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Plan of Action of the Euro-Mediterranean civil society to prevent all forms of violent extremism

I. Introduction

1. In January 2017, more than 130 activists and practitioners, CSO representatives, academics and UN representatives from across the Euro-Mediterranean Region met in Barcelona to discuss the prevention of violent extremism. The Barcelona Conference: "Towards a new paradigm: Preventing Violent Extremism", hosted by NOVACT (www.novact.org) and the CMODH (www.cmodh.org), focused on planning a constructive contribution to prevent violent extremism in view of the lessons learned over the past decades and the challenges that lie ahead. The following "Plan of Action of the Euro-Mediterranean civil society to prevent all forms of violent extremism" collects the main conclusions of the Barcelona Conference and provides a real opportunity for all the actors of the Euro-Mediterranean community to unite, adjust their actions and pursue inclusive approaches against division, intolerance and hatred. This Plan of Action represents an unprecedented effort to reconcile the civil society vision of the Northern and Southern Bank of the Mediterranean. We consider that only a real and honest transnational partnership can help us to establish an effective path towards preventing violent extremism.

2. We, the signers of this Plan of Action, consider that violent extremist movements are an affront to the principles of the civil society committed with the collective efforts towards maintaining positive peace and human security, fostering sustainable development, protecting human rights, promoting the rule of law and taking humanitarian action in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Their actions and messages fuel violence and war and contribute to a cycle of diffidence, anxiety and insecurity. The spread of violent extremism has further aggravated an already unprecedented economic, political and humanitarian crisis, which surpasses the boundaries of any region.

3. Violent extremism is undermining our humanity in all the Euro-Mediterranean Region. It is evolving in North Africa and the Middle East where extremist movements are cynically distorting and exploiting religious beliefs, ethnic differences and political ideologies to legitimize their actions, establish their claim on territories and radicalize their followers. It is currently raising in Europe, where fanatic movements which are spreading racist, islamophobic, ultra-nationalistic and extreme-right ideologies are gaining momentum and institutional representation.

4.   Over the past decades, our Euro-Mediterranean governments have sought to address violent extremism within the context of security-based counter-terrorism measures. Our governments have been determined to respond to violence with more violence. In the name of the battle against terrorism, we have observed an extensive use of military power, that has been not only highly ineffective but also responsible for dramatic human rights violations and increasing global human suffering. The anxiety to respond has also fuelled overreactions in terms of Homeland Security, where our fundamental freedoms and civil and political rights have been restricted, subjected to massive vigilance and the democratic and plural values have been limited by a general state of emergency. Those strategies cannot dry up the emotional and social wellsprings of radicalization and, indeed, can make matters worse.

5.   There is a need to take a more comprehensive approach which encompasses not only ongoing measures, but also systematic preventive strategies which directly address the drivers of violent extremism. In any case, we should all agree that when security authorities need to respond, we have in fact already failed in our longing for peaceful existence. When we are forced to respond through security measures, it is because we have failed to deal with the factors that lead first from alienation to radicalization, from radicalization to the adoption of violent extremist ideologies, and then to acts of violence.

6.   In front of the current efforts to take a new and more comprehensive and effective approach in front of the raise of violent extremism, we acknowledge the UN Secretary-General Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism that was presented to the General Assembly on January 2016. In this Plan, the Secretary-General calls for a comprehensive approach encompassing ongoing measures with systematic preventive steps to address the underlying conditions that drive individuals to radicalise and join violent extremist groups. The Plan is a concrete response from the international community coordinated among civil society groups from all over the world which appeals for concerted action to support national, regional and global efforts to prevent violent extremism and assist Member States in developing National Plans of Action. The UN Plan of Action constitutes the inaugural basis for a comprehensive approach to this fast, evolving and multidimensional challenge.

7.   At a time of growing polarization on several national, regional and global issues, the new paradigm based in prevention offers a real opportunity for all the actors of the Euro-Mediterranean community to offer a more agile and far-reaching response. We welcome all the ongoing efforts of the European, North Africa and Middle East national governments, regional initiatives, and current municipality actions and plans aligned with the principles of preventing violent extremism. The present Plan of Action also aims to be aligned with the UN Plan, adapting its new paradigm, values and principles to the Euro-Mediterranean Region and calling upon the commitment of civil society organizations towards concerted action.

8.   We acknowledge that the importance of involving civil society in a comprehensive and multidimensional response to the threat of violent extremism has been stressed by various international statements at all levels. The United Nations (UN) General Assembly, for instance, in its resolution adopting the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, confirmed the determination of Member States to "further encourage non-governmental organizations and civil society to engage, as appropriate, on how to enhance efforts to implement the Strategy." Similarly, in the framework of the OSCE, African Union or European Union, for

instance, recognised that it was vital to engage civil society in finding common political settlement for conflicts and to promote human rights and tolerance as an essential element in the prevention of violent extremism.

