THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: HOLISTIC APPROACHES FROM EDUCATION TO DE-RADICALIZATION

20-21 October 2016, İstanbul
5 Interactive Panels, 4 Simultaneous Brainstorming Sessions, 1 Networking Session
Participation of more than 300 young people and experts coming from 40 countries
Together with 50 speakers
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1. Overview of the Conference

The Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (Turkic Council) and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) co-organized the international conference on “the Role of Youth in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Holistic Approaches from Education to De-radicalization” held on 20-21 October 2016 in Istanbul.

The conference aimed

★ to analyze the root causes of violent extremism;
★ to put forward effective, comprehensive and innovative solutions for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE);
★ to strengthen political commitment towards concrete measures to empower youth in peacebuilding and conflict resolution;
★ to include young leaders in decision making processes on P/CVE issues;
★ to empower and engage youth worldwide in addressing the challenges related to P/CVE.

Framework Documents for the conference

★ UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security
★ UN Secretary-General’s Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE)
★ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
★ Turkic Council Founding Documents and Summit Declarations
★ Reports of Turkic Council Security Consultations

More than 300 young people and experts coming from 40 countries from Africa to Central Asia attended the event.
40 Countries
Member States of the Turkic Council- Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey- as well as Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, China, Malaysia, Syria, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Russian Federation, Qatar, Georgia, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece, Ukraine, Moldova, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Lithuania, Finland, Czech Republic, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, France, Italy, United Kingdom, Belgium, United States, Tunisia, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, Ethiopia and Zambia.

50 Speakers
Representatives of Turkic Council, UNAOC, UN, UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Office for South South Cooperation (UNOSSC), Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), governments as well as experts of non-governmental organizations, academia, sportsmen and young leaders.

5 Interactive Panels
1. Efforts of Governments and International Organizations to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism with the Involvement of the Youth
3. Preventing Violent Extremism Through Education: UNAOC’s Approach Through Youth Projects
4. Framing Development Solutions and Urging South-South Cooperation for the Empowerment of Youth in Countering Violent Extremism

1 Networking Session: Sports as a Means to Prevent Violent Extremism

The conference provided a platform to showcase the great potential and the contribution of youth to peace-building efforts and their commitment towards achieving the SDGs with concrete case studies on de-radicalization strategies and PVE programs through the use of innovative methods, including social media and sports.
II. Partners

The conference served as an opportunity for young leaders to exchange experiences and knowledge on P/CVE and to build South-South and triangular partnerships.

The following organizations were the partners of the international conference co-organized by the Turkic Council and the UNAOC:

- Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency-TİKA
  http://www.tika.gov.tr/en

- United Nations Development Programme-UNDP
  http://www.eurasia.undp.org/

- United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation-UNOSSC
  http://ssc.undp.org/content/ssc.html

- International Center for Sport Security-ICSS
  http://www.theicss.org/

The conference was the demonstration of the true partnership among the institutions that are committed to join hands against violent extremism.
III. Opening Ceremony

“600 million young people live in fragile and conflict-affected settings and unfortunately, young men and women become victims of conflicts of which, they are neither the cause nor the initiator. Young people are the game-changers and the agents of peace, the partners of today and leaders of tomorrow. Young participants, coming from 40 different countries with different cultural and religious backgrounds should raise their voices and share their expectations as well as proposals on how to turn the world into a more secure, peaceful and prosperous place. As a comprehensive and inclusive cooperation mechanism, the Turkic Council is always ready to support youth initiatives for their empowerment in P/CVE and to cooperate with regional and international organizations to this end”.

Secretary General of the Turkic Council Ambassador Ramil Hasanov

“Young people are the game-changers and the agents of peace, the partners of today and leaders of tomorrow.”
“Youth represents promise and potential, not peril and problems. According to the statistics, the majority of foreign terrorist fighters recruited are young people. We must work together towards implementing UN Resolution 2250 through mechanisms that would enable young people to participate meaningfully in peace processes and dispute resolution. The international community still lacks a comprehensive positioning and holistic policy, commitments, priorities or responsibilities to fulfill the aspirations of young people around the world. Let us not just talk about youth. Let us work with youth in true solidarity”.

