication, and greater research is required to draw good practices and lessons from these areas. Participants agreed that PVE communication programming and policy need a broader body of research and evidence in order to move forward and to avoid spending large sums of money on strategies that have not been demonstrated to be effective.

A focus on singular interventions alone will be insufficient; there is a need to understand and develop strategies that respond to the broader communication environment. Today's information ecosystem is not conducive to social cohesion – instead, it fosters strategies that drive division, polarisation and extremism. Successful communication strategies for PVE focus on enabling conversations across divides. Our approach to media and PVE should also emphasise and advocate for the importance of free, plural and independent media that can command trust and legitimacy and act as a conduit for dialogue and debate. There is increasing evidence that corruption is a key driver of violent extremism, and the role of independent journalism and free media is essential for holding governments to account.

Key recommendations that emerged from this session include:

- Media and communication are a critical component of PVE, and lessons should be drawn from current programmes, including initiatives implemented by the private sector;
- Media and communication strategies must reflect the reality of those most vulnerable to violent extremism and start with the issues that are important to them;
- Focus on opening spaces for discussion and creating spaces for people to communicate openly about their concerns – including uncomfortable or sensitive issues;
- Expand the evidence base on communication and extremism, identifying which strategies have demonstrated impact and rooting interventions in research;
- Ensure PVE work on media and communication is steered by the principles of a free press and by independent and pluralistic journalism.
- Explore further the role of media and communication in anti-corruption efforts in order to tackle one of the known drivers of extremism in many contexts.

d. Building gender-responsive approaches to PVE

There is a significant evidence base from peacebuilding on the resilience, effectiveness and sustainability of women's peacebuilding initiatives. International support comes and goes, dries up and changes course, but women's peacebuilding activities are often still there after others have left. Therefore, participants in the session argued, **women's peacebuilding organisations must be a central focus of support in PVE.**

The session illustrated the importance of **focused studies and research on women and PVE, including quantitative and qualitative research across different contexts, to inform policies and gender-sensitive PVE programmes.** Panellists shared findings and recommendations from recent studies of women's experiences in and with Al-Shabaab, including the need to update our models on PVE to reflect more than the binary of 'supporter' or 'resister' roles. Research also revealed the need for programmes to distinguish between restrictions on women's freedoms in public and private spaces, to raise awareness about gender-related practices and the dangers of extremist groups, and to develop the communication capacities of mothers and fathers to effectively discuss the risks of groups like Al-Shabaab within their own family.

Focusing on gender – as opposed to just women – requires looking at the roles of men and women together and understanding the role of masculinities in driving violent extremism. However, a focus on masculinities and the perspective of men, which participants agreed is important and necessary, should not distract from the continued need to support women-focused research and programming and strengthen women's peacebuilding organisations.

Education was seen as an important part of building the resilience of women to VE, but participants stressed that it is not a magic bullet, as higher educated men and women also join extremist groups. **Addressing violence against women must constitute a critical part of PVE** and conflict prevention, in particular since there is a statistical correlation between levels of intimate partner violence/gender-based violence and communal violence.

Key recommendations that emerged from this session include:

- Support the sustainability of what is already being done on the ground by local groups and communities that is context-specific, culturally sensitive and relevant;
- Support local women's peacebuilding organisations and their initiatives with sustained funding, as they are at the forefront of preventing extremism and have the necessary trust from their community, skills and knowledge of the context to implement effective and sustainable initiatives;
- Expand the evidence base on the gendered dynamics of PVE by conducting studies across different contexts, including on the roles women play in violent extremist settings and on masculinities. Ensure research is action-oriented and directly informs programming;
- Recognise that the inclusion of women and gendered perspectives is integral to successful PVE work and that addressing domestic violence and gender-based violence is linked to preventing violence in communities and households.

e. **Developing and implementing national and regional action plans on PVE**

The session served in part as a **stock-taking of ongoing work to support 'counter terrorism' and PVE national action plans (NAPs)**. NAPs are government-led processes, but the United Nations and development partners have an important role to play in supporting governments to develop holistic NAPs that integrate preventative approaches and development solutions. The UK Government is supporting United Nations efforts to develop effective plans of action and plans to more clearly articulate its approach in its revised counter-terrorism strategy (CONTACT). Hedayah founded the P/CVE Task Force, which offers a phased, programmatic approach tailored to the needs of specific partners. UNOCT is developing a Reference Guide on the Development of PVE NAPs to ensure a comprehensive approach to the NAP process that provides long-term impact. UNDP is finalizing a study on lessons learned from case studies of countries that have developed and are implementing PVE-NAPS. Finally, support exists at the national level, including through Centres of Excellence (such as the IGAD Centre of Excellence for the Countering and Prevention of Violent Extremism), which work directly with governments to draft NAPs and establish networks of civil society and local researchers.

