



THE GLOCAL CONNECTION
PLATFORM FOR SHARED SECURITY

Evaluation of the ‘5P-ambitions’ of the co-chairmanship of the Netherlands of the Global Counterterrorism Forum: questions regarding coherence, relevance, and effectiveness



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The views and opinions expressed in this study, as well as any errors and omissions, are the author's. Any questions on this study can be addressed to Dr. Bibi van Ginkel at bvanginkel@glocalconnection.eu.

Table of content

Acronyms	5
1 Synthesis and recommendations	7
2 Introduction	22
2.1 Key evaluation questions	22
2.2 Outline	23
3 The Global Counterterrorism Forum	23
3.1 The objectives, membership, and structure	23
3.2 Working procedures and outcome documents	26
3.3 Partnerships	29
3.4 The added value of the GCTF in the CT landscape and its key characteristics.....	30
4 The main outcomes of the Dutch Co-Chairmanship	36
4.1 Appreciation by GCTF Members and others of the Dutch/Moroccan Co-Chairmanship	36
4.2 Cost-benefit analysis	38
4.3 Sustainability of the benefits	40
5 The effectiveness of the Co-Chairs' Priorities	42
5.1 The five priorities	42
5.2 Reconstructing the attainability of the objectives	42
5.3 Realization of the five Priorities	44
5.3.1 Results Priority	47
5.3.2 Resources Priority	51
5.3.3 Relations Priority.....	54
5.3.4 Reinforcement Priority.....	58
5.3.5 Renewal Priority.....	66
6 Cooperation, coherence of policy and relevance of the GCTF activities	68
6.1 Coordination	68
6.1.1 Interdepartmental coordination	69
6.1.2 Intradepartmental coordination	70
6.1.3 Cooperation between the Co-Chairs Morocco and the Netherlands	72
6.2 Coherence of policy	73
6.2.1 Internal coherence of Dutch CT and PCVE policy.....	74
6.2.2 Coherence between Dutch local, national and international policies	75
6.2.3 Coherence of GCTF policies.....	77
6.3 Relevance	78
6.3.1 Focusing on the right topics?	78

6.3.2	Alignment with the security issues identified in Dutch security reports	79
7	ANNEXES	81
7.1	Research approach:	81
7.1.1	Evaluation criteria	81
7.1.2	Methods and Methodology	82
7.1.3	Limitations.....	83
7.1.4	Questionnaire questions	83
7.1.5	List of anonymized respondents to questionnaires	85
7.1.6	List of anonymized interviewees.....	86
7.2	International CT landscape	87
7.2.1	Policy developments	88
7.2.2	The actors and cooperation	90
7.2.3	Security and threat developments.....	95
7.3	Dutch CT and PCVE policies.....	97
7.4	Future themes for the GCTF agenda	99
7.5	List of GCTF Framework Documents adopted between 2015-2019	100
7.6	References	101

Acronyms

AIVD	General Security and Intelligence Service
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
CJ-RoL WG	Criminal Justice and Rule of Law Working Group
CoE	Council of Europe
CT	Counterterrorism
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DCAF	Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance
DSH	Department on Stabilization and Humanitarian Aid
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DVB	Department on Security Affairs
DVB-TN	Department on Security Affairs section on Counterterrorism and National Security
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FF	Foreign Fighters
FTFs	Foreign Terrorist Fighters
GCERF	Global Community Engagement Resilience Fund
GCTF	Global Counterterrorism Forum
ICCM	International CT and CVE Clearinghouse Mechanism
ICCT	International Centre for Counter-Terrorism
IJJ	International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law
IOB	Policy and Operations Evaluation Department
ISD	Institute for Strategic Dialogue
ISESCO	Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MIVD	Military Intelligence and Security Service
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NCTV	National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism
NGO	Non-governmental organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
OSCE	Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe
PCVE	Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
RES	Resolution
RSC	Regional Security Coordinator
RUSI	Royal United Services Institute
TTX	Tabletop exercise
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNCCT	United Nations Center on Counterterrorism
UN CTED	United Nations Counterterrorism Committee Executive Directorate
UNCTITF	United Nations Counterterrorism Implementation Task Force
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICRI	United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
UNOCT	United Nations Office on Counterterrorism
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSG	United Nations Secretary-General
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

1 Synthesis and recommendations

Based on the evaluation of the coherence, relevance, and effectiveness of the co-chairmanship of the GCTF of the Netherlands in the period between 2015-2019 and the way the Netherlands designed its post-chairmanship policy, there are seven lessons learned and eight recommendations for the post-co-chairmanship period to be shared. In addition, five focus areas can be identified to ensure the GCTF will remain relevant and fit for purpose for the next decade.

The focus of this evaluation study is the participation in and the co-chairmanship of the Netherlands of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) and the co-chairmanship of the Working Group on Foreign Fighters (FF), as an important aspect of the Dutch counterterrorism (CT) policy. The evaluation reviews the policy of the years 2015-2019, and the translation in post co-chairmanship policy. The Netherlands fulfilled the role of Co-Chair together with Morocco.