High Representative for the UNAOC
Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser

“Let us not just talk about youth. Let us work with youth in true solidarity.”
“In the age of information, education, social media, and civil society institutions are the driving forces to address the root causes of violent extremism and radicalization. Young minds should be educated in a way that they can differentiate knowledge and propaganda. Media should strike the right balance between the freedom of expression and the danger to feed the violent extremist tendencies. The conference that views the youth as the part of solution rather than the source of the problem would contribute to the unification of the hearts and minds of the youth”.

Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey Tuğrul Türkeş

“The conference that views the youth as the part of solution rather than the source of the problem would contribute to the unification of the hearts and minds of the youth.”
Within the framework of the international conference, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation between the Turkic Council and the UNAOC was signed by Ambassador Ramil Hasanov, Secretary General of the Turkic Council and Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, High Representative for the UNAOC at the end of the opening ceremony of the event.

Signing of the MoU sealed a solid and long-term partnership between the Turkic Council and the UNAOC.
“The 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at a historic UN Summit cannot be implemented without peace. UNDP has been carefully studying the root causes of the factors pushing the youth to violent extremism. UNDP found out that economic opportunities, inclusive education, structured dialogue with youth, participation of youth in decision making and tackling inequality and injustices are instrumental in addressing the problem”.

UN Assistant Secretary General Cihan Sultanoğlu

“The 17 SDGs cannot be implemented without peace.”
“As our Minister H.E. Mr. Çavuşoğlu duly stressed at his speech during the New York meeting of Group of Friends of the Alliance in September 2016, exclusionary tendencies and manifestations are on the rise globally. Being or perceived different makes peoples exposed to victimization. Labeling someone as the other, just because he or she is considered different, fuels so many tensions, which may inter alia end up in violent extremism, including terrorism. We should never stop saying time and again that our differences are indeed our strength”.

Director General for Multilateral Political Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey
Ambassador Hasan Ulusoy

“ We should never stop saying time and again that our differences are indeed our strength.”
“By utilizing sport, communities can ensure that they are preparing the grounds for hope and educating young people to build a brighter future. Sport can also break down social barriers and promote inter-cultural dialogue. Sport plays a role in encouraging social inclusion and cohesion, unites people and communities. Turkey successfully utilized sports to preserve the dignity of Syrian refugees”.

ICSS President Mohammed Hanzab
“The Turkish National Coordination Committee for the UNAOC is committed to work with the youth to promote dialogue between different cultures”.
*Chairman of the Turkish National Coordination Committee for the UNAOC*
Prof. Bekir Karlığa

“Violent extremism does not have anything to do with any religion or belief, but has certain addressable causes and TİKA undertakes several measures in all over the world addressing the developmental needs of the brotherly communities and those in need”.
*Vice-President of TİKA Mehmet Süreyya Er*
“Preventing violent extremism will not be possible only through traditional institutional arrangements or education. We need to integrate young women and men into decision-making at the local and national levels. In line with the deliberations of the UN Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, we should work not only for young people, but also with young people. We need to listen to the voices of young women and men”.

UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy on Youth Ahmed Alhendawi

"We need to integrate young women and men into decision-making at the local and national levels."
VI. Conference Inputs and Discussions

A. Panel Discussions

Panel I: Efforts of Governments and International Organizations to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism with the Involvement of the Youth

Moderator: Qaya Mammadov, Head of Department of the International Security from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan

Panelists:
- Bakyt Egemberdiev, Deputy Director General of the State Agency for Youth Affairs of Kyrgyzstan
- Farhad Hajiyev, Executive Director of the Youth Foundation under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- Serik Beissembayev, Head of Sociology Department in “International research complex “Astana”
- Anna-Katharina Deininger, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office on Youth and Security

“The religious illiteracy is the main reason of the spread of extremist ideology among the youth of Kyrgyzstan”.

Bakyt Egemberdiev

“The internal tensions and external conflicts as the elements feeding the violent extremism in Azerbaijan as in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Armenia which led to over 1 million internally displaced persons”.

Farhad Hajiyev

“Social isolation of young people is one of the main reasons of the violent extremism”.