As the development of NAPs is in its early stages, participants raised several key challenges that the international community faces in expanding its support to NAP formulation and implementation. **NAP processes are often not transparent. The lack of a definition of violent extremism continues to present an issue**, and the PVE agenda as a whole in certain countries is focused on Islamist VE, obscuring other forms of extremism that can lead to stigmatisation and polarisation. Long-standing cultural and sectoral divisions between different arms of governments, for example security and development branches, present additional challenges.

The involvement of international partners varies – in some NAP processes, international actors have been entirely kept out, other NAP processes are entirely donor-driven and the end product is written by international consultants. This poses a dilemma, as international partners must seek to uphold their own values while simultaneously respecting national ownership. Participants also found that the **inclusivity of women, youth and civil society in NAP processes remains weak**. When consultations around NAPs do take place, they are often limited to the 'usual suspects' at the national level. When civil society is excluded from the processes, distrust between governments and CSOs can hamper successful consultation and partnership.

Participants proposed that, to address these challenges international actors supporting NAPs, processes **should encourage a philosophical switch towards PVE by positioning preventive approaches as imperative for national security and safety**. By failing to address structural conditions, governments put themselves at risk. It is also

important to highlight to governments that NAPs are not intended to form an alternative to the rule of law, but rather to fill gaps and complement existing approaches. By creating an environment where governments can be more honest about the link between poor governance and the drivers of violent extremism, PVE approaches may be more easily accepted and national ownership will be strengthened and political will for implementation enhanced.

Particular attention should be paid to the process of developing NAPs, which can help in establishing cross-government structures for PVE and the eventual implementation and monitoring of the NAP.

Key recommendations that emerged from this session include:

- Producing a successful NAP requires building national ownership and political will for implementation;
- International partners should encourage a switch towards preventive approaches;
- International partners should emphasise the national incentive of prevention, including of inclusive approaches that meaningfully engage women, young people and civil society;
- Put the end-users of NAPs at the centre of the process, with the international community playing a supporting role;
- Action plans need to be comprehensive and multisectoral – piecemeal approaches might provide short-term gains, but do not enable governments to deliver on PVE in the long term;
- NAPs need to respect Pillar IV of the Counter-Terrorism Strategy (rule of law and human rights) in their process, product, implementation and monitoring. However, PVE plans are not an alternative to the rule of law but aim to fill gaps and complement existing approaches.
- NAPs provide an opportunity to bridge the PVE and CVE communities. It is not sufficient to focus only on either preventive or countering measures. Both approaches need to be better synchronised and NAPs need to be developed based on collective inputs from both the development and the security communities.

f. Young people's role in PVE

A seismic shift is needed in relation to the way we recognise, promote and support young people as positive agents for PVE, rather than merely as beneficiaries or solely as at-risk/vulnerable groups. In December 2015, the United Nations Security Council adopted a ground-breaking resolution on youth, peace and security (UNSCR 2250) that, for the first time, recognised the positive role that young women and men play in promoting durable peace, preventing violence, including violent extremism, resolving conflict and reconciling communities. This landmark resolution also mandated an [independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security](#), presented at an Open Debate of the Security Council on 23 April 2018. UNDP, in collaboration with other United Nations entities, is leading research into the positive roles of youth in PVE and in the promotion of sustainable development, good governance, peace and security. Yet, more work remains in translating this transformational shift into practice, with young people at the core of our response. As noted by Achim Steiner during the meeting, it is intriguing how “scared governments are of their young people. It is a strange time we live in when the relationship between those who lead our communities, our nations, our societies are in fact in a position where the frustrations, the disillusionment and the disengagement of the next generation becomes a threat to society”.

