Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Countering Violent Extremism

Introduction

This good practices document addresses the role of government institutions, agencies, and civil society in countering violent extremism (CVE). It was produced on the basis of responses by Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) members to the questionnaire that was prepared by the Turkish National Police's International Center for Terrorism and Transnational Crime (UTSAM) in cooperation with the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This document is also informed by the discussions at GCTF CVE Working Group workshops on multi-sectoral approaches to CVE held in Antalya and Ankara, Turkey, in December 2012 and March 2013. These workshops in Turkey were organized as a foundational part of the GCTF's CVE Working Group's work stream focused on institutions. This document is also complementary to the *Good Practices on Community Engagement and Community-Oriented Policing as Tools to Counter Violent Extremism.*

This non-binding document aims to provide GCTF members and other interested stakeholders with a non-exhaustive list of practices that reflect the experience of a number of members in countering violent extremism.

All states are encouraged to consider using these non-binding, good practices while taking their local needs and conditions into consideration, as they look to develop and implement national CVE policies and/or programs, as part of a wider effort to implement Pillar I of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The implementation of these practices should be consistent with applicable international human-rights law and take into account the varied histories, cultures, and legal systems among States.

This Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to CVE complements the June 2012 Rome Memorandum good practices on prison disengagement and rehabilitation of violent-extremist offenders. It also directly relates to recent GCTF CVE Working Group workshops on the role of community engagement and community-oriented policing in CVE, which were held in Washington, DC in March 2013, and which led to the development of a separate set of good practices. These good practices are intended to complement those contained

in the Ankara Memorandum and the work of the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and its relevant entities.

Background

CVE requires a multi-faceted approach, as various factors can drive violent extremism. The prerequisite of an effective, results-oriented CVE policy is to comprehend the complexity of violent extremism; this requires a joint effort at the local, national, regional, and international levels.

Most violent extremist groups have their own cultural, psychological, and structural characteristics, which play an important role in the process of radicalization. That is, the context in which terrorism emerges involves a complex mix of historical, political, ethnic, cultural, religious, social-economic, and various other factors and, as such, presents multiple and evolving challenges to governments.

Miscalculations or misinterpretations during the course of policy implementation for CVE can be counter-productive, and these miscalculations can be exploited by terrorists and terrorist organizations. There is no one-size-fits-all approach in CVE. Each state should take its own capabilities, structure, and needs into consideration in designing programs and policies. However, experiences reveal that a cooperative and constructive dialogue between society and government agencies, including at the municipal level, is a prerequisite to success in CVE. Government agencies should provide an environment that allows different parts of society – e.g., community leaders, media, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector – to collaborate on CVE programs and strategy. More importantly, while the government's role is crucial, a comprehensive CVE strategy should involve a "whole-of-society approach," rather than an approach limited solely to government actors. Empowering civil society in the struggle against violent extremism can produce more effective results, as governmental collaboration with non-governmental partners brings more resources to such efforts.

Identifying the Problem

Good Practice 1: *Each state initially needs to understand the nature of violent extremism. States should identify the conditions conducive to violent extremism and assess their own needs, objectives, and capabilities prior to developing and/or tailoring any CVE-relevant program.*

Understanding the process of radicalization has become one of the most critical points in responding to violent extremism and preventing individuals from starting down the path toward violence or becoming members of a terrorist organization. The first step to developing an effective CVE policy, program, or strategy is to have an in-depth understanding of this process.

Good Practice 2: *Strategies with regard to CVE should be based on scientific analyses.*

Radicalization and recruitment into violent extremism are often localized phenomenon; conditions conducive to violent extremism, vulnerable areas/communities, and at-risk demographic groups vary from country to country – and even within a particular country. In order to develop an effective response strategy to counter violent extremism, it is important first to identify the problem and focus on key groups or focal areas by using information from various sources. The information flow coming out of government agencies and intelligence services is clearly critical, but may not be sufficient to determine the scope of the problem. Scientific field studies or regular screening surveys conducted by academic or research institutions can help to complete the picture in understanding the dynamic structure of violent extremist groups and new emerging threats. The information flow from multiple sources likely will enable states to develop deeper understanding of the problem.