9. However, the good-willing positions expressed, has not been accompanied by real on-the-ground measures to reinforce the CSO contribution to prevent violent extremism. In the name of fighting terrorism governments have curtailed political freedoms and imposed restrictive measures against human rights defenders and civil society activists in many countries. The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders reported "worrying trends" globally in the stigmatization of human rights defenders and their growing categorization as "terrorists, enemies of the State or political opponents". States systematically invoke national security and public safety to restrict the scope of civil society activities. In many countries special legislative and regulatory measures have been used to crack down on NGOs and activists who criticize government policies. These measures make it more difficult for civil society actors to promote human rights and tolerance as an essential element in the prevention of terrorism and violent extremism. It is essential to maintain and protect an independent civil society space if we want to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.

10. We are convinced that the creation of open, equitable, inclusive and plural societies, based on the full respect of human rights and with economic opportunities for all, represents the most tangible and meaningful alternative to violent extremism and the most promising strategy to render it unattractive. We consider that CSOs have a proven capacity for broad-based mobilization and creating bottom-up demand that fosters responsive governance. Our advocacy capacities can facilitate the participation of poor and vulnerable populations in the design and implementation of development policies and programs. This can enhance the delivery of basic social services, such as health and education. Civil society organizations also play a critical watchdog role in public life. We have developed substantive capacity and have an increasing influence in our areas of concern.

11. We represent an underused resource. We can offer a positive vision of our future together that can create an effective alternative in front of the current posed challenges. CSOs needs to be empowered to make a constructive contribution to the political and economic development of our societies and nations. We aim to harness the idealism, hope, creativity and energy of civil society groups all around the Euro-Mediterranean Region to generate an effective alternative in front of violent radicalisation. We must all stand in front of violent extremism. And we are ready to contribute.

II. Definition of radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism

12. We acknowledge that the lack of universally accepted definition of the terms "radicalization", "violent extremism" or "terrorism" in governments or academia is a challenging threat for all those who want to establish effective measures to counter violence and prevent violent extremism in all our societies. The lack of clear definitions is especially worrying when we consider that mass media are daily using these terms in a variety of forms, compelling hegemonic definitions that are potentially incompatible with Universal Human Rights standards. Even more disturbing is the state's capacity to categorize

"terrorist" or "violent extremist" to individuals or groups. There are historical and present proofs that when states are lacking democracy, rule of law, or pluralistic political systems, state capacity can be used to stigmatize human rights defenders as terrorists, enemies of the State or political opponents. Recognizing this situation, our aim is to contribute to a consensual definition of those concepts.

13. The present Plan of Action considers the term radicalization as a process by which an individual, group or state comes to adopt increasingly extreme political, social, or religious ideas and aspirations that reject the status quo. The term radicalization does not imply, necessarily a negative connotation. Processes of peaceful radicalization do exist and they also aspire to reject the status quo; individual or collective grievances are channelled adopting subversive ideologies that fight for social and democratic progress. It is important to make some distinctions between radicals, those people holding radical ideas, and violent radicals, those who adopt violent extremist ideologies. There are multiple pathways that constitute the process of radicalization, which can be independent but are usually mutually reinforcing. Radicalization that occurs across multiple reinforcing pathways greatly increases a group's resilience and can serve as a kind of sociological trap that gives individuals no other place to go to satisfy their material and spiritual needs.

14. We understand violent extremism(s) as the ideologies that aspire to achieve political power by using violent means, over persuasion. Violent extremist ideologies are based in totalitarian, fanatic, intolerant, patriarchal, anti-democratic and anti-pluralistic values. Violent extremist ideologies can be adopted by individuals, groups, corporations or states. While current counter-terrorist efforts, focus only on the interconnection between violent extremism and physical violence, this Plan of Action aims to consider violence in all its dimensions: physical, emotional, verbal, institutional, structural or spiritual. We aim to include in our definition of violent extremism all ideologies advocating, maintaining or generating Structural, Cultural and Direct Violence. It is relevant to underline that no society, religious creed or worldview is immune to violent extremism; the definition includes, among others, right or left movements, ethnical, national, class, gender or fundamentalist religious movements. For the last decades, the way mass media has presented movements such as Daesh or AlQaeda has contributed to generate a direct correlation between violent extremism and totalitarian movements that are misusing the Islamic religion as an excuse to achieve their political goals. This narrative, that tends to create a determinist relation between terrorism and Islam, is dangerous and fallacious. If we observe the number of deaths caused by terrorism, we will see that Muslim citizens are the main victims.