The session identified several pervasive misconceptions around youth in PVE work that hamper successful engagement, meaningful prevention and durable results. These include the notion that ‘bulging youth populations’ often could present an increased risk of violence, that youth migrants, refugees and forcibly displaced people are potential threats to host societies and a drain on social services, and that the majority of young men and

women are potentially lured into joining violent extremist groups. In reality, panellists emphasised, the vast majority of young people resist recruitment and radicalisation and do not engage in extremism, and many are at the frontlines working on peacebuilding and PVE work in their communities and beyond. [UNDP's Global Report 'Frontlines' \(Youth in PVE forthcoming report – July 2018; summary available and shared during the meeting here\)](#) captures the perceptions of practitioners, analyses the latest evidence on PVE and argues that we should be sensitive to the needs of young people, their concerns and sensitivities, as well as expand available inclusive and safe space and opportunities for them.

Central to the session was the notion that young people are uniquely positioned to be meaningful partners and leaders in PVE. They know how to communicate to their peers, how to connect and build trust within their communities and how to convey empathy and their own experiences with radicalisation. However, participants emphasised, it is important not to see youth as the 'magic bullet' – they are a heterogeneous group and youth structures are not automatically inclusive of all identity groups.

The session discussed several promising practices that engage young people as active partners, rather than as beneficiaries of programming. These include Youth Innovation Labs that offer young people opportunities to get involved in developing campaigns, solutions, narratives and counter-narratives addressing extremist propaganda. Other good practices presented at the session include the engagement of youth in rehabilitation and reintegration, connecting young entrepreneurs to imprisoned young people to model alternative paths; innovative online tools such as Search for Common Ground's online game 'Battle for Humanity', which applies the tactics of extremist groups to a peacebuilding purpose; and the creation of local social contracts between youth-led organisations and municipalities, elder councils and community leaders. UNDP recently launched a new Regional Programme in Central Asia, which aims to support young people around employment, dialogue and civic engagement as well as vocational training initiatives.

Mistrust between governments and young people continues to be an ongoing challenge, as it leads to limited investment in young people's capacities and little consultation or partnership. As also highlighted in the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security (2018), participants also felt that funding mechanisms currently do not support young people and organisations are often reluctant to hire young people out of a fear of project failure. This contributes to an overall lack of capacity and learning platforms for youth and to a huge untapped potential for prevention work.

Key recommendations that emerged from this session include:

- Rather than only consult, also inform, support and hire young people in PVE programming;
- Establish and adopt mentorship, peer-to-peer and counselling models, where young people model good behaviour, success stories and alternative narratives and paths to their peers;
- Ensure that funding mechanisms are structured to support young people and their leadership, including by engaging with the philanthropic community and via advocacy efforts with donors;
- Recognise that trust-building is a two-way process and work with governments to enable them to trust young people and build relationships;
- Do not see young people as the 'magic bullet', recognise their value and potential, but also consider that they are a heterogeneous group and that youth structures are not automatically inclusive of all groups;
- Conduct more research on peace factors, including what makes a young person positively resilient and resistant to radicalisation and extremism.

g. Learning from faith-based organisations and religious leaders

The session highlighted the sensitivities of working with faith-based organisations as well as of good practices that demonstrate the transformative potential of engaging religious leaders and communities. **Panellists highlighted that any work with faith-based organisations and religious leaders should be rooted in localised, context-specific research** to understand the religious arguments used for radicalisation and for recruitment to extremist groups, as well as to take the pulse of people's perceptions of religion, pluralism and governance. For instance, a project by the State Islamic University in Jakarta, Indonesia, conducted research on radicalisation in schools that looked at the religious textbooks used and surveyed student's perceptions of religiosity, diversity and the state.

Religious sites, such as mosques, temples, churches and madrasas are particularly vulnerable to violent extremism, as violent extremists often start by trying to take them over. Support is required to ensure that these institutions are resilient, sustainable and integrated. These sites also serve as key community hubs and, when supported properly, can form a source of resilience, community engagement and sustainable development.