Good Practice 3: *Any CVE program should avoid the identification of violent extremism with any religion, culture, ethnic group, nationality, or race.*

An ethnocentric approach to violent extremism will limit the visions of those who are responsible for developing CVE strategies. Associating a CVE program with a particular religion, culture, ethnic group, nationality, or race could alienate those very members of the community whose cooperation is important for the program to succeed.

Good Practice 4: *Each violent extremist group should be evaluated separately, since a one-size-fits-all approach does not work in the case of violent extremism. Thus, responses and interventions should be group-specific.*

States can encounter different types of violent extremism and should acknowledge that each form has both unique and common characteristics. Any CVE policy or program should take into account these differences and similarities. Radicalization involves similar stages, regardless of the ideologies of violent extremist groups.

Good Practice 5: *Considering violent extremism to be a mere security issue can be misleading. It is a multi-faceted problem that requires multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional responses.*

Dealing with violent extremism involves a wide variety of fields, including psychology, sociology, political science, education, public policy, and administration, as well as welfare policy. These fields are inter-related. Common conditions conducive to violent extremism – such as real or perceived grievances, collective or personal humiliation, inequalities, injustice, unemployment, exclusion from economic, social and political participation – are typically beyond the scope of traditional security approaches and require a broader range of responses.

Multi-Agency Approaches within the State

Good Practice 6: *Developing shared understandings of the nature of violent extremism among governmental agencies and non-governmental actors is a critical element of any successful program targeting violent extremism.*

Multi-agency involvement in developing and implementing CVE programs is a complicated aspect of countering violent extremism. Developing and implementing a "whole-of-government" approach can sometimes be a painstaking process. Integrated projects might lead to inconclusive efforts, due to inconsistent awareness among different agencies. Particularly, operational agencies may not appreciate the importance of prevention strategies for CVE. In addition, there may be a preference for operational activities, since these activities can reinforce the belief among the public that the government is taking action against violent extremism.

Good Practice 7: *States, in cooperation with both governmental and non-governmental actors, are encouraged to consider comprehensive action in preventing and countering violent extremism. Although the role of the government is crucial, a strategy that involves a "whole-of-society" approach in addition to a "whole-of-government" one can be effective.*

Effectively addressing the conditions conducive to violent extremism requires a broader range of actors than security agencies. Different governmental agencies are responsible for ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, creating new job opportunities, sustaining community stability, regulating migration flow, and increasing the level of resilience to radicalization and recruitment into violent extremist groups. States and their structures would benefit from establishing or intensifying information work with the public in the interest of more effectively explaining the effort undertaken by state authorities to counter violent extremism, as well as all detrimental consequences related to violent extremism. Government-initiated efforts, however, may not be sufficient for a successful CVE program. A range of actors, including civil society, (e.g., international and local partners, NGOs, religious organizations, universities, and communities) might be encouraged to take part in these efforts and this could be addressed within the ap-

propriate legal and/or policy framework. States might benefit from positive voices emanating from different groups in any given community, in order to counter obstacles a CVE program might face in the implementation process.

Good Practice 8: *For a successful CVE strategy to be implemented, an operational coordination mechanism is of vital importance.*

Effective coordination among governmental agencies, as well as between government and non-governmental stakeholders, is critical to the successful implementation of any CVE program. In the absence of effective coordination among relevant agencies, the activities of one agency might preclude another's efforts to reach its expected objectives. In order to effectively counter violent extremism, states, in addition to ensuring the necessary legal and/or policy frameworks are in place, can consider creating operational coordination mechanisms among all related official agencies.

Public-Private Partnerships

Good Practice 9: *Civil society can contribute to CVE efforts by providing narratives and messages against violence; presenting alternative and non-violent means to reach shared goals; and promoting institutional diversity, which breeds mutual understanding as a bulwark against violent extremism.*

States often attempt to send their messages to communities that could serve as a potential breeding ground for violent extremism. Nevertheless, these governmental messages are often not received as intended. Governments are often perceived as one side of the conflict by extremist groups. In order to reach out to the heart of the community and/or violent extremist groups, states, consistent with their relevant national laws, should consider working with civil society groups and/or individuals that often have developed strong ties in the relevant local communities.

