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Transcript: *Policy Dialogue on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: National Experiences and Best Practices*

Allow me to start by saying what a pleasure it is to return to the Geneva Centre for Security Policy. I applaud the Centre for becoming a hub for policy dialogue in Geneva, and am particularly grateful for the priority being placed on preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE). And in this regard allow me to congratulate Professor Mohamedou and Dr Schori-Liang for their endeavours.

I would also like to thank the Governments of Morocco and the United States for hosting this event. Both Governments are donors to the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), as are many other states represented around this table today.

Before addressing the topic for this session, namely international cooperation on preventing and countering violent extremism, allow me to say a few words about GCERF. We are a relatively new institution, based here in Geneva, and indeed enjoyed strong support from GCSP during our set-up phase. We are a global fund intended to support grassroots initiatives to prevent and counter violent extremism. We have four main hallmarks: we are a funding mechanism, we focus on prevention, our work supports local communities, and we are a public-private partnership.

This discussion comes the day after our third Governing Board Meeting ended. I am pleased to report that the Board took decisions that pave the way for GCERF to issue its first grants in Bangladesh, Mali and Nigeria in early 2016. The Board also approved Kenya, Kosovo, and Myanmar as new partner countries. And the Board confirmed its ambitions for GCERF as the global fund on preventing violent extremism, by agreeing a strategic growth plan.

I've been asked to introduce this panel on international cooperation on preventing and countering violent extremism. I would like to do this with a simple SWOT analysis, identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the surge in attention on P/CVE:

Strengths

- This has been a truly global effort. Although initially led by the US, there is now a global coalition around P/CVE. The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) has 30 member states, the UN is about to launch its P/CVE Action Plan, a number of regional organizations are developing strategies on P/CVE, and many states around the world are working on national action plans. The lesson has been learned that this is not an effort that can be led by any one country; and neither are any countries, rich or poor, immune to violent extremism.
- P/CVE is part of a genuinely comprehensive approach to this challenge. Of course there is still an important role for military, security, and intelligence responses. But equally important are responses at the other end of the spectrum, focusing on prevention.

- P/CVE brings all the relevant stakeholders to the table, not just governments and the UN, but also civil society and the private sector. Of particular significance is the focus on communities.

Weaknesses

- P/CVE interventions are taking place in an evidence and research void. There is still no consensus on defining violent extremism; similarly there is still no clear evidence on what drives radicalisation, nor on what can be done to avoid it. More work is needed by our Universities and think-tanks in this regard, and here I look to the GCSP. Equally we need to find answers in unusual places, including among the communities most affected.
- I think there has been too much focus on summitry and dialogue, and not yet enough on action. This is an urgent issue that requires urgent action.
- We don't yet have a toolkit to demonstrate results and impact. Monitoring and evaluating P/CVE interventions, and demonstrating they work, remains a significant challenge.

Opportunities

- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) number 10 and 16 represent a clear opportunity to mainstream P/CVE in wider global efforts towards justice and prosperity. GCERF operates at the nexus of security and development, and has shared its lessons on how difficult it can be to navigate these two policy audiences.
- Another opportunity is to engage the private sector. As a public-private partnership, GCERF works with the private sector at all levels, from its Governing Board to the local level. We have found the private sector receptive to the business case that reducing violent extremism is good for business.
- I believe that international Geneva also has the opportunity to become the natural centre for P/CVE, located as it is at the intersection of human rights, conflict, security and development, in addition to the fact that it hosts so many institutions working on directly relevant issues such as migration and health.

Threats

- One threat is that we may lose momentum. How long will the current cooperative and comprehensive approach survive, for example, in the face of more terrorist outrages such as those recently in Beirut, Paris, or Bamako?
- A second threat is to overlook the central role of human rights in all our endeavours. A lack of rights is almost certainly one of the drivers to radicalisation. We must also safeguard the rights of those communities among whom we work.
- A final threat is that we now face a proliferation of activities and interventions. It will be very important to coordinate and to avoid overlap, in order to maximize our collective potential for impact.