15. The present Plan of Action adopts the Schmid and Jongman definition of terrorism: "Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby - in contrast to assassination - the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat- and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperilled) victims, and main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience(s)), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought".

16. For the purpose of this Plan of Action we adopt a definition of radicalization as the process conducive from individual, group or state alienation to the adoption of violent extremist ideologies. This Plan of Action reminds us that nobody is born a terrorist and that our main task should be to address the conditions, context and drivers that fuel radicalization. We adopt a definition of violent extremism as the totalitarian ideologies that aim to achieve political goals by promoting cultural, structural or direct violence. Regarding violent extremist ideologies, this Plan of Action aims to understand and have an impact on the processes of recruitment of groups and perpetrators through hate speech and propaganda. Regarding violent extremism, it is also key to understand that violent extremism can be conducive towards terrorism or others form of violence, like hate crimes or hate speech. The last point is our definition of terrorism as a particular type of violent extremist action. That means that the process we are considering is one that goes from alienation to radicalization, to the adoption of violent extremist ideologies through propaganda and hate speech and last to acts of violence, including terrorism.

17. This Plan of Action aims to set an agenda for action for preventing violent extremism. That means that our primary focus of action will be in the interrelation between alienation, radicalisation, violent extremist ideologies and violence. At the same time that we understand that security forces should have a balanced role on countering terrorist activity and perpetrators, this Plan of Action wants to express that the role of Security Forces on preventing violent extremism could be highly counter-productive and it is essential to balance the current counter terrorism efforts giving a relevant and main role to the efforts of Civil Society Organizations. This role should be accepted by all authorities and actors promoting concerted action, this role should be promoted, must be funded and must be encouraged.

III. Impact of Violent Extremism in the Euro-Mediterranean Region

18. Violent extremism undermines our collective efforts towards maintaining peace and security, fostering sustainable development, protecting human rights, promoting the rule of law and taking humanitarian action and providing access to the basic services in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

19. In terms of peace and security, violent extremist groups are contributing significantly to the cycle of insecurity and armed conflict affecting our region. The Middle East remains the most insecure are benefiting from existing armed conflicts in Syria and instability in Iraq, Libya and Yemen, and a source of deep problems and challenges for the region. Civilian population is put in serious danger, national and regional stability are largely undermined, there is an exacerbation of connections with transnational organized crime to increase their financial resources, and the generation of significant revenues from human trafficking and the slave trade. On another hand, the need to protect citizens from the consequences of both intentional and unintentional human acts, as well as natural hazards and technical failures, has become an important strand in the European security discourse.

20. Despite the decrease in the number of casualties for violent extremism, Syria and Iraq are two of the five most affected countries by terrorism and European countries like Belgium and France have experienced a decline. The global economic impact on counter-

terrorism is much bigger on the one devoted to conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. By responding to this threat, violent extremism has provoked an over-reaction among states, conceiving action for their own propaganda ends, as well as systematic human rights violations and privation of essential freedoms. Despite setbacks, and the attentions of an international military coalition that has been attacking Daesh in Syria and Iraq since 2014, the jihadist organization continued to resist and expand, proving that any war will stop violent extremism.

21. Concerning the sustainable development, it is important to note that violent extremism not only deprives people of their freedoms, but limits opportunities to expand their capabilities. The exploitation of development challenges, such as inequalities, poverty and poor governance, violent extremism exacerbates those grievances and creates a vicious cycle of decline which particularly affects marginalized groups While poverty cannot be proven to have a direct causal relationship to terrorism, it is clear the impact of extremist violence has been born most heavily by the citizens in developing countries, even if recruitment and radicalization to violent extremism also happens in developed countries.

22. Most governments in the region are spending increasingly large amounts of revenue to deal with the threats and consequences of violent extremism, taking away resources from other activities. The investment in counter-violent extremism has direct effects in countries like Iraq, Syria or Tunisia, where a notorious allocation of the budget has been dedicated to this sector in detriment to other socio-economic activities. The perception of insecurity increases this trend.

23. There is no doubt of the massive and systematic human rights violations committed by the violent extremism groups in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Ranging from the right to life, genocide, crimes against humanity, as well as and the right to liberty and security of person, to freedom of expression, association, and thought, conscience and religion. Those groups also violate the rights of women and girls, including through sexual enslavement, forced marriages and encroachment on their rights to education and participation in public life.