Appreciation of the Dutch co-chairmanship

Overall, the stakeholders¹ interviewed for this study have appreciated the Netherlands in the role of Co-Chair as efficient, hardworking, professional, knowledgeable, and creative. GCTF Members underlined the efforts made by the Co-Chairs to keep the GCTF a relevant platform. This is especially an accomplishment, since the CT arena is constantly in motion: threats evolve, new actors enter the CT stage, there is a worldwide decrease in the sense of urgency regarding terrorism threats, and existing actors alter their way of operating. Despite these developments, the Co-Chairs have managed to consolidate the position of the GCTF as an important and relevant actor in the field. Even though the GCTF has not delivered in terms of implementation of practices as was envisioned, the overall appreciation for the way the GCTF can be an added value to the CT arena is widely shared.

Some interviewees suggested though, that more emphasis is needed on attracting donor resources, particularly with respect to the funding of follow-up activities to strengthen implementation.

¹ For this study various stakeholders have been interviewed or returned a questionnaire. These include: representatives of several GCTF Member States and international organizations, representatives of Civil Society Organizations and implementing organizations, external experts, and policy officers of the Dutch MFA and the NCTV. See the Annex.

Stakeholders appreciated the expertise and knowledge regarding GCTF activities of the various Dutch diplomats and policy officers at the embassies. They were considered as go-to persons regarding CT and PCVE topics.

In partnership with Morocco, the Netherlands was also praised for their efforts to strengthen the relationship with the UN, and to transform the GCTF into a truly multilateral forum. After the co-chairmanship of the US, who was one of the initiators of the GCTF, it was important to strive for more ownership among all the Members of the GCTF. The Netherlands, in partnership with Morocco, were able to strengthen the platform-function, lowering the (perceived) threshold for the Members to contribute to the debate.

Evaluation of key questions

The key questions for this evaluation relate to:

- (1) the cooperation between the main actors that played a role in the co-chairmanship;
- (2) the coherence of policies within the Netherlands between the CT and preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) policies on the international, national and local level, as well as the coherence regarding cross-cutting themes within the GCTF documents;
- (3) the relevance of the GCTF policies with regard to addressing the relevant topics considering the actual threat assessments, the added value of GCTF policies for Dutch CT and PCVE policies and the impact of GCTF policies on national policies of GCTF Members, and the added value of the GCTF in the CT landscape;
- (4) the effectiveness of the Dutch foreign policy strategy on CT and P/CVE and particularly the Dutch strategy vis-à-vis the GCTF co-chairmanship, and whether objectives have been achieved; and finally
- (5) what have been the lessons learned and how are they incorporated in future strategies and policies.

Particularly the coherence and relevance of the policies have an objective and a subjective dimension, depending on whether the findings can be based on objective criteria (such as cross references in policy documents) or on the perceptions of stakeholders in the interviews and questionnaires.

Cooperation

The Dutch co-chairmanship task was a joint operation of Department on Security Affairs – Section on Counterterrorism and National Security (DVB-TN) of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the National Coordinator on Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) of the Ministry of Justice and Security, the former acted as the lead on the GCTF work. Although, the cooperation worked well, with hindsight, an interviewed policy officer of NCTV claimed that

NCTV would have benefitted from a more institutionalized joint task force, or a dedicated liaison officer at DVB-TN for the period of the GCTF co-chairmanship period.

Within the MFA, DVB-TN is considered the lead actor on CT and countering violent extremism (CVE) topics. Other thematic and regional departments consider their interactions with these topics as secondary to their main focus, and therefore referred to DVB-TN to design the policies. For that reason, they also took a back seat regarding the design of the overall CT and countering and preventing violent extremism (PCVE) strategies, and the input regarding the GCTF. They were, however, regularly informed by DVB about the activities of the GCTF and when asked, provided input related to their field of expertise. This would thus not be on their own initiative.

The cooperation between DVB-TN and the (especially appointed GCTF-) liaison officers in Washington DC, New York, Rabat, and Ankara worked quite well to streamline the communication with key stakeholders. In addition, some of the regional security coordinators, in particular the ones in the three African regions, have played an important role with regard to contextualizing the good practice documents to the regional and country contexts.

The Netherlands shared the Co-Chair position with Morocco. Prior to accepting the Co-Chair position of GCTF, the Netherlands and Morocco had already cooperated as Co-Chairs of the FF Working Group. Based on their experiences, they decided to place a bid for the co-chairmanship of the GCTF. After some initial problems in the cooperation related to the bilateral diplomatic relations, the GCTF teams of Morocco and the Netherlands took a practical approach to co-lead the GCTF. The cooperation was perceived as professional and exercised with mutual respect by both respondents of Morocco and the Netherlands.

Coherence

The cooperation on CT and PCVE topics within the MFA has not led to a more integrated approach where all relevant departments contribute in a joined effort to the formulation of a CT and PCVE strategy, resulting in a shared view on what a comprehensive CT and PCVE strategy entails. The benefit of such an integrated approach would be that different disciplinary lenses are used to look, for instance, at the underlying problems of radicalization, and the various policy approaches to address this. This is a missed opportunity to ensure better coherence of national CT and PCVE policies and does also no longer sit in line with the international policies where a trend toward more comprehensive approaches is developing.

The assessment of the coherence of policies objectively shows that to the maximum extent possible, coherence was sought after within the Netherlands between the Dutch CT and PCVE policies on the international, national, and local level. A clear example is the promotion of a local multidisciplinary approach regarding CT and PCVE.

