



Provisional Agenda

Regional Workshop on Preventing Terrorist Use of the Internet in the Commonwealth

Southern Africa*: 27 September: 1200-1700 SAST / 1100-1600 BST

West & Central Africa*: 29 September 2021: 1200-1700 WAT / 1200-1700 BST

East Africa*: 1 October 2021 1300-1700 EAT / 1100-1500 BST

To be held virtually

The Commonwealth Cyber Declaration recognises that, since its inception, the internet has made a powerful contribution to the economic, social, cultural and political life of the Commonwealth. But extremist groups' use of the internet is a threat to global security, peace and stability.

In 2015, Commonwealth Heads of Government agreed that it is imperative to counter the use of the internet by extremist groups to radicalise and recruit.

The Commonwealth Secretariat is convening virtual workshops to bring together representatives from the Commonwealth Governments (policymakers, regulators, law enforcement) with a panel of global experts working to address violent extremism on the Internet.

The virtual workshops will provide a forum to discuss the ways that terrorists use the internet (regionally and globally), and to explore positive and sensible measures that Commonwealth members can take to reduce the proliferation of violent extremist materials online, while upholding the values articulated in the Commonwealth Charter.

27 September / 29 September / 1 October

1100

Technical orientation

1200-1220

Welcome and introduction

Moderator:

Commonwealth Secretariat, London

Panellists:

Commonwealth Secretariat

Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation

* Efforts have been made to schedule breaks to accommodate prayer and religious practices, however as participants are attending from multiple time zones, this is not always possible. Participants are most welcome to pause their participation to allow for personal prayer, or to attend an alternative session.

1220-1250

1. Regional Trends: Violent Extremists' Use of the Internet

The global terrorist threat is more adaptive and geographically diffused than ever. Violent extremists use the internet and social media to radicalise and recruit.

Violent Extremist Groups and Networks differ in their approaches, but in recent years, there is a tendency towards disseminating a high volume of material, the use of wider range of multimedia tools and techniques (images, video, music), and compelling stories and arguments delivered by charismatic individuals designed to influence a “computer savvy, media saturated, video game addicted” population (B. Hoffman, 2006).

This session will explore trends in the regions' digital economies and platforms, and recent data and trends in how terrorists use the internet for propaganda, recruitment, incitement, training, planning, financing, execution and glorification of terrorism.

Moderator:

Commonwealth Secretariat

Panellists:

Tech Against Terrorism

Facebook

Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation

1250-1320

2. Blocks, Bans and Take Downs: Removing Terrorist Content

Many tech platforms require users to commit to certain rules and standards when using their platforms and reserves the rights to remove content and block or ban users that breach these standards. 2020 delivered high-profile examples of the tensions that are in play when deciding whether to remove content or to ban or block a user. There is no universally accepted definition of terrorism, and there is no one definition of terrorism across the tech sector. When does freedom of speech protect content that some find abhorrent, offensive, or dangerous? Sometimes context is key, and you must read between the lines to see how content is contributing to radicalisation and recruitment to violent extremism.

This session will explore the challenges in correctly identifying and removing terrorist content, and how to resolve them. The session will also discuss global initiatives such as the GIFCT Hash-Sharing Consortium and the Tech Against Terrorist Content Analytics Platform, developed with support from the Government of Canada.

Moderator:

Commonwealth Secretariat

Panellists:

Tech Against Terrorism

Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism

1320-1330

Break

1330-1415

3. Case Study: Facebook Responses to Terrorist Use of their Platform

Facebook has 1.9 billion users worldwide, and in March 2020, nearly 213 million Africans (16% of the population) subscribed to Facebook. WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and Instagram are also popular communications tools in the region. Some users across Sub-Saharan Africa have reported that WhatsApp is often their first and only interaction with the internet.

Facebook will provide a case study of how its Public Policy Team and the Counter Terrorism and Dangerous Organisations Team are working to make it harder for violent extremists to exploit their platforms: including Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp and Instagram. Facebook will discuss:

- The Facebook Dangerous Individuals and Organizations policy.
- How Facebook identifies dangerous content and enforcing the dangerous organisations policy.
- How Facebook is supporting the creating and sharing of resources that help people leave hate and violent extremism behind.

Moderator: Commonwealth Secretariat

Presenter:
Facebook

1415-1450

4. Measures to Promote Cooperation across the Tech Ecosystem

The 2019 terrorist attacks at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand was a deadly demonstration of how terrorist use of technology is a threat that affects the entire tech eco-system, with terrorists often exploiting tech platforms in combination.

Single-company actions cannot wholly address this threat. Terrorist content is frequently hosted on small, new or little-known file-sharing platforms with 'beacons' to find the content shared across large platforms.

Tech Against Terrorism and the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism will outline global initiatives to support tech-sector cooperation to address terrorist misuse of the internet, including:

- Tech sector counterterrorism policy, content moderation and transparency benchmarking
- Steps local platforms are taking to counter violent extremist use of platforms.
- Public-private collaboration: where governments can help industry to address gaps in the existing response.
- Practical ideas for cross-sector collaboration and support for the local tech sector (especially small, new or emerging platforms).

Moderator:
Commonwealth Secretariat

Panellists:
Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism
Tech Against Terrorism
Facebook

1450-1500

Break

1500-1530

5. Legal Responses to Terrorist Use of the Internet

Can the law and regulation be used as a tool to counter violent extremists' use of the internet? Or does information move too fast for laws to control?

How does work to Prevent Terrorist Use of the Internet (PTUI) connect to wider initiatives to address crimes committed via the Internet and other computer networks, such as the Budapest Convention that deals with infringements of copyright, computer-related fraud, child pornography and violations of network security?

When preventing terrorist use of the internet, what regulatory and law enforcement strategies can work? What are the limitations?

This session will outline some examples of laws and regulations that can make use of the internet for terrorism unlawful and establish the law enforcement powers, judicial or evidential procedures to investigate and prosecute use of the internet for radicalisation and recruitment. It will also consider the limitations and challenges in pursuing a regulatory response.

Moderator and Panellist:

Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation

Panellists:

Tech Against Terrorism

Commonwealth Secretariat, Rule of Law Unit

Facebook

1530-1615

6. Protecting Human Rights while Preventing Terrorist Use of the Internet

Content moderation can be an effective strategy to prevent terrorist misuse of the internet and help to protect the 2.6 billion people of the Commonwealth from violent extremism.

However, online regulation and content moderation also have the potential to threaten human rights, in particular freedom of expression and freedom of opinion/belief. In this session, we will explore tangible strategies for developing a counter terrorism response and content moderation policies that respect the Commonwealth values, including the rule of law and human rights.

Moderator:

Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation

Panellists:

Tech Against Terrorism

Commonwealth Secretariat, Human Rights Unit

Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism

1615-1700

Discussion and Conclusions

Moderator:

Commonwealth Secretariat

This is a provisional programme and as such may be subject to change.

This is an invitation only conference.

Enquiries to:

Anna Sherburn, Deputy Head of Countering Violent Extremism, Commonwealth Secretariat

T: +44 7740 450 901 | E: a.sherburn@commonwealth.int