

Open briefing of the Counter-Terrorism Committee on

*Economic and Social Council Chamber, United Nations Headquarters, New York
9 September 2015*

U.S. Prepared Remarks

We'd like to thank the CTC for holding this open briefing and the distinguished presenters from Member States and the UN who provided very useful regional perspectives and explanations of what the UN is already doing to address this important topic.

The United States is committed to countering terrorism and violent extremism and we believe that building partnerships at the global, regional, and local levels is essential to 1.) degrading and defeating today's most pressing terrorist threat: ISIL; 2.) confronting the false ideologies espoused by terrorist groups like ISIL; 3.) addressing the underlying social, political, and economic drivers of violent extremism that terrorists exploit; and 4.) ensuring respect for human rights and rule of law and that diverse societies welcome and respect people of all faiths and backgrounds.

Women have an essential role in building these partnerships.

Secretary Kerry and British Foreign Secretary Hammond recently wrote: "We must continue to integrate women as equal partners in international efforts to counter violent extremism, prevent conflict and build peace. Women are uniquely affected by war and their perspectives are indispensable in resolving disputes, ensuring accountability for crimes, minimizing the suffering of civilians and designing long-term recovery programs."

Furthermore, the ongoing conflict in Syria and the flow of foreign terrorist fighters there and to other conflict zones highlights the fact that many women flock to the ranks of ISIL. Women and girls are also victims of brutal violence perpetrated by violent extremist groups like ISIL and Boko Haram. But, just as women are victims and perpetrators of violent extremism, they must also be part of our efforts to counter it. Common sense and past experience tells us that women can wield significant influence in their families and in their communities. W

The United States remains a staunch supporter of dialogues and efforts to include women's perspectives in developing multi-sectoral approaches to CVE. This includes

a tool to prevent violence. Those experiences and perspectives need to be at the table, but more importantly, they have a right to be there as citizens and stakeholders.

Beyond this, women have a number of other complex roles to play around violent extremism, many of which we do not yet understand. Mindful of the existing gap in research on gender and CVE, the United States is taking concrete steps to address this by investing in research so that we can develop and refine the inclusive tools that make us all safer. In addition to academic research, community-wide engagement through civil society, religion, and other methods is critical for better understanding the diverse push and pull factors that radicalize women and men to violence, and the diverse ways women and men are working together to counter violent extremism.

It is important to acknowledge the role women play in supporting and perpetrating terrorist acts-whether by legitimizing the radicalization that leads to violence or as attackers. We should ensure that our broader CVE work targets women as well as men, such as developing counter-narratives that speak to young women at-risk of recruitment by violent extremist groups or focusing rehabilitation and reintegration programs for women who provide support for terrorist acts but have not themselves committed an attack.

On July 21, 2015, the U.S. Government and the United Institute of Peace co-hosted “Women and Countering Violent Extremism: Strengthening Policy Responses and Ensuring Inclusivity.” The event was attended by over 300 policy makers, academics, civil society leaders and advocates. These participants made a number of policy recommendations that we strongly encourage partners to integrate into preparations for upcoming high level ministerial deliverables around women peace and security and countering violent extremism.

These include:

- Recommendations that UN member states should explore how a concerted effort can integrate women’s perspectives in their CT and CVE strategy making. Within these strategies, protection of women and girls from violence should be considered a key priority and not a collateral concern;
- Recommendations that the international community consider enabling and supporting networks among women and youth working to counter violent extremism;

- Recommendations that the international community expand the research base as a means for identifying promising engagement and protection

strategies as well as approaches to promoting consistent engagement with and empowerment of women; and

Recommendations that UN member states consider integrating women into the security sector through international security partnerships, given