Although, as stated by a policy officer of the MFA in an interview, a masterplan did not exist concerning which topic would best be handled in which international forum, efforts were

made to ensure synergies were secured between the policies developed in different international fora. This was done by providing regular updates by the Co-Chairs for Members in other international fora on the developments in the GCTF. This approach was not followed in a systematic manner in regional and sub-regional organizations of which the Netherlands is not a member.

Synergies were also ensured by making cross-references in GCTF documents to the documents of other international organizations, or vice versa by suggesting, where appropriate, the cross-referencing to GCTF documents in documents by other international organizations.

Within the context of the GCTF, the Co-Chairs were furthermore in the position to ensure that coherence in the way certain topics were addressed in the various GCTF documents was preserved. In this respect, it can be concluded though, that under the current political climate, the co-chairs not always succeeded to accomplish this. This mostly concerns the references to already existing binding rules under international law. Consequently, particularly certain cross-cutting themes such as gender issues, and human rights, are not always addressed in a similar manner.

Relevance of policy

The relevance of the policies of the GCTF, and the GCTF as such lies in the ability to address *the relevant topics* considering the actual threat assessments and developments, and *the added value* the GCTF can offer to the CT landscape. The GCTF does not make use of an institutionalized security or risk assessment tool. There is therefore not an objective fact-based method to assess whether the GCTF has been focusing on the right topics, i.e. the most important global terrorism threats. Based on a comparison with the main threats identified by renowned security agencies and think tanks during the period of the co-chairmanship, it can nevertheless be concluded that many of the important security and terrorism risks have been addressed in the context of the GCTF. However, since these topics are in general proposed by the Co-Chairs of the Working Group, and not the result of a regularly held institutionalized discussion among the Members to identify the topics that merit their attention, there is a risk of a biased preference for certain issues, and blindness to emerging threats in regions that are less represented and less active and vocal within GCTF.

The topics on the agenda of the GCTF corresponded with the main threats identified in the Dutch security assessments and the policy strategies. The GCTF meetings were subsequently used as a podium to showcase the Dutch approach in handling these threats, with an emphasis on the multidisciplinary and local context approach.

Important to note though, is the fact that none of the GCTF Member States were able to share concrete examples of national policies that have been developed or amended as a result of the GCTF framework documents. This places question marks regarding the relevance of the GCTF in the areas where it matters, namely regarding the development or amendment of policies to more effectively contribute to CT and PCVE. Also, the Dutch policy officers were

not able to share any concrete examples of how the GCTF documents had impacted national policies. The fact that the topics on the agenda of the GCTF corresponded with the main threats identified in the Dutch policy strategy apparently only had a singular relevance.

The analysis shows that although there is indeed a lot of overlap in the topics addressed, the GCTF adds to the international CT landscape in particular in one manner: by paving the way for other international organizations to address certain topics, that are initially considered to be very sensitive. The self-acclaimed characteristics of the GCTF,² namely the apolitical, informal, and practice-oriented approach of the GCTF, provides a setting in which countries feel more comfortable discussing the issues, after which other organizations can pick up on the topic as well. It can be concluded that the Co-Chairs have ensured that the GCTF can under certain circumstances operate ahead of the policy curve, meaning a new threat has been identified, but has not yet been addressed in another international forum. However, the apolitical character is jeopardized by the fact that text negotiations of new GCTF documents become more and more political. The interactions between diplomats, policymakers, practitioners, experts, and NGOs during expert meetings in preparation of new GCTF documents, is furthermore challenged due to the sheer number of meetings taking place, preventing Members to send the relevant subject-matter experts.

The GCTF, once established to also function as an incubator for the implementation of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy, is, however, less successful in the implementation of policies than it intended to be, as was also argued above. Moreover, the establishment of UNOCT has brought a positive change to the abilities and resources available within the UN to initiate capacity-building activities. With regard to the implementation of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy, the GCTF has thus less of an added value.

The limited membership of the GCTF, in comparison to other international organizations that also take a global approach to counterterrorism, is a debated issue. Whereas some favor the limited membership, because it would keep the Forum agile and action-oriented, others criticize the limited membership, because of the lack of a balanced geographical representation which undermines the legitimacy.

One of the unique selling points of the GCTF is the fact that it is the only international CT platform that organizes an annual high level Ministerial meeting. Although, this is certainly an important way of ensuring that GCTF keeps its political relevance, there are risks of decreasing interest and commitment, which need to be addressed.

Overall, the assessment regarding the relevance of GCTF policies draws a mixed picture with some positive and some negative features.

² GCTF, Global Counterterrorism Forum Official Launch, Political Declaration, 22 September 2011, New York.

Effectiveness

The Co-Chairs developed a Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action. In this Plan of Action, five priorities with specific deliverables per priority were presented. These priorities were: Results, Resources, Relations, Reinforcement, and Renewal.

The ambitions of the Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action were probably too high. They furthermore lack a needs assessment and a properly developed theory of change. The key of a theory of change is, furthermore, to formulate objectives in a SMART manner, ensuring goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound. Since it was not clear from the outset, which results the GCTF (and the Co-Chairs in their capacity) wanted to achieve, it becomes impossible to identify specific and measurable results.