Serik Beissembayev

“OSCE through its United in Countering Violent Extremism Campaign works hard to raise awareness on the issue”.

Anna-Katharina Deininger
“Even though unemployed and uneducated young people with financially poor backgrounds are mainly influenced by the extremist ideas, there are also young people coming from relatively upper social segments who enter into the influence of radical ideologies”.

**Dr. Sebastien Peyrouse**

“While analyzing the terrorist groups it is significant to understand three components – their intentions, capabilities and opportunities. There are also non-jihadi and apocalyptic terrorist organizations, therefore it is significant not to confuse terrorism with religion”.

**Asst. Prof. Khuram Iqbal**

“Violent extremist ideologies differ, but narrative largely stays the same. Misuse of religious and other concepts by violent extremists must be deconstructed and challenged. Youth is the solution – not the problem”.

**Camilla Bognoe**

Prof. Ufuk Ayhan, Vice-President of Policy Academy of Turkey made a presentation entitled “the Case Study of Turkey in Preventing and Countering Radicalization”.

In his presentation, he informed the participants about the efforts of Turkey to fight against terrorist organizations such as DAESH, PKK and the Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETO).
Panel III: Preventing Violent Extremism Through Education: UNAOC’s Approach Through Youth Projects

Moderator: Nathalie Guillaume, Policy Analyst and Public Information Officer of the UNAOC

Panelists: Velma Saric, Founder & President, Post-Conflict Research Center, Bosnia Herzegovina

Jonah Obajeun, Chief Curator of Tolerance Academy, Nigeria

Benard Wakoli, Founder and Director of Yaya Education Trust, Kenya

Nuriia Karakulova, Member, Search for Common Ground, Kyrgyzstan

Abou El Mahassine Fassi-Fihri, Regional Director for Middle East and North Africa, Search for Common Ground, Tunisia

Vugar Allahverdiyev, Associate Programme Officer, the Office of the UN Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth

“More than 200 young people went to war in the Middle East from Bosnia Herzegovina as FTFs. More than 5,000 people were trained so far at the Post-Conflict Research Center in Bosnia-Herzegovina the field of P/CVE”.

Velma Saric

“The unfavorable conditions for the youth in Nigeria prevent them to channel their energy into productive activities and therefore we work for capacity building of young people in P/CVE”.

Jonah Obajeun

“Poverty in the African region is one of the main reasons for the young people to become the victims of violent extremism. Yaya Education Trust endeavors to decrease the number of those young people attracted and brainwashed by the terrorist groups”.

Benard Wakoli
“Active involvement of youth in governance and decision-making processes in their countries is essential for P/CVE in Central Asia. We should create a space for dialogue among youth to this end”.

Nuriia Karakulova

“Four pillars that are Prevention, Engagement, Partnership with government and Creation of alternative narratives are essentials in P/CVE. Search for Common Ground acts in this direction”.

Abou El Mahassine Fassi-Fihri

“The majority of the young people are peace builders and it is essential to work with them. The Office of UN Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth works hard to reveal this potential”.

Vugar Allahverdiyev
Networking Session: Sports as a Means to Prevent Violent Extremism

The Session was held in partnership with the International Center for Sport Security (ICSS) and Save the Dream.

**Moderator:** Massimiliano Montanari, Executive Director of the Save the Dream

**Panelists:**
- Fikret Orman, Chairman of Beşiktaş JK (guest of honour)
- Kashif Siddiqi, International Footballer & Co-Founder of Football for Peace
- Sergey Danilenko, Secretary General of the World Ethnosport Confederation

“All sport disciplines, first and foremost football, should be distanced from fanaticism and radicalism and be turned into entertaining activities where children and families can freely take part. Sport administrators should take care of their speeches and be role-models for the youth”.

*Fikret Orman*

“We should keep in mind that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges sport’s role for social progress and the sport particularly supports Goal 3, Goal 4, Goal 5, Goal 11 and Goal 16 of the SDGs”.

*Massimiliano Montanari*

“Sport is or tool, peace is our goal. Sports diplomacy can build trust for our youth and inspire understanding to respect opponents and understand them and their cultures more deeply”.

