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and other international organisations in Geneva

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Panel Discussion on preventing violent extremism

EU Intervention

17 March 2016

Mr President,

The EU welcomes today's panel discussion and the adoption of a resolution on this important topic at the 30th HRC session. The EU reiterates its full support to the Secretary General's Plan of Action to prevent violent extremism as an excellent tool to guide further efforts in this field, and looks forward to the upcoming Geneva conference, organised by the UN and the Swiss government.

The SG's Plan of Action is very much in line with existing EU policies. Addressing violent extremism is a key component among preventative aspects of EU-counter terrorism efforts and is included in several regional action plans. The EU engages in a number of additional initiatives aimed at mobilizing funds for preventing violent extremism, including in third countries, and is an active member of the Global Counterterrorism Forum and board member of Hedayah, GCERF and the IIJ.

Mr President,

Preventing and countering violent extremism depends on the effective protection and promotion of human rights: they are mutually reinforcing.

Firstly, acts of violent extremism threaten the enjoyment of human rights. Women and girls, as well as children, are often specifically vulnerable.

Secondly, the risk for violent extremism to thrive is especially high in societies where human rights are violated and abused, where socioeconomic opportunities are lacking, where governance is poor or impunity remains unaddressed. Heavy-handed

security forces, harsh treatment in detention facilities, or a lack of access to justice can provide opportunities for exploitation by violent extremists.

Thirdly, actions by states to prevent or counter violent extremism must not infringe on human rights. National security measures should never undermine a safe and enabling environment for an independent, diverse and pluralistic society, in which citizens have the right at all times to speak out, both on- and offline, against government policies and actions. Restrictions to the legitimate exercise of the freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association and the right to privacy should be prescribed by law, serve a legitimate aim and be necessary and proportionate to the aim pursued and in accordance with international human rights law. States should promote a culture of respect, dialogue, integration and education, highlighting the importance of universal principles and tolerance, specifically addressing persons belonging to the most affected and vulnerable communities. The threat to the right to education, and the vulnerability of women and girls to extremist acts, can be countered through both the harnessing of the potential of youth, and the unique and important role played by women in societies worldwide.

Mr President,

A question to all panelists: how can national action plans for prevention of violent extremism address a phenomenon that does not respect borders?

Thank you Mr President.