Based on the analysis of the Co-Chair's Legacy Paper, and the input received through the questionnaires and the interviews, it can nevertheless be concluded that not all of the objectives have been achieved (See table I, included in paragraph 5.3). Clearly, this is the result of an underdeveloped vision on the objectives and a lack of theory of change, but this is also partly related to the fact that there was no political support for certain proposals.

Some key findings with regard to the effectiveness are important to highlight. This includes the fact that the objective of the Co-Chairs to improve the implementation has, as was also stated above, not yielded the desired results. This is related to the lack of contextualization of the policies. Overall, the approach regarding the development of policies is mostly top down oriented, whereas it would benefit from a more bottom-up approach.

Regarding the objective to strengthen relations with other stakeholders, the Co-Chairs have particularly been successful in strengthening the cooperation with the UN. In addition, an effort has been made to invite a significant number of non-members to GCTF activities. The perceptions regarding the inclusiveness of the activities of the GCTF, however, vary.

The Co-Chairs had also formulated an objective to maintain the strengths of the GCTF, namely the apolitical, technical, action-oriented, and nimble character of the Forum. This translated in the Forum's function to create a platform for exchange of experiences, to strengthen network contacts, and facilitate the exchange of views between diplomats, policymakers, and practitioners. Respondents to the questionnaires and interviews report that the GCTF certainly had that edge in the early years of the GCTF, and also still has that potential. Yet, they also warn that there is a risk that the emphasis shifts back to a diplomatic forum, and that the dense agenda of meetings, leads to meeting fatigue.

Lessons learned

There were three main considerations for the Netherlands to accept the invitation to become Co-Chair of the GCTF:

- 1) the focus areas of the GCTF corresponded with the themes identified in the National Counterterrorism Strategy of 2011-2015;

- 2) the role would provide a great opportunity for the Netherlands to attain a prominent position in the international CT debate and influence the agenda; and
- 3) it would provide visibility, publicity, and recognition for the Dutch efforts to curb the threat posed by FTFs.

The National Coordinator on Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV), with whom the MFA teamed up for the purpose of the co-chairmanship, was less outspoken about their strategic interest in the co-chairmanship. They accepted the task provided that the MFA would take the lead. The NCTV's main interest merely corresponded with the third reason stated by the MFA, namely, to showcase the practices and policies developed in the Netherlands.

During the co-chairmanship period, the Netherlands has indeed been able to ensure synergies between the topics addressed in the GCTF and the themes identified in the National Counterterrorism Strategy. The MFA and NCTV have also made ample use of the privileged position of the co-chairmanship to share the CT and CVE policies and practices developed in the Netherlands to deal with the threat of FTFs, including the local multidisciplinary consultation models. Most importantly, during the co-chairmanship period, the Netherlands has indeed attained a prominent position in the international CT debate. This has been accomplished due to the pro-active attitude and the knowledge and expertise of the Dutch diplomatic network. This contributed to easy access in diplomatic circles and improved bilateral relations.

After the co-chairmanship period, the Netherlands continued to play an active role in GCTF as co-lead for the Initiative countering the financing of terrorism while safeguarding civic space, which, in any case, contains the development of a new GCTF framework document, and might include follow-up activities. In addition to the active role in other international fora and mechanisms, such as the EU and the Global Coalition against ISIL/Daesh, and GCERF, the Netherlands has also played an active role to lobby for a strong human rights paragraph in the UN General Assembly Resolution that will be adopted in reference to the Review of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy in 2021. Furthermore, the Netherlands is considering the possibility of a new co-chairmanship of one of the GCTF Working Groups if the possibility presents itself.

Although, the position of the Netherlands in the international CT debate is certainly still strong, there is a risk of erosion of the position of the Dutch policy officers, especially those at the embassies, as go-to persons. This is the result of the rotation of policy officers, and the fact that the constant flow of information regarding GCTF activities during the co-chairmanship period has dried up. And clearly, also the fact that travel was hardly possible during the Covid 19-pandemic, has also been an impediment to maintaining the network.

Based on the analysis in the previous chapter, there are seven main lessons to be learned for the Netherlands:

- 1. Be more realistic in formulating the objectives for a co-chairmanship in order to be more effective.** Particularly the number of deliverables listed for the five priorities identified by the Co-Chairs was ambitious. Clearly the seriousness of the threats the international community was facing and the sheer number of challenges that thus needed to be addressed, played a role in setting the (ambitious) agenda. The workload processing all the developed documents was significant, making it difficult to keep the overview and keep the focus on the overall strategy. The context in which the GCTF had to operate, and the political differences between the Members were (and still are), moreover, factors to be reckoned with. Support of (all) the Members of GCTF was missing, for instance, to make significant changes to the way of operating of the GCTF.
- 2. Formulate a clear theory of change regarding the objectives of the strategic plan of action.** When formulating the objectives of the strategic plan of action, it is important to have a clear vision on what results the GCTF aims to achieve. Otherwise, developing a theory of change becomes a wholesome task. To develop a theory of change, the objectives should be formulated in a SMART manner, ensuring goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound. Furthermore, as part of a theory of change, it is important to make clear how the objectives can be attained. It is also important to acknowledge the potential impediments to achieving the objectives, such as, for instance lack of political support, and mechanisms to overcome these challenges.
- 3. Conduct a needs assessment to focus the activities on the right issues.** Effectiveness of strategy and policies would benefit from conducting a needs assessment to find out where the policy gaps are in order to be able to better focus activities on the right issues. To this end, it is important to strengthen the engagement with potential target countries, also if they are not GCTF Members, to secure their input and commitment to implementation and capacity-building activities before the start of the development of new GCTF framework documents.
- 4. Organizing scenario-based discussions is helpful to invite Member States to reflect on challenges in dealing with (new and emerging) threats.** Even though, the GCTF is intended to operate as an apolitical and technical forum, which should facilitate the easy exchange between Member States regarding the threats they face, and the policies and practices they have developed, not all Member States are equally willing to publicly share their experiences. Making use of fictional scenarios lowers the threshold for open debate and can therefore function as a useful tool to secure more interactive exchange.