Working with recruiters, who are responsible for convincing people to join extremist groups by using faith-based reasons and rhetoric, was identified by panellists to be a particularly effective method to prevent extremism. Recruiters are the epicentre that keeps violent extremist movements going and the brains behind their ideology and philosophy. Best practices for working with recruiters and populations at risk for radicalisation include the **use of faith-based critical thinking tools**, paired with religious texts, laws and maxims, that enable them to deconstruct common extremist narratives. These should respond to the strategies recruiters use themselves.

A recurring theme in the session was the notion that simply deconstructing and countering narratives is insufficient and may inadvertently appear as a defence of the status quo. In working on ideology and religion for PVE, it is critical not only to counter narratives, but also to **actively empathise with grievances, offering realistic alternatives to violence and legitimate, peaceful strategies for social reform.** Equally important is looking for common ground, rather than acting defensively, and acknowledging opinions with respect and courtesy even though one may disagree with them.

There is an immense diversity of religious traditions and leaders, each with their own modes of engagement; as such, there is a need to be very specific when saying, "We are working on religious issues." As most United Nations projects are secular projects, they do not necessarily connect with people's spirituality and culture. Panellists pointed out that we should not let a lack of religious knowledge interfere with the work, and ensure that we do no harm, by elevating the voices of local actors and credible intermediaries.

Another challenge is **the potential for excluding the perspectives and experiences of women**, as the religious leaders in most cultures are traditionally male. Women's organisations, who are at the frontlines of preventing extremism in their communities and, in many cases, reach out to religious leaders and work with religious texts, were identified as essential partners in work with faith-based organisations.

Finally, there is a **need to keep human rights at the forefront of our thinking and approach when working with faith-based organisations and religious groups.** This becomes particularly pertinent where oppressed minority communities are concerned, and when there is inter-group religious violence.

Key recommendations that emerged from this session include:

- Working with religious actors requires special expertise, sound religious literacy and a capacity to collaborate with a diverse range of faith-based actors;
- The international community should approach working with faith-based organisations and religious leaders carefully, partner with credible intermediaries and build a strong understanding of the local context and religious/ideological factors at play;
- Do not only counter religious narratives, but empathise with grievances and offer legitimate, peaceful strategies for social reform that address grievances, rooted in religious texts;
- Support women’s organisations in promoting religious literacy in their community and involve them when partnering with religious leaders;
- Design programming to engage recruiters, who are central to faith-based radicalisation, including via critical thinking tools;
- Be prepared to do the necessary intra-faith groundwork prior to setting up inter-faith dialogues;
- Ensure that all programming and policy approaches promote respect for human rights, particularly where minority communities are concerned;
- Document experiences of work with religious organisations, religious leaders and dissemination of alternative narratives from the grassroots, and compare and share the lessons learned and results.

h. Measuring Effectiveness in PVE programming

This session noted there was limited evidence on the impact and effectiveness of PVE programming. The absence of conceptual clarity creates particular challenges, although work from Tunisia where the United Nations prepared a shared analysis and a joint working definition of PVE was highlighted as good practice. Measuring prevention is also a problem, although this is not new, since peacebuilding and conflict prevention actors have grappled with this issue for decades. Additional challenges include very complex contexts, limited funding for the implementation of grassroots programmes, and short project cycles.

In response to these challenges, UNDP and International Alert developed the toolkit “Improving the **impact of preventing violent extremism** programming – A toolkit for design, monitoring and evaluation” which provides practical guidance, referencing innovative and good practice as well as ‘easy to apply’ approaches.

The session also discussed risk awareness in PVE work, including the risk of non-engagement. When this outweighs the risks of engagement, there is a need to focus on mitigating the likelihood and impact of risks. Good tools and mechanisms for mitigating risks include: UNCT-wide PVE analysis; establishing a civilian consultative body; a Resident Coordinator-chaired board for high-risk initiatives; training on risk management; robust theories of change; and the development of PVE indicators.

Key recommendations that emerged from this session include:

- UNDP and other organizations should increase their investment in monitoring and evaluation capacities, including increased financial investment to allow for surveys, innovative data collection, and similar;
- Decision-makers should not approve programmes without a solid monitoring framework. Work together as a community investing in impact by contributing to the evidence base and share learning so we can build up knowledge of what works.
- Invest more in trainings, ‘communities of practice’, and similar technical capacity-building exercises.
- Base a risk assessment on joint analysis for shared risk, with a focus on risk mitigation and lowering risks rather than being risk averse.
- Engage through a ‘whole of UN’ approach when it comes to supporting government and the broader community.