Good Practice 10: *It is crucial for states to build trust while working with communities. States should ensure meaningful community participation in order to mobilize the resources of the community in CVE-relevant activities.*

Effectively engaging society requires the establishment of trust between government agencies and society as a whole. Preexisting tension between some segments of society and government agencies might be a significant obstacle to achieving this objective. Then the crucial first step is to re-establish trust on which future collaboration will be constructed; otherwise, efforts from any side are likely to lead to a deadlock. Communities may have doubts and suspect state actors are simply using such activities for information collection. Such a situation jeopardizes the success of activities, as it precludes building trust between the related community

and state agencies. Communities' possible perception of being stigmatized as a potential terrorist breeding ground may present another obstacle in building mutual trust between the state and communities. Such a perception is likely to lead communities to close all possible doors to collaboration. Therefore, states should avoid creating such a perception by sending a clear message to communities that they do not target their communities because of their unique characteristics such as race, religion, and ethnic background.

Government agencies cannot easily work alone in vulnerable communities where violent extremist views may be well received, and it is crucial for state institutions to build trust in such communities. State agencies should work with community residents and community leaders to build a sense of common purpose around CVE. State agencies might foster nuanced and locally rooted CVE programs and initiatives by serving as facilitators, conveners, and sources of information to support local networks and partnerships at the grassroots level. State agencies do not have to necessarily be involved in these activities, but they can be of assistance in coordinating resources, delivering funds, and providing training.

Further elaboration on engaging with local communities in CVE-related activities can be found in the GCTF's *Good Practices on Community Engagement and Community-Oriented Policing as Tools to Counter Violent Extremism*, which was adopted at the GCTF Ministerial Plenary session in September 2013.

Good Practice 11: *States can help civil society in CVE activities.*

Many civil society groups function in different fields (e.g., human rights, social services, cultural activities) and often might not be aware that these efforts also contribute to countering violent extremism. They might not be aware of the fact that they can play a vital role in CVE. They may also lack sufficient resources. In other respects, there may be robust NGOs that may not possess CVE-specific expertise. State actors can support civil society to increase their awareness and capacity in CVE.

Good Practice 12: *States should promote tolerance and facilitate dialogue in society to build communities which appreciate their differences and understand each other.*

It is important to identify the ways to stimulate inter-cultural, inter-religious, and inter-ethnic dialogue. An exchange of views might enable one to understand how others see the world. Creating dialogue channels serves as a first step for communities to get to know one another. Once different communities start to socialize, they might acknowledge the fact that there are communalities that they can use as a common ground for further dialogue. States might also work to promote democratic values, human rights, pluralism, and freedom through education and out-

reach programs. Religious communities can work together to promote tolerance and to stem support for violent extremism. As a part of their efforts, they might create exchange programs of young theologians and might offer meetings for students to promote inter-religious dialogue and tolerance. Educational projects to raise awareness of different forms of prejudice and hostility might be implemented to prevent intolerance and discrimination.

Good Practice 13: *States and society can work together to amplify voices that oppose exploitation of religion by violent extremist groups.*

No religion encourages its adherents to commit violent acts in its name. However, throughout history, there have been violent extremist groups that utilize their faith communities as breeding grounds for violence. Encouraging moderate voices that promote tolerance, dialogue, and mutual understanding to speak out and self-monitor, including with other religious groups, has proven to be an effective way to suppress violent extremist rhetoric or, at least, to mitigate its negative effects.

Socioeconomic Approaches

Good Practice 14: *CVE programming should place a specific emphasis on youth at risk of radicalization and recruitment.*

Youth form a natural recruitment pool for violent extremist groups. The recruitment age typically ranges from 15 to 25 in many violent extremist or terrorist groups. For that reason, CVE efforts should concentrate on youth. Youth should be viewed as part of the solution to countering violent extremism, not just a potential violent-extremism problem. Youth typically have energy, a desire to act and be recognized, and often seek to be a part of something larger – and these characteristics can serve as a foundation for CVE programming. Countries should involve at-risk youth as active partners in CVE program design and implementation. Also, youth CVE programming should build and support youth peer groups, as youth are often more receptive to their peers than to adults. At the same time, such programming should involve mentors, families, and communities; research has shown that a caring, consistent mentor is the most effective asset for positive youth development.