24. The overly broad application of counter-terrorism measures has had a profound detrimental impact on the enjoyment of human rights. Criminalising or otherwise prohibiting or sanctioning conduct without a clear definition is incompatible with the principle of legality, a basic rule of law precept. Counter-violence initiatives may compromise human rights and fundamental freedoms of the communities they target, undermine the work of human rights defenders as well as the independence of civil society. Several governments in the region already routinely label political opponents, journalists, and human rights defenders as "extremists" or "terrorists". The arrest of individuals for alleged association with armed revolutionary leftist political groups in Turkey; counterterrorism laws allowing pre-charge detention of 4 and 6 days in Morocco and France, respectively; or the penitentiary conditions in Iraq are some of the numerous examples that need to be monitored and denounced.

25. Finally, in terms of humanitarian action and access to basic services, the region is facing a situation where the number of forced refugees and displaced persons is the highest on record, a situation to which violent extremism has been a significant contributing factor. At a global level, an unprecedented 65.3 million people around the world were forced from home in 2015. From those, more than 1 million crossed the Mediterranean Sea and more

than 5,000 died during the same period. While Syria is the largest country in number of refugees (5 million), Lebanon has hosted the largest number of refugees. The inaction on the asylum policies under the current migrant crisis in Europe.

26. Violent extremist groups actively interfere with the provision of international humanitarian assistance and limiting the access to basic services to the areas controlled by those groups, by seizing relief supplies or targeting humanitarian actors. In situations of armed conflict, violent extremists routinely disregard the traditional protection, enshrined in international humanitarian law, accorded to humanitarian actors in conflict zones. In other contexts, the dissemination of hate speech discriminates minorities preventing them from accessing to basic services (accommodation, health care, education).

27. The inaction on the asylum and migrant policies under the current migrant crisis in Europe has been a driver and an impact of violent extremism. The main response to deal with this crisis by the EU has been an increase on the funding for border patrol operations in the Mediterranean (security approach) and proposing a new quota system to relocate asylum seekers among EU states. At the date of the signature of this Plan of Action, this quota has not been fulfilled. A clear and robust commitment for hosting refugees (beyond the expected quotas, due to the fact that the asylum demand amount is only a ridiculous proportion from the European total population), can only be the first step, more must be done. Furthermore, a more preventive policy on displacement (conflict prevention perspective) is essential to mitigate one of the most visible effects of the violent extremism in the region.

28. The above-mentioned discrimination in Europe is intrinsically related to the rise of islamophobia and hate speech in Europe. Anti-Muslim racism poses a growing threat to the democratic foundations of European constitutions and social peace as well as the coexistence of different cultures throughout Europe. Claiming that Europe faces a Muslim invasion has become a standard fare for a range of the political sector, undermining democratic principles. More specifically, this sector is also rising in the continent, as per another consequence of violent extremism: far-right populist movements. They exploit the current financial crisis to strengthen their populist appeal, disregarding fundamental humanitarian principles and the ideals of democratic pluralism for short-term partisan gain.

IV. Context and drivers of violent extremism in the Euro-Mediterranean Region

29. In the past decade and a half, we have seen an enormous research effort on the context and drivers of violent extremism in the Euro-Mediterranean Region. However, this Plan of Action considers that while there are some recognizable trends and patterns, there are only few areas that have been intensively observed while others have been diminished or poorly investigated. On one hand, we have observed that many research efforts have been directed towards understanding the context and drivers of radicalization of individuals and particular communities, while other potential perpetrators, like states, have been disregarded. On the other hand, we have observed that research efforts have been mostly directed towards the understanding of a particular type of violent extremism, the yihadism terrorism. Others, like the context and drivers conducing towards the adoption of

islamophobic or extreme right violent ideologies have been mostly lessened. We consider that this pathway is reinforcing a worrying relation between violent extremism and particular misinterpretations of Islam. We consider that reinforcing this link is a dangerous mistake that can even reinforce other violent extremisms. More research, both qualitative and quantitative, is required on all perpetrators and on all violent extremisms present in the Euro-Mediterranean Region.

30. Qualitative research, based mainly on interviews to academics, institutions, victims, perpetrators and practitioners in the Euro-Mediterranean Region, suggest that two main categories of drivers can be distinguished: "push factors", or the conditions conducive to violent extremism and the structural context from which it emerges; and "pull factors", or the motivations and processes, which play a key role in transforming ideas and grievances into violent extremist action.