VII. CONCLUSION: ROAD AHEAD FOR PVE WORK

Prevention works, saves lives and is cost-effective. This was affirmed during the two-day Oslo II global meeting on PVE. The meeting also confirmed that discussions and practice have significantly shifted in the two years since the first global PVE meeting. There is now a clear recognition that a response to violent extremism primarily through containment and dominated by security responses can only achieve limited success. Instead, engagement is needed that prioritises a multidisciplinary and whole-of-society approach to prevention, based on human rights and the rule of law.

The detailed recommendations from the meeting are presented above. UNDP's approach to PVE and its implementation of these recommendations will be further strengthened by building effective partnerships, within and outside the United Nations system, as epitomised by the MoU between the UNDP and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. To some, the partnership between security and development actors has not always been comfortable. However, we have learned that there is a need for collaboration amongst all relevant United Nations entities and others, including national expertise, to tackle the challenges of violent extremism.

UNDP is committed to forging partnerships with a range of stakeholders, including civil society, faith-based organisations, academic institutions, media outlets, and national and regional centres of excellence. Supporting national expertise will be particularly important in making progress in this challenging agenda.

Research and policy dialogues will remain primary tools for breaking new ground and expanding our knowledge horizon in PVE. Within the framework of Agenda 2030, UNDP will also continue to provide policy support and implement programmes in support of Member States' efforts to achieve peaceful, just and inclusive societies. The discussions at 'Oslo II' helped inform and support this work for the years to come.

Appendix I: Agenda

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Second Global Meeting on Preventing Violent Extremism

Theme: Assessing Progress Made, and the Future of Development Approaches to Prevent Violent Extremism⁸
23 - 24 May 2018, Quality Expo Hotel, Fornebu, Norway

A screening of the film, *IMAN*, based on real events related to violent extremism in Sudan and the Arab region, is scheduled on **Tues 22 May**, from **18:00 - 19:30** in *Iderommet* at the **Quality Expo Hotel**. The film is in Arabic, sub-titled in English. This event is organized and sponsored by UNDP Sudan. All conference participants are invited to attend, on a 'first-come, first-served' basis.

Day 1 (Wednesday 23 May)	
08:30 - 09:00	<i>Registration and Coffee</i>
09:00 - 10:00	Welcome and Introduction: Framing the Debates In this opening session, the keynote speakers will provide their reflections on contemporary issues related to preventing violent extremism (PVE). The centrality of prevention will be highlighted but this session will also re-iterate the importance of strategic partnerships with national governments, regional organisations and civil society. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nikolai Astrup, Minister of International Development, Norway• Achim Steiner, Administrator, UNDP• Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism• Somia Okoued, State Minister, Sudan• Jayathma Wickramanayake, United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth – video message Moderator: Laila Bokhari , Independent Adviser and former State Secretary, Norway
10:00 – 10:20	Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between UNDP and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (By Invitation Only) <i>Venue: Inspirasjonsrommet</i>

⁸ All presentations will be recorded except where there is an explicit request not to do so. Discussions will not be recorded and will be based on the Chatham House Rule, which means participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.

Day 1 (Wednesday 23 May)