5. **NCTV would benefit from also developing a strategy themselves and formulating specific objectives for the co-chairmanship position.** For the NCTV, the GCTF was rather a Forum for sharing its expertise and showcasing the practices used in the Netherlands, particularly the multidisciplinary and multistakeholder approach and the translation to the local context. The GCTF and the policies developed did not as such lead to an adaption of the Dutch approach. The NCTV did value the exchange with other countries though to get a better understanding of the local context and the policies used in other countries. These benefits were, however, not anchored in, for instance, an overarching strategy to strengthen international working relationships.
6. **Strengthen the cooperation between NCTV and MFA by appointing a dedicated liaison officer of the NCTV at the MFA for GCTF affairs.** Although the cooperation between the NCTV and MFA has been good, the NCTV would have been able to be more involved in the management of the overarching strategy and to serve the strategic interests of the NCTV if a dedicated liaison officer had been placed with the GCTF team at DVB-TN.
7. **Develop a clear comprehensive vision regarding CT and PCVE that also translates into the way of working within the MFA.** The importance of a ‘whole of government’ and ‘whole of society’ approach is strongly embraced by the Netherlands in the international arena. However, the MFA is internally struggling to translate this concept to the working floor, where these concepts are still mostly assessed through a security lens. Particularly a ‘whole of society’ approach benefits from rather using a human security lens, which combines the need to address the threats, as well as the underlying factors of these threats. A human security approach furthermore entails multistakeholder engagement. To achieve this, it is first of all important to ensure different departments within the MFA contribute in a meaningful manner to the analysis of underlying causes of radicalization to violent extremism, and the development of policies to counter these problems.

Recommendations for the post-co-chairmanship period of the Netherlands

The investments made by the Netherlands for the co-chairmanship of the GCTF, and the benefits achieved in relation to the motivational factors formulated for the acceptance of the task as a result, are overall positive, but also lost if a post-co-chairmanship strategy is missing to secure the sustainability of these results. A strategy is therefore needed to maintain the prominent position of the Netherlands in the international CT arena. The position was clearly acquired due to the fact that the Netherlands was closely involved in the broad scope of the international CT and PCVE policies. This position opened doors to relevant partners, also on sensitive political issues. To maintain this position, it would not be realistic to remain

intensively involved on the broad scope of CT and PCVE issues. It would rather be recommended that the Netherlands takes the lead on specific CT or PCVE themes that are closely related to the core values of the Netherlands in its foreign policies, or more specifically related to its vision of an effective CT and PCVE policy. It would, for instance, be advisable to focus on human rights or gender issues, or to promote the effective policies based on a multidisciplinary, multistakeholder, and local approach.

In addition, to maintain the reputation of the Dutch diplomats in the field as go-to persons on CT and PCVE issues, it is important to secure a better hand-over of the relevant files and networks in the region. It is, furthermore, paramount that the diplomats as well as the relevant policy officers are involved in selecting the key focus areas of the Dutch foreign CT and PCVE policies and are frequently updated on the contributions of the Netherlands in various international fora.

Below, several suggestions are made for the post-co-chairmanship period:

1. **Develop an internal comprehensive vision on CT and PCVE** to ensure more input is incorporated from other departments, and the policies are not solely shaped through a state security lens, but rather embrace a human security approach³, meaning a vision on security for people and communities, also ensuring human rights are respected and there is ownership for security challenges in society. In order to do this, it is recommended to regularly organize dialogues and exchanges between the policy officers of various departments and external experts and civil society representatives.
2. **Organize thematic awareness raising events or issue a newsletter** for relevant practitioners within the Netherlands (also those working outside the MFA or the NCTV) to ensure the Dutch CT/PCVE community is aware of the international policy developments, including those taking place within the context of the GCTF. This would improve their knowledge on these developments, contribute to the dissemination of the accomplishments reached in international fora, might even lead to amendment of certain national policies and practices following examples in other countries, and strengthen meaningful relations in the network of practitioners.
3. In order to maintain the international reputation of the Netherlands as a knowledgeable partner, and the status of diplomats or regional security coordinators as the go-to persons is it necessary to **re-invest in the information exchange**. Depending on how the Netherlands wants to position itself in the future, this could either relate to the developments in the whole of CT or PCVE or particularly regarding certain themes or particular regions (see below).

³ Human security as a concept is often linked to the four freedoms as formulate by Franklin Roosevelt, namely freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom of speech and freedom of worship.

