

Explanatory Notes

The write up and compilation of information below shall serve as the explanation to the resolution drafted for the 28th APPF Political and Security Matters

Drivers of violent extremism

There has been a growing understanding that a security-based response to violent extremism should be accompanied by a focus on more preventative efforts. Such current thinking is reflected within the VE Action Plan in which the Secretary-General placed much importance upon context and drivers - the 'push' and 'pull' factors - of violent extremism, together with the processes of radicalization. Generally, the language of 'driver' is used in relation to violent extremism; whereas the term 'pathway' is used with respect to individual radicalization. The VE Action Plan distinguishes between two main categories of drivers (General Assembly report A/70/674, paras. 23 and 32-37; United Nations, Swiss Confederation, 2016, p. 4):

- **'Push factors': The conditions conducive to violent extremism and the structural context from which it emerges. These include: lack of socio-economic opportunities; marginalization and discrimination; poor governance, violations of human rights and the Rule of Law; prolonged and unresolved conflicts; and radicalization in prisons.**
- **'Pull factors': The individual motivations and processes, which play a key role in transforming ideas and grievances into violent extremist action. These include: individual backgrounds and motivations; collective grievances and victimization stemming from domination, oppression, subjugation or foreign intervention; distortion and misuse of beliefs, political ideologies and ethnic and cultural differences; and leadership and social networks.**

Put another way, 'push factors' refer to those factors that are structural within society, whilst 'pull factors' are psychological ones that can render an individual more susceptible to undertaking violent extremist behaviour (Nanes and Lau, 2018).

More specifically, the Plan identifies five primary drivers that are considered to be conducive to violent extremism, namely:

- (1) Lack of socio-economic opportunities;**
- (2) Marginalization and discrimination;**
- (3) Poor governance, violations of human rights and the rule of law;**
- (4) Prolonged and unresolved conflicts, and;**
- (5) Radicalization in prisons.**

Each will be considered in turn. At the outset, it is important to emphasize that none of these potential pathways to violence should be considered in isolation, especially since multiple

factors will generally be involved. Furthermore, these potential pathways to violent extremism must also be contextualized, with regard to not only local, but also national and international issues.

One such issue, of special significance to the E4J Counter Terrorism University Module Series, concerns what those engaged in 'securitization studies' (which forms part of international relations theory) would term as 'securitization'. This is when States view all subjects, including their citizens, through a national security lens. It has been described as "an extreme version of politicization that enables extraordinary means to be used in the name of security" (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, 1998, p. 25). Potentially, this could lead to a declaration (or maintaining) of a state of emergency when the legal criteria for doing so have not been met fully (see further Module 7) or the imposition of martial law with similar effect; or the justification of extraordinary measures which risk violating established rule of law and international law norms; as well as the inability of victims of such exceptional measures to achieve justice and satisfactory reparation with respect to accompanying human rights abuses within their own national courts (see further Module 14). Indeed, it is notable that on these issues the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the protection of human rights while countering terrorism noted the following:

The broad-brush 'securitization' of human rights, international development, humanitarian assistance, education, community integration, gender or any other agenda by the State or the international community must be avoided. The State must respect, protect and promote the human rights of all individuals, of all ages, genders and ethnic or religious affiliation, without discrimination and without framing this obligation as part of any broader agenda, including the prevention and countering of violent extremism. Whenever a new area of engagement for preventing or countering violent extremism is envisaged, a proper analysis of the impact on all those involved as providers or recipients must be undertaken. Any engagement in government initiatives must be safe and voluntary (General Assembly, Human Rights Council report A/HRC/31/65, para. 56(d)).

i. Lack of socio-economic opportunities

The lack of socio-economic opportunities may take many different forms. One of the key 'unequivocal' findings of the UNDP Report of 2017 was that economic factors can be significant drivers, with economic exclusion, unemployment and limited opportunities for upward mobility leading to alienation or frustration, which can result in radicalization leading to violent extremism (UNDP, 2017, p. 5). It should, also, be recalled that SDG 8 calls for the promotion of sustained and inclusive economic growth.