10:00 – 10:10	<p>Video Snapshots on PVE Introduced by Annaliese McAuliffe, Independent Journalist</p>
10:10 – 10:40	<i>Coffee and Tea Break</i>
10:40 – 12:45	<p>Beyond Drivers of Violent Extremism: Stocktaking of Development Responses to PVE</p> <p>There is growing research evidence on the underlying factors that contribute to violent extremism. Development approaches are emerging as a sustainable means of tackling the conditions that give rise to violent extremism. This session will draw on experiences in supporting countries, communities and civil society to provide insights on how developmental approaches are contributing to PVE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrick Keuleers, Director, Governance and Peacebuilding, UNDP Bureau for Policy and Programme Support • Ozonnia Ojielo, United Nations Resident Coordinator, Kyrgyzstan • Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini, Co-Founder and Executive Director, ICAN • Rebecca Wolfe, Director of Evidence and Influence, Peace and Conflict, Mercy Corps <p>Moderator: Alexander Avanesov, PVE Special Adviser & Global Programme Manager, UNDP</p>
13:00 – 14:00	<i>Lunch</i>
14:00 – 15:30	<p>Reintegration of Disengaged and Returning Fighters</p> <p>Even though there is no certainty of the threat posed by former terrorist fighters returning to their country of residence or origin, it is likely that some of these fighters remain committed to a form of violent extremism. This session will provide an empirically rich analysis of the patterns, trends, and implications of returning former terrorist fighters, based on lessons from Al Shabaab, Boko Haram and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant/Sham (ISIL/ISIS). It will also consider policy options for effective reintegration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richard Barrett, Director, The Global Strategy Network • Ilwad Elman, Director of Programs & Development, Elman Peace and Human Rights Centre • Cheryl Frank, Programme Head, Transnational Threats and International Crime Programme, Institute for Security Studies • Russell Porter, Senior Coordinator for CVE, USAID • Mauro Miedico, Chief a.i., Terrorism Prevention Branch, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime <p>Moderator: Fredrika Ornbrant, Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs</p>
15:30 – 16:00	<i>Coffee and Tea Break</i>
16:00 – 17:30	Parallel Sessions

Day 1 (Wednesday 23 May)

<p>A.</p>	<p>Media, Communication and Extremism <i>Venue: Main meeting room</i> The Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism encouraged more research on the relationship between the misuse of the internet and social media by violent extremists, as well as the factors that drive individuals towards violent extremism. This session will provide a discussion of recent studies and experience related to media, communication and the prevention of violent extremism. It will also showcase recent content developed to prevent violent extremism. The moderated debate will consider three questions: i) What is the relationship between online and offline attitudes and behaviour related to VE? ii) What are the roles of counter narrative or alternative narrative programming, as well as other approaches to using media and communication in PVE? iii) What is the evidence around these areas and to what extent are our interventions evidence-driven?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drew Mikhael, Research Fellow, Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice, Queen's University, Belfast • Alastair Reed, Senior Research Fellow, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, The Hague • Miriam Estrin, Policy Manager, EMEA, Google • Simon Finley, Programme Advisor Asia Pacific, UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub <p>Moderator: James Deane, Director, Policy and Research, BBC Media Action</p>
<p>B.</p>	<p>Building Gender-Responsive Approaches to Preventing Violent Extremism <i>Venue: Iderommet</i> Traditional gender roles are often used as recruitment tools, socio-cultural norms of masculinity act as motivations for radicalization, and sexual and gender-based violence is deployed as a weapon by extremist groups. Too often, our approach ignores the influence of notions of masculinity and femininity on PVE processes, and sometimes obscure the diversity of roles women assume in extremist contexts as perpetrators, survivors and peace practitioners. This session will draw on the experiences and innovations of civil society and gender practitioners, as well as disseminate recent research findings from Somalia, Somaliland and Kenya, as well as other global cases, to illustrate the gendered dimensions of violent extremism and the need for locally-led, integrated approaches to PVE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarah Douglas, Deputy Chief, UN Women • Fauziya Abdi Ali, Founder, Women in International Security • Nancy Yammout, Co-founder and General Director, Rescue Me – Crime Prevention • Shafqat Mehmood, Chairperson, PAIMAN Alumni Trust, Pakistan - video <p>Moderator: Hans Jacob Frydenlund, Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway</p>
<p>18:00 – 20:00</p>	<p>Photo Exhibition and Reception (organised and sponsored by UNDP Africa)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the photo exhibition by Ozonnia Ojielo, United Nations Resident Coordinator, Kyrgyzstan

End of Day 1

Day 2 (Thursday 24 May)

09:00 – 09:30	<p>Plenary debrief and discussion on key findings and recommendations from parallel sessions and take-aways from Day 1</p> <p>Moderator: Sarah Lister, Director, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre</p>
09:30 - 11:00	<p>Developing and Implementing National and Regional Plans of Action on PVE</p> <p>The Secretary General's Plan of Action on PVE encouraged states and regional organisations to develop national and regional plans of action. A number of organisations are providing support in the development and implementation of these plans of action. This session will interrogate the progress made, identify gaps in support to states and regional organisations, and discuss plans to enhance the development and effective implementation of national and regional plans of action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrick Lynch, Director, Hedayah • Simon Nyambura, Director, IGAD Center of Excellence for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism • Jessica Banfield, Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Specialist, UNDP Istanbul Regional office • Mehdi Knani, Political Affairs Officer, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism <p>Moderator: Alastair King-Smith, Head of International Counter Extremism, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK</p>
11:00 – 11:30	<i>Coffee and Tea Break</i>
11:30 - 13:00	Parallel Sessions