A. Conditions and the structural context conducive to violent extremism

31. Nothing can justify violent extremism but we must also acknowledge that it does not arise in a vacuum. The available qualitative evidence points to the presence of certain recurrent drivers, which are common among a wide variety of countries and regions of the Euro-Mediterranean Region and which lead, sometimes in isolation and sometimes in combination with other factors, to radicalization and violent extremism.

Lack of socioeconomic opportunities
32. For the last decades the unprecedented economic crisis affecting the Euro-Mediterranean Region has generated low and negatives levels of growth. The economic policies implemented by our governments to respond to the economic crisis has generated extraordinary levels of inequality aggravated by the general fail to create decent jobs for their youth, to reduce poverty and unemployment, to control corruption and to manage relationships among different communities in line with their human rights obligations. There are statistical evidences that show that states with high levels of inequalities are more prone to violent extremism and tend to witness a greater number of incidents linked to violent extremism. Citizens may consider weak development outcomes as confirmation of the lack of a government's legitimacy, making state institutions less effective in responding to violent extremism when it arises.

33. The existence of high levels of inequality have generated low levels of social cohesion and lack of socioeconomic opportunities affecting particularly to stratified social classes and communities. The lack of access to opportunities of particular social classes, or specific cultural communities, generates alienation, the estrangement of people from aspects of their citizenship, and a fertile soil for the propaganda of violent extremist organizations.

34. The lack of socioeconomic opportunities has wrinkled the resilience of our communities in front of the violent extremist propaganda and fostered the distrust towards governments and rule of law. The rising lack of a solid social contract between the governing and the governed is fueling extremist alternatives. In Europe, several member states are experiencing a political momentum where extreme-right populist alternatives are gaining social support and are actively promoting violent extremist ideologies against minorities or

specific religions. The possibility that one of this political parties will manage to take control of a member state is one of the main threats in Europe today. The low community resilience in the Middle East and North Africa is also fueling and giving legitimacy to authoritarian and repressive governments where real democracy and real pluralism continues to be elusive for several countries.

35. The general absence of alternative employment opportunities, especially when it affects to specific regions or municipalities, can make violent extremist organizations an attractive source of income.

36. Violent extremism is more likely to occur in European member countries with poorer performance on socio-economic factors such as opportunities for youth, belief in the electoral system or levels of crime. In both European and Northern Africa and Middle East countries, violent extremism is statistically related to the acceptance of the rights of others, good relations with neighbors, likelihood of violent demonstrations and political terror.

Marginalization and discrimination
37. No country in the Euro-Mediterranean region is completely homogeneous. It is important to stress that diversity in and of itself does not lead to or increase a country's vulnerability to violent extremism. The problem is not diversity: it is inequality of access to opportunities. The above-mentioned economic crisis has aggravated insecurities as scarce resources and fear of need compelling social competition for wellness between the most marginalized and discriminated communities. This competition is aggravating previous structural and cultural violence systems against specific communities and social classes. When one group, whatever its demographic weight, acts monopolistically in political and economic sectors at the expense of other groups, the potential for intercommunal tensions, gender inequality, marginalization, alienation and discrimination increases, as expressed through restricted access to public services and job opportunities and obstructions to regional development and freedom of religion. This, in turn, may incite those who feel disenfranchised to embrace violent extremism as a vehicle for advancing their goals.

Political terror, violations of human rights and the rule of law
38. There are strong statistical evidences that violent extremism tends to thrive in an environment characterized by political terror. Ninety-three per cent of all terrorist attacks between 1989 and 2014 occurred in countries with high levels of state sponsored terror – extra-judicial deaths, torture and imprisonment without trial. Over 90 per cent of all terrorism attacks occurred in countries engaged in violent conflicts. Only 0.5 per cent of terrorist attacks occurred in countries that did not suffer from conflict or political terror. 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. Violations of international human rights law committed in the name of state security can facilitate violent extremism by marginalizing individuals and alienating key constituencies, thus generating community support and sympathy for and complicity in the actions of violent extremists. Violent extremists also actively seek to exploit state repression and other grievances in their fight against the state. Thus, Governments that exhibit repressive and heavy-handed security responses in violation of human rights and the rule of law, such as profiling of certain populations, adoption of intrusive surveillance techniques

and prolongation of declared states of emergency, tend to generate more violent extremists. This statistical reality proves that the current security-based counter-terrorism responses may fuel community and social grievances and can provide opportunities for exploitation by violent extremists.

39. The lack of adequate efforts, in line with international obligations, towards the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, exacerbated by discrimination against ethnic, national, gender, racial, religious, linguistic and other groups and the absence or curtailment of democratic space, can provide opportunities for exploitation by violent extremists. State institutions that do not adequately fulfil their international obligations to uphold these rights can fuel grievances and undermine not only their own effectiveness but also social norms and social cohesion.