High numbers of educated, frustrated young individuals without jobs is an issue in many developing countries and may fuel grievances together with feelings of disenfranchisement. In his assessment of young individuals not engaged in meaningful employment, Marke determined that they are more likely to engage in activities that draw the attention of the political elite to their plight (Marke, 2007, p. 7), with this argument being supportive of the position adopted by Ikejiaku who has argued that when youths can no longer cope with their lack of basic needs, they display a higher tendency to react by engaging in violent extremist behaviour (Ikejiaki, 2009, p. 22). Indeed, statistical data suggests the existence of a strong correlation between violence and income inequality (Dixon, 2009). Unemployment provides a fertile ground for recruitment by violent extremist organizations since they can provide a route

out of poverty with economic opportunities that are not readily available through more legitimate means. For example, it is reported that Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) can pay (or at least offers to pay) its fighters US\$500 a month which can act as an attractive inducement to uneducated, unskilled, rural and unemployed men and women (UNDP, 2016), though in practice the actual payment received by recruits is often much lower (UNDP, 2017, p. 5). This fact aside, the basic premise is that economic deprivation acts as a major pull factor towards violent extremism.

The World Bank's economics-based analysis, within its 2016 study, the Economic and Social Inclusion to Prevent Violent Extremism, on the supply of violent extremists, provides an interesting insight into the relationship between economic opportunity and violent extremism (World Bank Middle East and North Africa Region, MENA Economic Monitor, 2016, p. 11). This study seemingly built on the work of Sandler and Enders, who utilized economic theory to argue that an individual would act as a rational person and decide to undertake violent extremist activity after weighing the costs and benefits of undertaking that action (Sandler and Enders, 2004, p. 301). In this regard, the World Bank went on to suggest that indicators of economic exclusion predicted higher rates of radicalization due to the associated low opportunity cost of undertaking violent extremist acts, and that those excluded would likely have more grievances with the State. In stark contrast, however, to such suggestions are the findings of Gries, Krieger, and Meierrieks who, in their study of the correlation between economic growth and rates of terrorism in seven European States, concluded that only in some States was there a clearly identifiable causal link between economic growth and violent extremism (Gries, Krieger and Meierrieks, 2011, p. 493 and 496).

Notably, the World Bank ultimately concluded that the correlation between violent extremism and economic variables is unclear and, at best, of ambiguous influence (World Bank Middle East and North Africa Region, MENA Economic Monitor, 2016, p. 18). For instance, it recognized that individuals based further from Syria require more capital to travel to the destination and, therefore, that this would have necessitated prior economic engagement (World Bank Middle East and North Africa Region, MENA Economic Monitor, 2016, p. 18). Therefore, despite there being statistical data to suggest some form of connection between violence and a lack of economic opportunities, great caution should be taken in too readily making premature conclusions. As Chingle, Mancha and Gukas have observed, empirical studies on the impact of economic growth on conflicts, including those linked to violent extremism, have been rather scant (Chingle, Mancha and Gukas, 2015, p. 3). Indeed, it is notable that economic inequalities, and related frustrations, are not always a primary driver of violence. A case in point is the shooting incident in Las Vegas in the US in 2017 when Stephen Paddock, a millionaire, killed 58 people, and injured more than 800 people, without any clearly identifiable motive (The Guardian, 21 January 2018).

Equal caution should be exercised not to dismiss the possibility of connections existing between a lack of economic opportunities and extremist violence. The UNDP Report suggested that "[i]f an individual was studying or working, it emerged that he or she would be less likely to become a member of an extremist organization", with employment being the single most commonly raised 'immediate issue' for those recruited by violent extremist groups (2017, p. 5). Notably, in 2016 the UNESCO Representative to the Counter-Terrorism Initiative and co-chair of the Working Group on Conditions Conducive to the Spread of Terrorism, observed that education does have a role to play in PVE, but that it is necessary to look at not only the content

of education, but also "how it is delivered" (UNESCO, Global Education First Initiative). Therefore, as with economic factors, any links between insufficient educational opportunities and violent extremism is often more complex than might initially be apparent.