4. The Netherlands could **focus its international efforts regarding CT and PCVE on specific themes close to the core values of the Dutch foreign policy**. These include human rights and gender issues. This could, for instance, take form by fulfilling another co-chairmanship position, this time of the CJ-RoL WG, once this position opens up. Another option would be to specialize as a guardian of one of the cross-cutting themes (human rights, gender) to ensure coherent reference to these themes across the various documents.
5. Alternatively, the Netherlands could focus on the **promotion of effective CT and PCVE policies**. This could take form by promoting the multidisciplinary and multistakeholder approaches on the local level by accepting the position of co-chair of the CVE Working Group if this position becomes vacant. Another option would be to focus on strengthening the mechanisms needed to ensure CT and PCVE policies are relevant and effective, by executing need assessment studies, or by building a proper monitoring and evaluation system of GCTF policies.
6. To enhance the effective implementation of CT and PCVE policies, the Netherlands could **focus its activities on a specific region** by seeking close cooperation with regional/local partners to enhance the implementation of the framework documents. This could also take form by taking the lead to coordinate donor support on CT and PCVE activities in specific regions.
7. In line with the ambitions during the co-chairmanship, the Netherlands can **contribute to the contextual implementation of good practices** to package deals in different manners, namely: 1) by co-sponsoring the development for regional specific toolkits and capacity building, building on a previously developed Good Practice document (also if developed under the co-chairmanship of another GCTF member); 2) by proposing a new package deal (in partnership with other actors) to develop a new framework document plus the translation into regionally relevant toolkits and capacity building activities by way of a stand-alone Initiative.
8. Finally, in line with the importance the Netherlands attributes to the involvement of civil society in the development and implementation of CT and PCVE policies, it could **facilitate the establishment of, or host a CSO coalition for the GCTF** (experts and practitioners), which could focus on cross-cutting themes, such as youth, gender, human rights, peace building, the nexus between PVE and development aid, and the nexus between CT and PCVE and humanitarian aid or refugee's management.

Recommendations for the next decade of the GCTF

The evaluation of the relevance, coherence, and effectiveness of the GCTF's activities and way of operating, shows that the key characteristics and main aims of the GCTF are jeopardized if several challenges are not properly addressed. There are five main challenges that can be identified:

1. The number of meeting undermining the quality of the exchange and the informal character of the meetings;
2. The undermining of the apolitical character as a result of the lack of transparency in the negotiations and the powerplay used by certain Member States in the final stage of the negotiations;
3. The legitimacy of the GCTF in relation to the limited membership and the lack of transparency regarding the participation and engagement with non-members, including civil society actors;
4. The lack of effective implementation and contextualization of the GCTF policies;
5. The lack of awareness among relevant stakeholders and the flawed communication strategy.

The new GCTF Co-Chairs, Canada, and Morocco, have presented their strategic plan for their co-chairmanship. Their main objective is to reinforce the Forum's founding mission of developing practical and effective ways to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism. To achieve this, they pledge to ensure a constructive balance between continuity and renewal that focuses on the following priorities:

1. Working together - increase the collective engagement of the GCTF Membership, to promote the involvement of non-GCTF member countries in the Forum's activities and to safeguarding the GCTF's strong and mutually reinforcing partnership with the United Nations;
2. Building on success - continue to encourage the implementation of the growing body of GCTF framework documents, relying upon the GCTF's international, regional and sub-regional partners, including the United Nations and the three Inspired Institutions;
3. Assessing our impact - committed to undertake a study to measure the impact of the Forum's framework documents on the CT and CVE policies and practices of states, with close collaboration among the Co-Chairs, GCTF Members and partners, and the GCTF Administrative Unit;
4. Focusing on Africa - in an effort to keep the GCTF connected with realities on the ground, the Co-Chairs intend to further emphasize Africa as a cross-cutting theme in GCTF efforts and focus on engaging African leadership and participation;
5. GCTF 2021-2023: the next decade - aim to leverage the GCTF's current achievements and know-how to ensure the future success of long-term civilian approaches to

countering the terrorist threat by exchanging experiences, developing Good Practices, and building capacities;

6. Ensuring sustainability - commit to work to mobilize resources required for the GCTF to remain agile and well-positioned to address new and emerging global counterterrorism challenges.

In advance of the new Co-Chairs' ambition to prepare the GCTF for the next decade, the following categories of recommendations can be taken into consideration to ensure the GCTF remains a relevant and fit-for-purpose actor in the international CT arena:

→ *Strengthen relations and meaningful engagement:*

- Offer implementers a more permanent seat at the table, not making this an exclusive privilege for the GCTF inspired institutions;
- Set up a fund to sponsor participation of experts and NGOs from DAC countries;
- Set up a civil society focal point or mailbox function for unsolicited input on initiatives;
- Publicly announce the implementing partner of an initiative, who can be approached to offer input;
- Develop more meaningful/institutionalized relations with regional organizations, and exercise reciprocity in the relationship, meaning GCTF representation also attends the relevant meetings of regional organizations. This could be done by appointing dedicated GCTF focal points in the region;
- Be more innovative with regard to the organization of the Ministerial Meeting to remain relevant by lowering the frequency or alternate between Ministers of Foreign Affairs and line Ministers on, for instance social affairs, education, or youth affairs, or by CT coordinators. Or by copying the example of the Nuclear Security Summit, and submit more long-term visions with multi-annual working plans;
- Learn lessons from the Covid-19 period and the proliferation of online working forms. This offers the opportunity to bring in a wider variety of experts and civil society representatives to the discussion;
- Be more creative in the set-up of events by championing more meaningful engagement and input, for instance, through the use of scenario-based discussions or table-top exercises;
- Facilitate short and focused online webinars (maximum of 60 minutes) on specific challenges between the regular meetings organized by Working Groups or for the purpose of developing new documents. This could facilitate a meaningful exchange between practitioners from one country with practitioners from other countries;
- Set up a roster of experts and practitioners on selected topics. This could contribute to the building of a community of experts and practitioners that can be engaged for the development or evaluation of GCTF policies;

- Set up a transparent and general vetting mechanism to facilitate accreditation for NGOs, in addition to the ad hoc clearance procedure per meeting.

→ *Facilitate effectiveness of policies and better implementation*

- Consider the added value of an independent research unit to assess emerging security threats and underlying conditions conducive to radicalization to violent extremism. The responses to the questionnaires and the interviews offered a very scattered picture of the topics the stakeholders felt the GCTF needs to address (see Annex) underlining the importance of an independent assessment;
- Conduct regular needs assessments among GCTF members and non-members in order to know where to target capacity building activities, including awareness raising and practitioners' trainings;
- Strengthen the implementation capacity by ensuring new workplans offer package deals of the development of new policy documents accompanied with -if relevant- the contextualization of the policies for specific countries and regions in practitioners' toolkits and training and capacity-building activities. These projects can be initiated by Co-Chairs of the Working Groups but need to be backed up with a group of friends/supporting states, that will also pledge resources for the follow-up steps.
- Focus more on the specific regions. This can be done by strengthening the role of the regional working groups and offer flexible membership for local countries to the regional working groups. This will increase ownership and legitimacy. It is also possible to organize a meeting with representative of regional organizations once a year. Or to dedicate a Coordinating Meeting to regional implementation coordination. Another option is to appoint a particular GCTF Member to be the 'Envoy' regarding a certain region, who could attend the meetings of (sub-) regional organizations and share agreed GCTF talking points.
- Invest in the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the GCTF policies.

→ *Invest in awareness-raising and better communication*

- Invest in translating toolkits in the main GCTF languages (English, French, Arabic), and offer translation in the relevant language for specific regions to enhance awareness raising;
- Include funding in the 'package deals' in the workplans for more regional awareness raising expert seminars after finalizing the documents, to spur discussion on a regional/local level;
- Improve the website of the GCTF by:
 - Ensuring announcements of meetings on the GCTF website are up to date and timely;
 - Translating the website information to the other GCTF languages (English, French and Arabic);

- Providing summaries of the expert meetings on the website, and contact details of those in the lead of an initiative;
- Developing a codification system of the GCTF documents, to enhance the archive function and facilitate accurate referencing by researchers and for cross-referencing in other documents.

→ *Strengthen coherence in policies*

- Appoint special rapporteurs to enhance the coherence in policy of cross-cutting themes, especially regarding human rights obligations, gender issues, youth affairs, and privacy and data protection.

→ *Enhance the legitimacy of the GCTF*

- Invite target (non-GCTF member) countries of GCTF policies to invite the Forum to run country-specific working groups. This will strengthen the ownership regarding contextualization and implementation of policies and will ensure engagement by the relevant local stakeholders with willing donor countries. A GCTF Member State, active in that country with capacity-building activities can take the lead in coordination and organization of these events. It would, furthermore, be important to engage GCERF in these locally focused working groups.
- Offer flexible membership of the regional GCTF Working Groups to States in the specific regions to enhance ownership and legitimacy.

2 Introduction

The Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is currently evaluating the Dutch foreign policy on counter-terrorism (CT) and preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE). There are three focus areas for this study:

1. The GCTF as an organization in a global playing field on CT and P/CVE, its working methods and its added value;
2. The results of the GCTF;
3. The role of the Netherlands in the GCTF, in particular as Co-Chair of the GCTF and of the Working Group on Foreign Fighters (FF).

The evaluation reviews the policy of the years 2015-2019, and the translation in post co-chairmanship policy, and is intended to support current and future policy decisions regarding the Dutch involvement in GCTF.

2.1 Key evaluation questions

The key questions for this evaluation relate to (1) the coherence and relevance of GCTF policies and the Dutch foreign policy on CT and P/CVE in terms of the internal coordination, coherence of Dutch CT and PCVE policies, coherence of GCTF policies, the added value of the role of the Netherlands as co-chair of the GCTF, and the added value of the GCTF as such and its policies, and the GCTF policies for Dutch CT policies; (2) the effectiveness of the Dutch strategy vis-à-vis the GCTF co-chairmanship, and whether objectives have been achieved; and finally (3) what have been the lessons learned and how are they incorporated in future strategies and policies. A more elaborate explanation of the evaluation criteria and the methodology used can be found in the Annex (paragraph 7.1.1).