Day 2 (Thursday 24 May)

A.	<p>Frontlines: Young People's Role in Preventing Violent Extremism <i>Venue: Main meeting room</i></p> <p>In December 2015, the United Nations Security Council adopted a ground-breaking resolution, on youth, peace and security (UNSCR 2250) which for the first time recognised the positive role that young women and men play in promoting durable peace, preventing violence, including violent extremism, resolving conflict and reconciling communities. This landmark resolution also mandated an independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, presented at an Open Debate of the Security Council, on 23 April 2018. Against this backdrop, panellists will share experiences and discuss concrete field initiatives, challenges, opportunities and promising practices, and formulate policy and programming recommendations to better support and promote youth empowerment in the context of PVE responses, including by strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achaleke Christian, National Coordinator, Local Youth Corner Cameroon • Amira Ibrahim, YouthCAN, Norway • Emadeddin Badi, Project Coordinator, Peaceful Change Initiative, Libya • Lena Slachmujlder, Vice President (Programmes), Search for Common Ground • Norimasa Shimomura, United Nations Resident Coordinator, Kazakhstan <p>Moderator: Noella Richard, Youth Global Programme Manager, UNDP</p>
B.	<p>Building Safer Communities: What Can We Learn from Faith-based Organisations and Religious Leaders? <i>Venue: Iderommet</i></p> <p>Religious institutions play a central role in many societies, and many religious leaders exert considerable influence. In recent years, there has also been a dramatic increase in the number of religious institutions in many communities that provide education for young people. Some of these faith-based organisations and religious institutions become easy targets for those who wish to spread extremist ideologies. This session will highlight the need for programme-sensitive approaches in support to religious institutions. It will also underscore good practices by faith-based organisations and religious leaders in building safer communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jamhari Makruf, Advisory Board, State Islamic University, Jarkata, Indonesia • Muhammad Lemu, Director of Research and Training, Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, and General Secretary, Islamic Education Trust • Nika Saeedi, Policy Specialist, UNDP • Shaukat Warrach, CEO, Faith Associates <p>Moderator: Chetan Kumar, Senior Advisor on Peacebuilding and Prevention of Violent Extremism, UNDP Philippines and SE Asia</p>
13:00 – 14:00	<i>Lunch</i>

Day 2 (Thursday 24 May)

14.00 – 14:30	<p>Plenary debrief on key outcomes from parallel sessions</p> <p>Moderator: Ulrika Richardson, United Nations Resident Coordinator, Kosovo*</p> <p><small>*References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).</small></p>
14:30 – 15:30	<p>Measuring Effectiveness in PVE programming</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluation is an essential part of any intervention. This is particularly the case in the complex, fluid, conflict-affected environments in which PVE programming takes place, where the risks of doing harm are high and the consequences can be serious. The systems and tools for understanding the suitability and impact of PVE interventions in different contexts are being developed by national and international actors. This session will review efforts by UNDP and other partners to develop guidance and toolkits aimed at designing and measuring effective PVE interventions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ruth Simpson, Senior Lead (MENA), International Alert • Anita Ernstorfer, Director, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects • Giordano Segneri, United Nations Peace and Development Advisor, Tunisia <p>Moderator: Malin Herwig, Policy Advisor, UNDP</p>
15:30– 16:00	<p>Concluding Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrick Keuleers, Director, Governance and Peacebuilding, UNDP
16:00	<p><i>End of meeting – Coffee and tea available</i></p>
End of Day 2	

The UNDP Oslo Governance Centre would like to express its appreciation to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, Hedayah and the UNDP Global Programme on Preventing Violent Extremism for their generous contributions in support of this meeting.



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

United Nations Development Programme

Oslo Governance Centre

Kongens gate 12, 0153 Oslo, NORWAY

www.undp.org