Furthermore, it would be incorrect to suggest that lack of educational or employment opportunities are the only factors at play or that they are always present. A number of the most high-profile terrorist attacks have been perpetrated by highly educated (e.g., graduates of university degree programmes and/or (advanced) professional training) individuals, such as the terrorist pilots who carried out the 9/11 attacks, in addition to the former leader of al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, himself. Other socio-economic factors can play a significant part too, notably drug addiction, in the radicalization of young people and ultimately in their recruitment by violent extremist groups such as IS and Al Qaeda, such as has occurred in the Maldives (Bangladesh Peace Observatory, 2017).

ii. Marginalization and discrimination

Marginalization and discrimination may take many different forms, premised upon a range of diverse factors including socio-economic, ethnic, cultural, racial, religious, or status related (e.g., migrant) ones. Prior to understanding how marginalization and discrimination may act as a driver for violent extremism, it should be mentioned that SDG 16 requires Member States to "[p]romote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels" (General Assembly resolution 70/1, Goal 16). Therefore, a reduction in discrimination, and the implementation of Goal 16, should not only assist in mitigating the 'push' and 'pull' factors towards violent extremism, but also facilitate the realization of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda goal of ensuring an "equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met" (General Assembly resolution 70/1, para. 8).

Marginalization and discrimination have long been recognized as factors that can act as a driver towards violent extremism, as is illustrated by the 'troubles' in Northern Ireland between the 1960s and 1980s especially (Bonner, 1992, p. 173). Typically, as Silke identified in this context, before an individual was prepared to partake in violent activities, he/she first had to belong to a section of society which perceived itself as being marginalized. He further suggested that if such a marginalized group was discriminated against, "there will always be those within such communities who will be receptive to radical ideologies" (Silke, 2003, p. 39). Critically, marginalization may result in an individual losing his vested interest in the maintenance of that society, thereby resulting in such marginalization acting as a driver towards violent extremism.

The extent to which such factors may (or may not) act as drivers towards extremist violence can vary markedly. This is illustrated by the seemingly two principal camps of ISIL recruits. One comprises those who have experienced profound negative personal experiences, such as witnessing warfare, experiencing dislocation or life in squalid living conditions. The other seems to be composed of foreign terrorist fighters (United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, 2017, p. 3) who are typically recruited through the outreach of friends, through family or "fellow travellers in search of a meaningful path in life" (Downey, 2015). Interestingly, social scientists have observed that most foreign volunteers and supporters recruited by violent extremist groups fall into the mid-range of 'the normal distribution' in terms

of being motivated by psychological attributes like empathy, compassion, idealism, and wanting mostly to help rather than hurt other people (Downey, 2015). Notably too, a key finding of the UNDP Report was the speed of recruitment together with the accompanying sense of belonging:

Forty-eight percent of respondents joined in less than a month from first contact with the organization in question, and 80 percent in less than a year. This speed of recruitment shows the depth of the vulnerability faced. Emotions of 'hope/excitement' and 'being part of something bigger' were high among those who joined, indicating the 'pull' of opportunity for radical change and rebellion against the status quo of circumstances that is presented by violent extremism. (2017, p. 6).

In his VE Plan of Action, the Secretary-General identified gender inequality, marginalization, alienation and discrimination as primary drivers of violent extremism. Though diversity in and of itself does not make countries more (or less) vulnerable to violent extremism, when one group has exclusive control of political and economic sectors at the expense of other groups, this may result in increased intercommunal tensions, gender inequality, marginalization, alienation and discrimination. This may take different forms, such as restricted access to public services, job opportunities, obstructions to regional development and freedom of religion, which may further fuel resentment on top of any existing frustrations attributable to other drivers such as socio-economic inequalities and deprivations (General Assembly report A/70/674, para. 26).

Alternatively, growing diversity in an increasingly interconnected world can in and of itself arouse feelings of fear and anger, e.g., where benefits that were previously bestowed to a particular group or community are now distributed among larger groups which may be accompanied by a reduction of benefits compared to what was available previously (e.g., due to the ongoing migrant crisis). When some people feel that diversity threatens their interests or safety it can lead to intercommunal tensions resulting in the rejection rather than embracing of diversity. This is considered by some to be an at least partial explanation for the rise of far right-wing nationalist groups in Europe in response to the ongoing migrant crisis (Steinmayr, 2017, p. 24).

Closely related to this can be a general sense of disenfranchisement from the societies that these people live in; sentiments that can be further heightened through factors such as little or no political inclusion, limitations on freedom of expression and shrinking civic space. Underdeveloped and inexperienced civil societies, such as those in 'transitioning States' (e.g., out of conflict or more authoritarian regimes), are often unable to adequately channel people's frustrations into constructive communication in response to such frustrations. Even in countries with a strong civil society, feelings of alienation by particular groups may lead individuals to reject available open platforms ('safe spaces') to express their feelings and views in favour of alternative venues with 'like-minded' (frustrated) people, or else to live in isolation (UNDP, 2016, pp. 20-21). The accompanying perceptions of disempowerment and disenfranchisement, especially when they develop over extended time periods, can draw some towards violent extremism (UNDP, 2016, p. 21).