40. In addition, more attention needs to be paid to devising efficient gender- and human rights-compliant reintegration strategies and programmes for those who have been convicted of terrorism-related offences as well as returning foreign terrorist fighters.

Prolonged and unresolved conflicts. Lack of resolution and non-transformation of structural conflicts.

41. The Euro-Mediterranean area is one the regions of the world with more prolonged and unresolved conflicts in the world. The lack of international and national commitment has generated long-standing situations with high number of displaced and refugee people, and entire populations living under military occupation or in a permanent state of war for many years. These situations tend to provide fertile ground for violent extremism, not only because of the suffering and lack of governance resulting from the conflict itself but also because such conflicts allow violent extremist groups to exploit deep-rooted grievances in order to gather support and seize territory and resources and control populations. Urgent measures must be taken to resolve protracted conflicts. Resolving these conflicts will undermine the impact of the insidious narratives of violent extremist groups. When prevention fails, our best strategy towards securing lasting peace and addressing violent extremism entails inclusive political solutions and accountability.

Radicalization in prisons

42. Research shows 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. We are aware that several initiatives have been conducted in order to prevent the radicalization in prisons, while we welcome these efforts, it is important to stress that main efforts must go to improve the prison conditions and inhumane treatment of inmates, corrupt staff and security officers, gang activity, drug use, lack of security, proper facilities and overcrowding. Safeguards need to be put in place to prevent the spread of extremist ideologies to other prisoners while upholding the protection afforded under international law to persons deprived of their freedom, including respect to international standards and norms relating to solitary confinement.

B. Processes of radicalization

43. Although the conditions conducive to violent extremism affect entire populations, only a small number of individuals are actually radicalized and turn to violence. Both complex individual motivations and human agency play a key role in exploiting these conditions and transforming ideas and grievances into violent action.

44. While the above-mentioned conditions and the structural context described generate alienation and estrangement between citizens and a fertile soil for violent extremist organizations; there must also be a social context that provides some form of organization and direction to generate processes of radicalization.

45. The social context is often established through the intervention of propaganda and hate-speech promoted by charismatic leaders, political movements and through informal family and social networks. While it can be difficult to join terrorist organizations unless you already know one of their members, in the case of organizations promoting violent extremist ideologies it often happens in the public arena, in social networks, even in mass media like radio, television or newspapers that are openly promoting violent extremist propaganda and hate speech.

46. Individuals at risk of recruitment to violent extremism often feel unable to resolve disputes peacefully and find it difficult to embrace diversity (due to a culture of violence and intolerance); have experienced - or fear -abuse from the institutions in society holding the monopoly of violence and detention; perceive social inequality favouring specific groups that also benefit from impunity; and experience a lack of opportunity in terms of education, livelihood, and income. Not all individuals with such grievances embrace violence. The combination and magnitude of grievances, however, combined with personal experiences and the influence of violent extremist narratives can push or pull individuals into embracing violence as a legitimate means of redress.

47. Young people may experience identity crises and quests for meaning that have no positive outputs; exclusion or alienation from traditional decision-making processes and institutions; and stark socio-economic inequalities in employment, income, housing, and access to basic social services. Youth radicalism can be, and has often been, a critical force for progressive social change. Radicalization (as a youth phenomenon) is also about the search for identity, belonging, and recognition.

V. An Agenda for Action

48. We, the signers of this Plan of Action, are committed to the prevention of violent extremism and we want to promote an agenda for action as agile and far-reaching as the phenomena itself. We acknowledge that our regional and transnational dimension, based in real and honest partnership, is one of our main added values to make a relevant contribution in our societies. As violent extremism does not respect borders, national and global action has to be complemented by enhanced regional cooperation.

A. Setting the policy framework
49. This Plan of Action welcomes the call of the UN Secretary General to all the member states to promote multi-stakeholder processes to adopt National, Regional and cities Plan of Actions to Prevent Violent Extremism. We, the signers of this Plan of Action, want to

reinforce the message of the SG and want to express our commitment and our demand for the immediate adoption of this concerted Plan of Action by including real participative processes giving a relevant and key space to independent civil society organizations. In order to contribute to this concerted action, we want these Plan of Actions to include the following demands

Conflict prevention and dialogue

50. We want to promote an integrated framework to address the complex issue of violent extremism by all nonviolent means. Preventing extremism requires conflict resolution, inclusive development, respect for human rights, dialogue, and governance reform.

51. Diversification of the existing funds dedicated to countering terrorism and violent extremism to enable them to also address the drivers of violent extremism.