Research indicates that qualities such as motivation, perseverance, and risk-aversion are predictive of success in life, and these capacities can be built through "life-skills" training focused on topics such as teamwork and conflict resolution. Young people who have joined violent extremist groups have often expressed a desire for a sense of belonging and purpose; thus, an integrated youth program that addresses these psychosocial, as well as other, youth needs could address more

than one condition conducive to radicalization and recruitment. Program design should, where appropriate, take into account the different needs of young women versus young men.

Good Practice 15: *Educational institutions can serve as an important platform in countering violent extremism.*

Because it reaches and shapes so many children and youth in countries around the world, education can be a critical CVE platform. Education systems can instill the values, skills, and tools necessary for individual success in life by shaping tomorrow's productive and constructive citizens. Some research has suggested that critical-thinking skills may help to prevent radicalization because they provide students with the capacity to discern between black-and-white argumentation typical of extremism in any form. In at-risk communities in particular, school-based curricula and programming centered on civic education, community engagement, and volunteerism may constructively occupy at-risk youth and build their sense of connectedness to their families, communities, and countries; for those at-risk youth that have dropped out of formal education, or in cases in which young women are not permitted to attend school, other venues may be more appropriate for broadly similar approaches.

Good Practice 16: *Promoting economic opportunity among at-risk populations can address a condition conducive to violent extremism.*

While research has rejected the thesis that poverty begets violent extremism, the gap between the expectations and reality of an individual's socioeconomic status can be a condition conducive to violent extremism. At other times, financial payments or material support offered by violent extremists to individuals and/or their families, with little or no economic means, can supply the ranks of such groups. Depending on the particular context, programming supporting economic livelihoods – such as vocational training and job-placement support – may mitigate economic conditions conducive to radicalization and recruitment where relevant among at-risk populations. It will be important to determine the particular economic needs, capacities and opportunities of such at-risk communities or populations in designing such projects to be successful.

Good Practice 17*: Women can be a particularly critical actor in local CVE efforts.*

Across countries, women play a particularly critical role in their families as mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, and as primary caregivers, as well as breadwinners. In many places, they provide deep understandings, and even serve as institutional memories, of their local communities. As such, women are particularly well-placed and positioned to serve as locally knowledgeable, credible and resonant

CVE voices. Women may be able to identify signs of radicalization and discourage this phenomenon in their families and communities. In some places, they may be the best actors to raise the awareness of, and build capacity among, other local women – thus serving a force-multiplier effect in communities where radicalization and recruitment are possible to occur.

The Role of Law Enforcement Agencies

Good Practice 18: *Law enforcement agencies should acknowledge that one of the most vital rules in countering violent extremism is building trust with those particularly vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment towards violence.*

Law enforcement agencies should utilize a community-oriented policing approach to reach out to the centers of at-risk communities. Community-oriented police working in diverse communities should appreciate different cultural contexts. They should focus on common ground among communities instead of differences, while crafting community-oriented policing programs to build trust. These programs should aim to win their citizens' hearts and minds – just as their daily work protects their citizens' bodies, property, and public spaces. The legitimacy of the state might be strengthened via such close communication between police officers and community members.

Good Practice 19: *States should provide training to law enforcement officers in CVE-related matters.*

Law enforcement officers, especially those working in localities, do not always have a good understanding of violent extremism. They may have inadequate knowledge about the early signs of violent extremism and little, if any, training on how to respond to it. Training in CVE-related matters is sometimes needed to help law enforcement recognize indicators of violent extremist activity in relation to religious or cultural practices. One of the main aspects of this training should focus on understanding and distinguishing between cultural, societal, and religious norms and activities that are not being used to further criminal activities and violent extremist activities. International gang-prevention experiences and initiatives may offer one source of approaches to craft such programming.