Violent extremist groups are masters at exploiting increasing global economic inequalities together with the sense of injustice stemming from the current socio-economic and political system. They offer ideological alternatives to the narrative of free markets, democracy and

multicultural diversity, namely ones that offer empowerment, order and security, with violence as a tool for imposing this view on wider society (UNDP, 2016, p. 21). All this said, however, no 'hard' or fixed conclusions may be drawn regarding the effect of disenfranchisement on recruitment by these groups. For instance, as cases of violent extremism committed in Myanmar and India reveal, these are often carried out by the majoritarian communities which do not generally suffer from such sentiments of disenfranchisement (McPherson, 2016).

iii. Poor governance, violations of human rights and the rule of law

Issues of poor governance, together with violations of human rights and the rule of law, arise all too common, both in respect of global efforts to make progress on the Sustainable Development Agenda as well as counter-terrorism efforts whether at the national, regional or global levels which, in turn, can have an undermining effect on the effectiveness of PVE/CVE efforts. Some of the primary related issues are considered here.

Whilst it is true that non-State actors have perpetrated serious violations of human rights law in the form of core international crimes - such as through their acts of torture, sexual and gender-based violence - often with impunity (General Assembly report A/70/674, paras. 18-20) (see further Module 14), it is noted that that some State actors have similarly committed significant rule of law and human rights violations. In addition, violations of human rights and the rule of law sometimes occur through efforts by States to intervene during the early phases of radicalization on the pathway towards extremism which may become violent. Some of these efforts, however, can "entail[] the danger that some States may adopt a sequencing approach which places the maintenance of security ahead of the protection of human rights ... Capturing all trajectories towards possible terrorism and violent extremism at the earliest possible stage may require casting the security net so wide that human rights protections are rendered ineffective" (General Assembly, Human Rights Council report A/HRC/31/65, para. 12).

For such reasons, in the VE Action Plan the Secretary-General notes that "we must be vigilant in ensuring that Member States' efforts to address violent extremism are respectful of the rule of law and in accordance with their obligations under international human rights law, as well as international humanitarian law, if applicable" (report A/70/674, para. 20). In recognizing that a link can exist between rule of law violations and violent extremism, the VE Action Plan further observes that:

Violent extremism tends to thrive in an environment characterized by poor governance, democracy deficits, corruption and a culture of impunity for unlawful behaviour engaged in by the State or its agents. When poor governance is combined with repressive policies and practices which violate human rights and the rule of law, the potency of the lure of violent extremism tends to be heightened ... Violent extremists also actively seek to exploit state repression and other grievances in their fight against the state. (Para. 27).

The UNDP Report reaches similar conclusions, calling for an urgent rethinking of "state security-focused interventions" with accompanying increased levels of effective oversight to ensure that these fundamental obligations are complied with and that effective accountability mechanisms exist where that is not the case (UNDP, 2017, p. 5). One of its findings is especially revealing in this regard:

The idea of a transformative trigger that pushes individuals decisively from the 'at-risk' category to actually taking the step of joining is substantiated by the Journey to Extremism

data. A striking 71 percent pointed to 'government action', including 'killing of a family member or friend' or 'arrest of a family member or friend', as the incident that prompted them to join. These findings throw into stark relief the question of how counter-terrorism and wider security functions of governments in at-risk environments conduct themselves with regard to human rights and due process. State security-actor conduct is revealed as a prominent accelerator of recruitment, rather than the reverse. (2017, p. 5).

The Report's findings reinforced the critical importance of ensuring that "there are no counter-productive results from counter-terrorism, particularly in regard to civic participation" (UNDP, 2017, p. 5). Failure to do so can (further) undermine perceptions of "state legitimacy" and reinforce existing negative narratives such as regarding "malign power structures" in areas which are already especially vulnerable to violent extremism recruitment (UNDP, 2017, p. 5).