52. Be sure that Plans of Actions will not to focus exclusively on religious extremism, but to consider the full range of extremist discourse and behavior. Racist, ultra-nationalistic or extreme-right ideologies are other current threats that foster violent extremism.

53. Monitor and denounce all efforts to prevent violent extremism which curtail human rights and civil liberties of individuals and communities, for example, in the form of punitive or insensitive national counter-terrorism legislations.

Good governance

54. Include critical review of all national legislation, policies, strategies and practices aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism to ascertain whether they are firmly grounded in respect for human rights and the rule of law.

55. Non-discriminatory basic service provision, ensure accountability for service delivery, and extend state services to remote areas and create an environment where entrepreneurship can flourish and societies can become more peaceful, just and inclusive.

56. Strengthen the professionalism of security forces, law enforcement agencies and justice institutions; and ensure effective oversight and accountability of such bodies, in conformity with international human rights law and the rule of law.

57. Enhance the cooperation of CSO and local authorities to create social and economic opportunities, in both rural and urban locations.

Rule of law and respect for human rights principles

58. Supervise and lobby the creation of legitimate state security institutions that do not abuse power, are under civilian control, and are held accountable for human rights violations.

59. Intercede for the access to justice for all and strengthen fair, effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

60. Supervise and lobby for the accountability for gross violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Accountability mechanisms should have relevant gender expertise to fulfil their mandates.

Youth and education

61. Inclusion of youth and education organisations are included in national law enforcement, included part of the prevention of violent extremism framework.

62. Implementation of education programmes that promote global justice, soft skills and critical thinking, tolerance and respect for diversity, in order to promote peace and nonviolence cultures.

63. Explore means of introducing civic education into school curricula, textbooks, teaching materials and trainings and awareness to teachers.

Gender equality

64. Mainstream gender perspectives across efforts to prevent violent extremism. Gender analysis of security-related decisions and interventions are needed to recognize new dimensions of violent extremism and how to prevent it.

65. Inclusion of a focus on strengthening interaction with women's civil society organisations regarding the impact of security intervention, improving community-level security presence.

66. Ensure that women (and other underrepresented groups) are included in national law enforcement and security agencies, as part of the prevention of violent extremism framework.

Engaging communities

67. Adoption of community-oriented policing strategies with the goal to solve local issues in partnership with the community. Those strategies must be firmly based on human rights so as to avoid putting community members at risk.

68. Advocate regional and national dialogues on preventing violent extremism with a range of actors, encompassing youth engagement, gender equality, the inclusion of marginalized groups, the role of municipalities, and positive outreach through social media and other virtual platforms.

69. Explore and intercede to find opportunities to introduce alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as mediation, arbitration and restorative justice, to resolve conflict and achieve sustainable peace.

Communications and social media networks

70. Protection of freedom of opinion and expression, pluralism, and diversity of the media in the national legal frameworks.

71. Protection of journalists by ensuring the prompt and thorough investigation of threats to their safety, and encourage journalists to work together to voluntarily develop media training and industry codes of conduct which foster tolerance and respect.

B. Taking action

Conflict prevention and dialogue

72. Develop participatory strategies to prevent the emergence of violent extremism, protect communities from recruitment and the threat of violent extremism, and support confidence-building measures at the community level by providing appropriate platforms for dialogue and the early identification of grievances.

73. Encourage individuals to leave violent extremist groups by developing programmes that place an emphasis on providing them with educational and economic opportunities, in coordination with the needs of the wider civilian population.

74. Engage religious leaders to provide a platform for intra-and interfaith dialogue and discussions through which to promote tolerance and understanding between communities, and voice their rejection of violent doctrines by emphasizing the peaceful and humanitarian values inherent in their theologies.

75. Convene regional and national dialogues on preventing violent extremism with a range of actors, encompassing youth engagement, gender equality, the inclusion of marginalized groups, the role of municipalities, and positive outreach through social media and other virtual platforms.

Good governance

76. Promote the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, including human rights-based initiatives that help eliminate the conditions conducive to violent extremism.

77. Promote the political space for nonviolent dialogue among all essential stakeholders in a context. This dialogue should be done through respecting rights of free expression and assembly. Also, recognize and protect nonviolent civil society groups as essential partners in creating democratic societies.

78. Provide human rights training to security forces, law enforcement agents and all those involved in the administration of justice regarding the respect for human rights within the context of measures taken to prevent violent extremism and in all its aspects.

Rule of law and respect for human rights principles

79. Assisting and protecting human rights defenders who document all kinds of human rights violations, even by state actors on the purpose for the prevention of radicalization.

