



## Concept Note

### *Regional Conference on Countering the Misuse of Internet by Terrorists and Violent Extremists: Addressing the Prevailing Digital Information Disorder*

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Venue: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia

Date: 12-13 September 2023

#### **Background & Rationale**

Terrorists and violent extremists exploit the internet in order to recruit, gain knowledge and know-how, select targets and plan violent acts. They also disseminate misinformation, disinformation and malign information (collectively referred to as ‘information disorder’) in order to polarize and spread fear.<sup>1</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic scaled up these processes as social interactions abruptly shifted to the digital space. With technological progress moving at a rapid pace, governments, civil society and the private sector face the challenge of addressing the digital information disorder in an effort to prevent polarization while simultaneously protecting human rights, including freedom of expression.

OSCE participating States have committed to countering the use of the internet for terrorist purposes as one of the strategic focus areas of OSCE counter-terrorism efforts, and to strengthen public-private partnerships “to foster communication efforts, including via social media, to counter violent extremist messaging, while fully respecting the right to freedom of opinion and expression.”<sup>2</sup> Participating States are further committed “to engage and empower youth, in preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism [PCVERLT], *inter alia*, by: [s]upporting youth-led and youth-focused awareness-raising initiatives, including through the Internet and social media, to prevent and counter their radicalization to terrorism, and to promote respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, tolerance and non-discrimination”.<sup>3</sup>

In a world with millions of online information sources disseminating new content daily, an increasing use of artificial intelligence, low level of media and information literacy and lack of

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the UN Secretary-General, [Roadmap for Digital Cooperation](#).

<sup>2</sup> See OSCE Decision No.7/06 Countering the Use of the Internet for Terrorist Purposes, from 2006: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/d/3/23078.pdf> and [Ministerial Declaration on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that lead to Terrorism | OSCE](#).

<sup>3</sup> OSCE Ministerial Declaration on P/CVERLT [MC.DOC/ 4/15](#) and OSCE Consolidated Framework for the Fight against Terrorism ([PC.DEC/1063](#), 2012), and OSCE Strategic Framework for Police-Related Activities ([PC.DEC/1049](#), 2012).

critical thinking skills may create vulnerability to online harms, including violent extremist and terrorist content. The removal of content and blocking of websites are insufficient and in many cases can constitute a violation of human rights, including the right to freedom of expression. What is needed is an effort that leverages cross-sectoral expertise and resources, including new partnerships between governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in order to develop and promote effective human rights-based strategies to address the digital information disorder, enhance critical thinking and prevent violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT) online. As an added dimension, understanding how individuals shift from consumption of online content to target selection and offline violence must be part of a comprehensive assessment of this global challenge.

The Mongolian Government, through its ‘Digital Nation Strategy’, has taken a pro-active approach to P/CVERLT by addressing the challenges related to the use of the internet for terrorist purposes. By launching the ‘Digital Nation Strategy’, Mongolia is promoting an inclusive approach to strengthening media and information literacy.<sup>4</sup> Regionally, Central Asian participating States are looking at how to address the information disorder, with the first Central Asian Media Forum in 2022 including a focus on media literacy and addressing misinformation, disinformation and malign information online.<sup>5</sup> In addition, experts from the region express concerns that communities are becoming increasingly vulnerable, in part because of low level of critical thinking skills, and urge initiatives to increase media literacy across the population.<sup>6</sup>

### **Proposed Activity**

Building on previous collaboration between the OSCE and Mongolia, such as the [national seminar](#) on community policing approaches to P/CVERLT in 2017 and the [High-Level Inter-Regional Conference on a Whole-of-Society Approach to P/CVERLT](#) in 2019, TNTD/ATU proposes a regional event with the following objectives to address the above-mentioned challenges:

- Discuss challenges related to addressing in an effective manner the use of the internet for terrorist purposes, specifically how to counter information disorder; as well as formulate effective approaches to P/CVERLT in the digital space in an inclusive, gender-sensitive and human rights-based manner;
- Generate regionally-focused policy recommendations on enhancing media and information literacy context of P/CVERLT and addressing the prevailing information disorder.

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<sup>4</sup> [Third National Stakeholder Forum on Media and Information Literacy held in Mongolia | UNESCO.](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Central Asian Media Forum \(ca-mediaforum.org\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Low Level of Media Literacy of the Central Asian Countries' Population - CABAR.asia](#)

The structure of the event is envisaged as follows:

### **Day 1: Framing the challenge**

- Civil society round table to generate recommendations that ensure inclusion and representation of non-governmental P/CVERLT actors in policymaking;
- Framing remarks on the challenges of P/CVERLT in the digital information disorder and the importance of a human rights-based approach to address them;
- Opening remarks segment;
- Panel discussion taking stock of the use of the internet for violent extremist and terrorist purposes, including ‘online-to-offline jump’, identifying possibilities and limitations of governmental risk assessments and human rights-based interventions.

### **Day 2: Addressing the challenge**

- Panel discussion on countering the use of internet for terrorist purposes – addressing illegal and harmful content while safeguarding freedom of expression;
- Panel discussion on media and information literacy in the context of P/CVERLT and addressing the online information disorder;
- Panel discussion on examining the pathway from online hate to offline violence through case studies;
- Closing session.

### **Target Audience**

The envisioned audience includes representatives of OSCE participating State and Partner for Co-operation policymakers, law enforcement, media regulatory authorities, civil society actors including youth and women organizations, educators, mental health and psychosocial support professionals, media, social media influencers and bloggers, academics as well as relevant tech representatives.

UN agencies such as UNESCO, UNDP, UNICRI, UN Women and UNOCT that are working on relevant topics may also be considered as participants/speakers. Representatives of Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism, Tech Against Terrorism, and social media platforms popular in Mongolia, Central Asia and other parts of Asia may also join this Conference and contribute by sharing best practices of identifying and combating the spread of violent extremist content online. They can also share insights on effective approaches to media and digital literacy, drawing on their collective expertise in technology, content moderation, and counter-terrorism.