



Remarks by Dr Khalid Koser, Executive Director, GCERF

Expert Roundtable Meeting on “Countering Violent Extremism and Development Assistance: Identifying Synergies and Opportunities in the Horn of Africa”

Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, London, UK

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'd like to thank the Government of the Netherlands for hosting this important event, and also note that the Netherlands has recently become the 12th donor to the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF).

I'd also like to thank the Global Center on Cooperative Security for preparing the excellent background paper for this meeting, and also for your contribution to the GCERF Governing Board meeting in Geneva last week.

I'm delighted to report that the Board has paved the way for GCERF to issue its first grants in Bangladesh, Mali, and Nigeria early next year. The Board has also approved Kenya, Kosovo, and Myanmar as new partner countries. I know that the Horn of Africa is of particular interest to this meeting and we look forward to working with you as we launch our Fund in Kenya.

A brief introduction to the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund: We are a relatively new initiative, based in Geneva, with the objective of supporting local initiatives to prevent violent extremism. GCERF has four main hallmarks: filling a funding gap, a focus on prevention, working with local communities, and developing partnerships with the private sector.

GCERF works at the nexus of security and development: our funding comes from both security and development actors, both are represented on our Governing Board, and we work with both in our beneficiary countries. We have spent much of the last year navigating between these two communities and as such, we have found that security and development actors have broadly different understandings of results, different attitudes towards risk, and different time lines.

A few observations on how we have tried to bridge this gap.

First, we have tried to move the debate beyond the national level and divisions within national bureaucracies, in particular by pointing to SDGs 10 and 16 and the forthcoming UN Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) Plan of Action. These provide an opportunity to galvanize security and development actors in a concerted effort on a global level.

Second, we have found that a focused discussion is more effective than a broad conceptual discussion. For example GCERF's current initiative to work on PVE among mobile populations has attracted significant interest across the spectrum.

Third, we have tended to rely on the private sector as an intermediary. Its focus on business opportunities transcends the security-development divide and appeals to both sets of actors.

We have also tried not to force the issue. We conceive three approaches to bridging the security-development nexus. First, we respect that security and development have different approaches and goals, and their distinctiveness must be preserved. Second, equally, there is overlap in the Venn diagram. Development actors can address some of the 'push' factors that radicalise people to violent extremism, for example social injustice, whereas security actors can address some of the 'pull' factors, for example extremist ideologies.

Third, PVE can also fill a void between the two. Security actors tend to focus on communities that pose a security threat, whereas development actors tend to focus on impoverished communities. In contrast, GCERF focuses on communities at risk of radicalisation to violent extremism – neither the poorest, nor the most dangerous.

As we issue, monitor, and evaluate our first grants, we look forward to sharing our results with you.

Thank you.