*Kashif Siddiqi*

“Ethnosports might constitute an important antidote to extremism and radicalization in the sense that they address the young people’s identity problem by raising awareness to traditional values and ways of life”.

*Sergey Danilenko*
Panel IV: Framing Development Solutions and Urging South-South Cooperation for the Empowerment of Youth in Countering Violent Extremism

The Panel was co-organized by the UNDP in cooperation with the UNOSSC.

**Moderator:** Mohamed Yahya, UNDP Africa Regional Programme Coordinator

**Panelists:**
- Edem Bakhshish, Chief of Division for Arab States, Europe and the CIS, UNOSSC
- Jonathan Friedman, Assistant Director, Stroz Friedberg
- Chinara Esengul, Senior Conflict Prevention Advisor to UNDP in Kyrgyzstan
- Agron Sojati, Prime Minister’s Assistant, National Coordinator for Countering Violent Extremism, Albania
- Shelley Inglis, Team Leader of Governance and Peace Building Team, UNDP
- Yasemin Cansuz Kurt, Expert at Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency-TİKA

“Development of the social aspects of national development strategies needs to be accompanied by strong focus on primary and secondary education where young people can learn about diversity and inclusion”.

**Agron Sojati**

“TİKA carries out multiple development assistance projects across the world such as providing infrastructure for schools, playgrounds and youth centers and these efforts are all pertinent elements of giving young people an alternative to violent rhetoric and action”.

**Yasemin Cansuz Kurt**

“Private investments in areas of potential or ongoing conflict can provide employment, opportunities and the sense of belonging to young people preventing them getting involved in violent extremist acts”.

**Jonathan Friedman**
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“Developing countries have much to learn from each other with regard to several issues including P/CVE. South-South cooperation pertains to the SDGs especially those on combating poverty and extremism”.

**Edem Bakhshish**

“The long-lasting experience in conflict prevention and multiple spheres of development work needed to be matched by strategic partnerships and active engagement with all involved stakeholders. Gender equality should be proportionally approached when tackling with violent extremism”.

**Shelly Inglis**

“Engaging with the youngsters, establishing dialogue fora as well as arranging vocational and religious trainings, providing small grants and match-making the efforts of private and public sectors are among the solutions offered in Kyrgyzstan within the context of P/CVE”.

**Chinara Esengül**

**Moderator:** Maqsoud Kruse, Executive Director of Hedayah-International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism, UAE

**Panelists:**
- Prof. Peter Kagwanja, Chief Executive of Africa Policy Institute, Kenya
- Alim Shaumetov, Director of Center of Information, Propaganda and Rehabilitation Akniet, Kazakhstan
- Zeeshan Amin, Political Affairs Officer at the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTIFT) Office
- Velma Saric, Founder & President, Post-Conflict Research Center, Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Mossarat Qadeem, Executive Director of PAIMAN Alumni Trust, Pakistan
- Almaz Hasanova, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Azerbaijan

“There is still the need to elaborate more on the concept of violent extremism as a primary step and as a second step, to conduct research on the drivers and dynamics of the phenomenon”.

**Prof. Peter Kagwanja**

“Programs and methods used at the Akniet Center and in Kazakhstan were successful not only for the rehabilitation of those who were already in the penitentiary but also for the de-radicalization of those in the society. As a result of their activities, he informed, since 2015 there were not known cases of youth departure to join international terrorist networks”.

**Alim Shaumetov**

“Secretary-General’s Plan of Action to PVE is a comprehensive document on the issue concerned. Along with the mentioned plan, countries were also encouraged to develop their own national strategies”.

**Zeeshan Amin**
“The role of social media is essential in de-radicalization especially through the engagement of the youth. Their Center carries out youth citizenship project where young people could spread the successful examples of rehabilitation. Youth driven research is significant in P/CVE”.

**Velma Saric**

“It is importance to work with communities, more specifically with the mothers in preventing the young people before falling prey to the violent extremism. We should make sure both students and teachers get proper education and training”.

**Mossarat Qadeem**

“The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and its long standing negative effects in Azerbaijan are the outcomes of violent extremist acts”.