One issue of special concern relates to the definitional challenges surrounding violent extremism referred to earlier, in particular the use of ambiguous policy or legal definitions by States which not only lack legal certainty but may in fact actually facilitate human rights or wider rule of law violations. The UNHCHR Report revealed that:

Some domestic laws and policies address the phenomenon of 'extremism' without qualifying it as 'violent'. They define 'extremism' as 'vocal or active opposition' to the values of the respective country or society, including 'democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs'. Some definitions of 'extremism' refer to notions or aims which are racist, anarchist, nationalist, authoritarian or totalitarian regardless of their political, ideological, religious or philosophic character, and which are contrary, in theory or in practice, to principles of democracy or human rights, to the good functioning of the democratic institutions of the State or to other basic principles of the rule of law. Some laws and policies go further and describe extremism as encompassing non-violent conduct, including conduct deemed to insult national pride or breach national dignity, or knowingly disseminating false accusations against federal or regional officials, such as allegations that they have committed illegal or criminal acts in their official capacity. (A/HRC/33/29, para. 18).

On such themes the Secretary-General in the VE Action Plan emphasized that domestic legislative approaches need to conform with States' international human rights law obligations (General Assembly report A/70/674, para. 5). Of special note is article 15 of the ICCPR which requires certainty in the law for anyone convicted of a criminal offence. This requirement for certainty is not assisted by such practices as the interchangeable use between the terms 'terrorism' and 'violent extremism' (Nasser-Eddine, et al., 2011). As the UNHCHR Report further noted:

[A] legal or policy framework that fails to clearly define the phenomenon it seeks to address not only risks leading to inefficient measures, but may also become harmful. Vague concepts such as 'violent extremism', 'extremism' or 'radicalization' are open to interpretation and may easily be abused. In particular, they risk encompassing manifestations or acts that are lawful under international human rights law. (A/HRC/33/29, para. 20).

One area of particular concern is that such ambiguous terminology can be misused by States to suppress not only violent conduct, but also the mere holding of dissenting opinions or contrary beliefs which are both permissible and protected under international human rights law as well

as many national constitutions (General Assembly, Human Rights Council report A/HRC/33/29, para. 18). In turn, the resultant denial of 'safe spaces' for dissent can further increase the frustration of already disenfranchised individuals. As the UNHCHR Report emphasized, "the freedoms of peaceful assembly and of association, are essential components of democracy, providing individuals with invaluable opportunities to express their political opinions and enabling dialogue related to preventing and countering violent extremism" (General Assembly, Human Rights Council report A/HRC/33/29, para. 5). (See further Module 13).

More generally, poor governance structures can be a significant source of frustration too, including where it goes hand in hand with "democracy deficits, corruption and a culture of impunity" (General Assembly report A/70/674, para. 3). For example, weak development outcomes may fuel citizens' mistrust in the legitimacy of their government; in turn, this may further weaken the effectiveness of State institutions in responding to violent extremism when it does occur (General Assembly report A/70/674, para. 25). Such themes were evident in the UNDP Report which revealed high levels of disaffection and mistrust of the government by those subsequently recruited. Key indicators included:

[B]elief that government only looks after the interests of a few; low level of trust in government authorities; and experience, or willingness to report experience, of bribe-paying. Grievances against security actors, as well as politicians, are particularly marked, with an average of 78 percent rating low levels of trust in the police, politicians and military. Those most susceptible to recruitment express a significantly lower degree of confidence in the potential for democratic institutions to deliver progress or meaningful change. (2017, p. 5).

UNDP identifies several issues relevant to poor governance in relation to CVE. For example, a strong correlation can exist between "political violence and experiences or perceptions of injustice, corruption and systematic discrimination" (UNDP, 2016, p. 21). This correlation can be stronger than that of socio-economic issues of poverty, in that "[p]eople do not take up guns because they are poor, but because they are angry and frustrated" (UNDP, 2016, p. 21). Wentling wrote persuasively that, "as long as political elites and the wealthy can do as they please without fearing any kind of legal sanctions, the huge and growing gap between the great mass of people who have little and the small percentage of the population who possess much will grow" (Wentling, 2002, p. 4). Therefore, it is understandable why corruption may increase perceptions of injustice that, in turn, contribute to collective grievances. This is further compounded in situations when impunity for injustice, corruption and mistreatment is commonplace. In turn, this can fuel sentiments that violent action is justified when it aims to rectify the inequalities and injustice that result from it.