80. Raise awareness on the subversion of the work of educational, cultural and religious institutions by terrorists and their supporters. For that, if necessary, take appropriate measures against all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief.

Youth and education

81. Facilitate young people's disengagement from violent groups. Work with young population who have joined violent extremist groups to channel their aim for change into constructive, non-violent and inclusive activities and approaches.

82. Enhance the participation of youth population on designing and disseminating alternative narratives to prevent violent extremism. Bring new evidence on the contribution of young people as role models in preventing violence, conflict and violent extremism and support and promote new positive narratives on young people's role in the prevention of violent extremism.

83. Contribute on the provision to young people for their socio-economic development with additional career options by fostering an entrepreneurial culture and offering entrepreneurship education, facilitating employment searches and job-matching, enacting regulations.

84. Support and enhance young women's and young men's participation in activities aimed at preventing violent extremism by prioritizing meaningful engagement mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels; and provide a physically, socially and emotionally safe and supportive environment for the participation of young women and men in preventing violent extremism.

85. Integrate young women and men into decision-making processes at local and national levels, including by establishing youth councils and similar mechanisms which give young women and men a platform for participating in mainstream political discourse.

Gender equality

86. Support and strengthen existing women's organisations and networks to play their peacebuilding and reconciliation roles in formal mechanisms and institutions at all decision levels.

87. Build the capacity of women and their civil society groups to engage in prevention and response efforts related to violent extremism.

Engaging communities

88. Support the establishment of regional and global networks for civil society, youth, women's organizations and religious leaders to enable them to share good practices and experience to improve work in their communities.

89. Encourage civic and professional associations, unions and chambers of commerce to reach out through their own networks to marginalized groups so as to address challenges together through inclusive dialogue and consensual politics.

90. Provide medical, psychosocial and legal service support in communities that give shelter to victims of violent extremists, including victims of sexual and gender-based crimes.

91. Strengthen local and own capacities for prevention of violent extremism and community resilience to violent extremism. In order to identify, manage and leverage the local partnerships needed to prevent violent extremism, CSOs must invest in analysis to understand the local context, trust-building processes with partners, and capacity development of endogenous structures.

Communications and social media network

92. Contribute on the design and development of national communication strategies that are tailored to local contexts, which are gender sensitive and based on international human rights standards, to challenge the mainstream narratives associated with violent extremism.

93. Conduct more research on the relationship between the misuse of the Internet and social media by violent extremists and the factors that drive individuals towards violent extremism.

94. Promote alternative narratives that address the drivers of violent extremism, including ongoing human rights violations.

C. Establishment of an Observatory to support the CSOs issued from the Barcelona Conference

95. Support the creation of an Observatory to Prevent Violent Extremism (OPEV) in the Euro-Mediterranean region to support the CSOs issued from the Barcelona Conference. The OPEV will have the following expected outcomes:

- Be responsible to coordinate the efforts to follow-up the implementation of this Plan of Action and the main conclusions of the Barcelona Conference.

- Be a focal point for all the signers of the Plan of Action to conduct coordinated efforts to promote preventing violent extremism actions a policy framework.

- Promote the establishment of an active platform of civil society organizations from all across the Euro-Mediterranean Region promoting coordinated efforts.

- Promoting the establishment of the OPEV in key countries around the Euro-Mediterranean Region.

- Conduct research-action approaches in order to determine the key drivers of ALL violent extremisms in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

- Conduct big data analysis and research on the propaganda and hate speech in Internet and social media.

- Contribute with communications strategies, tailored to specific contexts, which are gender sensitive and based on international human rights standards, to challenge the mainstream narrative associated with violent extremism and propose alternative ones.

- Advocate for establishing local, regional and national plans of action for the prevention of violent extremism including CSOs and encompassing youth engagement, gender equality and the inclusion of marginalized groups. The participation of CSOs on the design of national plans of actions is specified in the UN Plan of Acton to Prevent Violent Extremism.

- Enhance the communication and coordination of the CSOs platform issued from the Barcelona Conference by sharing all necessary elements (good practices, tools, etc.) in order to empower them and further contribute to the prevention of violent extremism.

- Identify the best practices of the civil society organizations to prevent the violent extremism to share and foster the Euro-Mediterranean CSOs platform issued from the Barcelona Conference.

- Provide technical support (networking, training, etc.) to the Euro-Mediterranean CSOs platform issued from the Barcelona Conference.

We, the signing civil society organisations of the Euro-Mediterranean region, declares the will to respect and contribute to the implementation of the Action Plan adopted today.

Barcelona, 29 January 2017