**Almaz Hasanova**
Youth needs to be encouraged and empowered in taking all necessary measures for P/CVE.

Putting young people at the forefront of the response agenda is essential. This means having more young people at the table on all forums.

The existing toolkits for P/CVE should be more effectively used and innovative ways should be found and implemented in this direction.

Governments and international organizations should play more active roles to identify problems related to VE for solving them in cooperation with all stakeholders in societies.

De-coupling religion from extremism should be one of the priorities of the projects for P/CVE.

Religious literacy and education should be encouraged and supported. This will enhance individual resilience against extremisms.

Women and mothers should be placed at the center of the prevention and response agenda in P/CVE efforts.
• The media’s underlying role should be the promotion of peace and cooperation and a greater volume of positive messages and role models should be featured.

• A concrete project of “train-the-trainers workshop”, the main goal of which will be to empower the youth in the Turkic Speaking States and beyond in P/CVE is needed to be implemented in the period ahead.

• Taking into account that countries in the Global South are the experts in dealing with the phenomenon of violent extremism, their experience and knowledge on the P/CVE should be transferred to the other countries in need.

• Greater effort should be taken to reduce online hate speech and related platforms.

• Youth should be provided with education about the dangers of social media, including extremist recruitment, and about the various safety measures that can be taken.

• To produce successful responses, prevention agenda in P/CVE must be anchored at the local level and tailor-made approach should be developed in this direction.

• It is essential to prioritize “exchange of knowledge, experience and best practices” and “capacity building and development” in designing projects for P/CVE with a view to building resilience of all stakeholders engaged in these projects.

• Enhanced information sharing across regions, governments and civil society organizations in P/CVE should be encouraged.
C. Closing Ceremony
Nihal Saad, Chief of Cabinet and Spokesperson of the High Representative for the UNAOC
Dr. Ömer Kocaman, Deputy Secretary General of the Turkic Council

"- Professionalization of PVE approaches and practices in the field,
- Investing in both informal and formal education,
- Strengthening peer to peer collaboration,
- Ensuring that UN SC Res 2250 does not stay on the shelve and gets implemented;
- Use of entertainment and new technologies to counter extremism and prevent radicalization,
- Education for all: teachers and students, police, media, political parties, religious leaders, journalists are the key elements for developing effective P/CVE measures”.

Chief of Cabinet and Spokesperson of the High Representative for the UNAOC
Nihal Saad
The Turkic Council is committed to work with the youth through innovative, demand-driven and tailor-made projects in P/CVE in cooperation with relevant regional and international partners. We will continue to cooperate with the international community in this direction.

Deputy Secretary General of the Turkic Council Dr. Ömer Kocaman
VII. Social Activities

A. Reception of the Turkic Council on the occasion of the 3rd October “Cooperation Day of the Turkic Speaking States” and the International Conference

On 19 October, Ambassador Ramil Hasanov, Secretary General of the Turkic Council hosted a reception on the occasion of the 3rd October “Cooperation Day of the Turkic Speaking States” as well as the international conference. The reception was attended by high level guests, members of corps diplomatic in Istanbul as well as participants and speakers of the conference.
Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser took the floor at the reception where he expressed his gratitude for the developing relations and cooperation with the Turkic Council which would be launched with the International Conference and congratulated this significant historical day of the Turkic Council and wished continuation of its successful activities.

Secretary General Hasanov conveyed his thanks to the guests for their participation to the reception on the occasion of the 3rd October, “Cooperation Day of the Turkic Speaking States” and the International Conference and expressed his gratitude for the fruitful cooperation that the Turkic Council and the UNAOC would start with the conference where they would sign an MoU to formalize this relation.
VII. Social Activities

The reception continued with the performance of “TÜRKSOY National Orchestra of Folk Instruments” composed of the musicians from the Turkic Speaking States.
B. Networking Opportunities and Trending Topic

#youthVSviolence

The conference provided outstanding opportunities for the young participants to network with their counterparts and the prominent members of the P/CVE community.
The international conference also supported the United CVE campaign of the OSCE.
B. Networking Opportunities and Trending Topic #youthVSviolence

The short videos of the conference and the reception are available at www.turkkon.org.
THE OUTCOMES OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

#youthVSviolence