Other contributing factors can be "insensitive policing or profiling in public locations and at security checkpoints and lack of awareness of social or cultural particularities of minority groups can add up to a sense of persecution" (UNDP, 2016, p. 21). On such issues, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has advocated that "States should ensure that any measures taken in the fight against terrorism do not discriminate, in purpose or effect, on the grounds of race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin and that non-citizens are not subjected to racial or ethnic profiling or stereotyping" (2002, para. 10). Certainly, any governmental policies which result in the profiling of selected targeted groups

of society can result in feelings of increased alienation which, in turn, may further fuel discontent and terrorist recruitment agendas (see e.g. Aziz, 2017, p. 263).

iv. Prolonged and unresolved conflicts

A fourth primary driver identified by the Secretary-General relates to prolonged and unresolved conflicts, with the promotion of peace being an integral aspect of SDG 16. It is immediately apparent that these forms of conflicts are interlinked with the other drivers, mentioned above. For example, as was recognized within the Sustainable Development Agenda, "[s]ustainable development cannot be realised without peace and security". Therefore, it is apparent that the resolution of conflicts is essential for, e.g., ensuring better socio-economic opportunities. Moreover, the building of peace has a critical role to play in terms of mitigating other drivers of violent extremism, since it is a foundation from which a just and inclusive society can be built (General Assembly resolution 70/1, para. 35).

Furthermore, this driver is of broader significance in that these forms of conflicts can be the cause of not only human suffering and poor governance, but also facilitate the agendas of violent extremist organizations. For instance, in conflicts whereby the machinery of the State has been debilitated, the void of effective State control can provide the space for violent extremist organizations to function, enabling them to promote their extremist narratives and activities in a largely unchecked fashion (USAID, 2009, p. 42). Such situations can also be exploited by these groups to further their agendas, commonly through such activities as the taking over of territory, resources and control. It should also be recognized that armed conflicts can act as a motivational factor, inspiring others to follow a violent extremist path (USAID, 2009, p. 42). In response to such challenges, the Secretary-General called for urgent measures to be taken to resolve protracted conflicts as an effective tool to undermine the impact narratives of violent extremist groups, being of the view that "[w]hen prevention fails, our best strategy towards securing lasting peace and addressing violent extremism entails inclusive political solutions and accountability" (General Assembly report A/70/674, para. 30).

v. Radicalization in prisons

The other key driver which is central to the VE Action Plan concerns the impact of radicalization in prisons in terms of furthering violent extremist agendas. Two factors are at play: firstly, prisons provide a unique environment within which individuals can spread extreme and violent ideologies (Speckhard, Shajkovi and Esngul, 2017); and, secondly, the conditions inside prisons can act to create, or inflame already present, animosity. Certainly, existing research suggests that "harsh treatment in detention facilities can play a disconcertingly powerful role in the recruitment of a large number of individuals who have joined violent extremist groups and terrorist organizations" (General Assembly report A/70/674, para. 31), thereby reinforcing the importance of human rights compliance by the detaining State. Factors such as poor prison conditions, the ill-treatment of prisoners, institutional corruption and criminal activity can all serve as motivators for detained persons to seek the assistance and protection of violent extremist groups. In response, in addition to more effectively addressing such issues, there is a pressing need for better mechanisms to be put in place to prevent or at least reduce current levels of the promotion of violent extremist ideologies (General Assembly report A/70/674, para. 31).

Synergies may be found behind the drivers of violent extremism and the provisions of the SDGs. For instance, in addition to such moves acting to reduce the 'push' factors of those susceptible to undertaking violent activities, implementing these would go some way towards fulfilling the requirements of the SDGs. Though the Sustainable Development Agenda does not specifically reference the treatment of prisoners, one of its overarching principles is the importance of equality for all, with SDG 16 seeking reductions in all forms of violence accompanied by augmentation in upholding and strengthening the rule of law. As the Belgium Action Plan against Radicalization in Prisons observed:

The most powerful weapon in the fight against radicalization in prisons is without a doubt a humane detention policy that respects the fundamental rights of the detainees and focuses indefatigably on rehabilitation and reintegration. Therefore, a custodial sentence or measure has to be executed under psychosocial, physical and material conditions that respect the dignity of the human person, has to render the preservation or growth of the self-respect of the detainee possible and has to appeal to their individual and social responsibility. (Belgium Federal Public Service-Justice, 2015, pp. 4, 6).