10th Coordination Committee meeting of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact

Remarks by Naureen C Fink, Executive Director, Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism
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Introduction

- Thank you to the UNOCT, and USG Voronkov, for the invitation to join you today,
- For those of you who don't yet know us, GIFCT is a non-profit organization that brings together a diverse range of tech companies as members, as well as key stakeholders from industry, government, civil society, and academia to foster essential collaboration and information-sharing to counter terrorist and violent extremist activity online, working with our own counterterrorism and technical experts. We do this by working with our members and partners to foster information sharing, crisis response tools, and connect our members to expertise and networks around the world.
- At GIFCT we recognize that preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism requires a whole-of-society approach, and no single sector or state can alone address the myriad of challenges — or leverage all of the opportunities. As such, our work with the tech ecosystem is informed by long-standing consultations with government, civil society, as well as partner organizations.
- GIFCT has had a longstanding partnership with the United Nations. We are pleased that CTED sits on our Independent Advisory Committee and we are delighted to be part of its Global Research Network.
- We deeply appreciate the opportunities to engage with UNOCT, with our conversations spanning human rights, AI, and building capacity for ICTs among others.

Coordination of Counter-Terrorism Initiatives in Africa

- Over the past few years, counterterrorism practitioners and communities have watched with concern as terrorist attacks have risen in Africa.
  - In fact, the continent represents approximately half of all terrorism-related deaths, with the SubSaharan African region accounting for 60% of global terrorism deaths in 2022.
  - These have been compounded by other challenges including governance, development, and border management challenges.
- In regions like Sahel and East Africa, affiliates and branches of ISIS and Al-Qaeda have mingled with local groups and criminal enterprises to exploit opportunities presented by many of the challenges facing the region and reduced opportunities for international counterterrorism and PCVE engagement.
  - Al Shabaab for example has developed a sophisticated social media strategy to disseminate its propaganda and we have heard how terrorist groups in the Sahel have benefited from the spread of misinformation,

disinformation, and the low-cost high visibility that online platforms and media offer.

- As GIFCT's stakeholder communities have grappled with dimensions of the threat in Africa and considered its implications for tech platforms, we have worked with regional and industry partners to better understand the threat and what kinds of responses are needed from industry.
- In 2022, in partnership with Ghana as a member of GIFCT's Independent Advisory Committee, we hosted a regional workshop focused on the current threat landscape in the West Africa region and its nexus to online activity.
  - We partnered with the Kofi Annan Foundation in Accra and Ghana's Cyber Security Authority to bring together experts and practitioners from tech, government and civil society in person and discuss regional threats, models for multi stakeholder collaboration, and resiliency for programs and practitioners working to prevent and counter violent extremism. These discussions have underpinned our efforts to identify regional platforms and understand how the threat informs online activity affecting our members.
- GIFCT has also regularly partnered with the Aqaba Process, working closely with Jordan on its global initiatives to develop a shared understanding of the challenges posed by TVE and for creating partnerships that can mitigate the associated risks to international peace and security. Recently I had the opportunity to brief with representatives of regional law enforcement agencies in Rwanda to share GIFCT's perspectives on the online threat and the kinds of tools GIFCT uses with its members to address them.
- In Kenya last summer, GIFCT joined the Nairobi Caucus meeting with stakeholders from government, civil society, and tech, and speaking on several panels and meeting with potential partners.
  - Follow up meetings to strengthen partnerships in Kenya will be held over the next few weeks, and be used as a basis to deepen relationships with the tech industry and potential members in the region.
- GIFCT most recently held an expert roundtable on TVE threats in the Sahel to share important context and information with our tech company members about dynamics on the ground that shape the terrorism & counterterrorism landscape. Such discussions provide key context for tech companies and a deeper understanding of how the dynamics on the ground might affect the contents or behaviors that might appear on their platforms.

Conclusion

- The work of GIFCT underscores the importance of securing the commitment and expertise of the tech industry, bringing together diverse platforms, and its partners joining together to harness the power of our collective capacity to prevent and counter terrorism.
- Moreover, at GIFCT we demonstrate through our work and our engagement that the promotion and protection of human rights is a key component in efforts to prevent and counter terrorism online, and we continue to work with experts and civil society partners to understand the potential human rights impacts of our work and work with our members to support their commitment to these values.

- GIFCT will continue to bring together experts and partners and work with like-minded organizations, follow international security dynamics at the nexus of technology and terrorism, and support its members to address and quickly adapt to evolutions in the terrorist and violent extremist threat landscape.
- I am honored to be a part of this discussion, having the opportunity to hear from my co-panelists and discuss how we can work together on our shared mission. Thanks again.

Check against delivery.