



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Special Permanent Council

29 September 2017

Report on OSCE Activities to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism (VERLT)

Remarks by OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger

*Minister Kurz,
Special Representative Neumann,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

First, I would like to thank the CiO for his leadership on the issue of preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization and for his offer to strengthen the Anti-Terrorism Unit of the Secretariat. Professor Neumann, I would like to thank you for your very insightful report and your clear recommendations.

I am pleased to present the second report on *Past, Current and Possible Future Activities of OSCE Field Operations to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism*. This report was prepared by the Secretariat at the request of the Austrian Chairmanship. It is based on input submitted by OSCE field operations, which were requested to provide information on relevant assistance given to host authorities over the past 12 months, including achievements, lessons learnt and main challenges. The report summarizes key trends.

A holistic approach to preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT) is one of eight strategic focus areas identified by participating States for OSCE counter-terrorism activities. Since the Ministerial Declaration in 2015, the OSCE had developed a number of promising activities, promoting civil society and youth engagement, as well as gender-sensitive approaches.

Since last year's report, youth has increasingly become the focus of activities related to preventing and countering VERLT. Under the leadership of the Austrian Chairmanship, the OSCE Transnational Threats Department (TNTD) and field operations organized a series of

regional youth workshops in Tunis, Vienna, Chisinau, Sarajevo and Almaty. Recommendations from these workshops were presented at the annual Counter-Terrorism Conference here in Vienna in May this year. Six field operations indicated that youth is the main target group of their VERLT related activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In times of growing concern over the spread of violent extremism leading to terrorism as well as the threat posed by home-grown and foreign terrorist fighters, it is vital that participating States consider carefully how the potential of the OSCE to prevent and counter this phenomenon can best be utilized. Special Representative Neumann's thought-provoking and frank assessment can be very useful in this regard.

Over the past year, eleven field operations have implemented VERLT specific activities, with six of them having dedicated UB staff working exclusively or mostly on VERLT. Of those, four are from the region of South-Eastern Europe and two from Central Asia, where engagement in this field has been strong since 2014.

Three areas have emerged as the main focus of this work:

- Strengthening civil society, women, youth and religious leaders;
- Promoting co-operation among experts from government, civil society, academia, the media and the private sector; and
- Promoting community policing approaches.

This shows that the field operations are increasingly and continuously taking a multi-dimensional approach to this problem, as recommended by the OSCE Ministerial Declaration No. 4/15.

In addition, three thematic areas that were given relatively low priority in last year's report are emerging as areas of increased focus. They comprise efforts towards integrating a gender perspective as well as attempts to address negative socio-economic factors conducive to VERLT. As a third area, there has been growing attention given to the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremists, as well as prevention activities in prisons. In March 2017, upon the specific request of OSCE Heads of Mission, the TNTD organized a brainstorming on this topic. The meeting included representatives from organizations already established in this field such as the Council of Europe and UNODC that encouraged greater OSCE engagement in this area.

Generally, the field operations show an excellent capacity to use their convening, facilitation and capacity-building role in promoting a truly comprehensive approach to VERLT. And they are making a conscious effort to mainstream preventing and countering VERLT into ongoing programmes that promote human rights and the rule of law, such as the training on hate crimes with "Coalitions against Hate" in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or the awareness-raising and resilience-building activities under the slogan "Parents against Terrorism" in Tajikistan.

Underlying this success is the pro-active communication that characterises the close cooperation between field operations and the Secretariat, in particular TNTD as focal point and central coordinator for these activities. From its end, the Secretariat will continue to invest efforts in developing tools that will ensure coherence of approaches, especially through its flagship #UnitedCVE communication campaign and the “Leaders against Intolerance and Violent Extremism” (LIVE) project.

Looking ahead, field operations expressed an interest in organized regional networks of focal points for Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe. This would allow for an organized exchange of good practices and lessons learnt between the field operations, with the TNTD acting as the convenor.

Efforts to ensure coherence, co-ordination and co-operation with external partners will continue to be a priority. Field operations are well placed to support the involvement of their host countries in international and regional processes for networking and exchanging lessons learnt and good practices. Over the past twelve months, six field operations have also been approached by other international actors with offers for collaboration or requests for assistance with VERLT-related projects.

To conclude, let me emphasize that the OSCE provides numerous openings to invest in highly cost-efficient projects related to preventing and countering VERLT in line with OSCE principles and on the basis of our comprehensive approach to security. I encourage OSCE participating States and our international partners to take advantage of these opportunities.

Thank you.