The findings of this study are based on the analysis of public policy documents and internal memos, and a total of 68 questionnaires and (follow-up) interviews conducted with Dutch and foreign policy makers, representatives of other international organizations and non-governmental organizations, implementing partners, NGOs, and independent experts. An anonymized list of those interviewed, and those who responded to the questionnaire can also be found in the Annex (paragraphs 7.1.5 and 7.1.6).

The limitations and scope of this study did not make it possible to involve the input of all GCTF Members. And although a broad and representative number of GCTF Members were approached, a limited number of States responded, mostly coming from Western States. The views as expressed by interviewees might therefore rather represent a Western-centric perspective on the operations of the GCTF. Also, not all questions were always answered due to political or diplomatic sensitivities (see more elaborate on the limitations paragraph 7.1.3).

2.2 Outline

The evaluation report has the following outline: In chapter 3, the objectives, membership, structure, and way of operating of the GCTF will be addressed. Particular attention will be given to the key characteristics of the GCTF, its strengths and its challenges, and the added value of the GCTF to the CT landscape. In chapter 4, the focus will be on the appreciation of the main stakeholders of the role of the Netherlands as Co-Chair, the main reasons for the Netherlands to accept the co-chairmanship position, and the question whether this has yielded any sustainable results. This chapter is followed by a chapter focused on the effectiveness of the five priorities that were identified by the Co-Chairs in the Strategic Plan of Action. Finally, in chapter 6, the focus is on the cooperation between the main actors during the Co-Chairmanship, and the coherence and relevance of policy. For the evaluation of coherence, an assessment will be made regarding three aspects. The internal coherence of the Dutch CT and PCVE policy will first be assessed. Next, the focus will be on the coherence of the Dutch local and national CT and PCVE strategy and policies with the contributions of the Netherlands in various international fora. And finally, coherence of policies also depends on the consistent and coherent manner in which reference is made to certain issues in various GCTF framework documents, and the language that is used. Regarding the evaluation of the relevance of policies, the question is whether the focus of the agenda has been on the right security challenges given the threats the international community was facing as a whole. In addition, an assessment is made whether the topics on the agenda of the GCTF related to the issues identified in the threat assessments by the national security agencies, the NCTV and the AIVD.

3 The Global Counterterrorism Forum

3.1 The objectives, membership, and structure

The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) was launched in September 2011 in New York as the first global platform dedicated to counterterrorism (CT). The general perception was that the UN was not agile enough, and too political and bureaucratic to respond effectively to the imminent terrorist threats the world was facing. The US therefore took the lead to set up a nimble, action-oriented, informal network with a limited membership to operate as an incubator for global CT responses. The GCTF's primary objective is thus, according to its Political Declaration at the launch, "to provide a dedicated, informal, multilateral counterterrorism platform for senior policymakers and practitioners from different regions and representing appropriate stakeholders".⁴ It thereto lists seven sub-objectives:

⁴ GCTF, Global Counterterrorism Forum Official Launch, Political Declaration, 22 September 2011, New York, available at < https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Foundational%20Documents/GCTF-Political-Declaration_ENG.pdf> (last visited on 5 March 2021).

- a) “share experience, expertise, best practices, and assessments on key regional and thematic issues;
- b) identify and develop innovative solutions for addressing critical counterterrorism gaps and challenges;
- c) mobilize and coordinate existing and additional resources and expertise to build counterterrorism capabilities around the globe in partnership with and according to the particular needs of interested countries, while respecting their sovereignty and territorial integrity;
- d) coordinate and facilitate capacity- and cooperation-building activities;
- e) develop effective political messaging to counter terrorism and violent extremism;
- f) support practical initiatives aimed at building the political will and capacity to implement the UN Strategy and the wider UN counterterrorism framework in a balanced manner and serve as an incubator for ideas and initiatives that can be further developed and implemented by the United Nations; and
- g) promote the development and implementation of comprehensive and integrated regional, sub-regional, and national counterterrorism strategies that are consistent with the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the principles in this declaration.”⁵

With a selected membership of 29 countries plus the European Union (EU),⁶ it aimed to bridge the views between three main groups. Firstly, the permanent five members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to ensure political buy-in on the global level. Secondly, other Western States with first-hand experience with terrorism and the financial resources to sponsor activities and the expertise to deal with the problem. And thirdly, a selection of Islamic countries with frontline experience with terrorism within their borders. The selection made in 2011 aimed to be a geographical reflection of the situation at the time.

With an annual Ministerial meeting, it is the first global platform dedicated to the problem of terrorism and counterterrorism, which gathers at a high political level (mostly Ministers of Foreign Affairs, or Special Envoys or senior directors) on an annual basis. During the Ministerial meetings the framework documents that have been developed during that year are endorsed by the GCTF Members based on consensus (see also paragraph 3.2).

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ The Members of the GCTF are: Algeria, Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Denmark, Egypt, EU, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, United Arab Emirates (UAE), United Kingdom (UK), and United States (US).

The GCTF's main goal is to break with the classical way of interacting by diplomats in international fora, by bringing together experts and practitioners from around the world with policy officers to share experiences and expertise, and to develop strategies and tools on how to counter the evolving terrorist threat. The Political Declaration emphasized the important role civil society plays in the development and implementation of policies, and also the need to strengthen public-private partnership. By emphasizing the interaction between different stakeholders, civil society should therefore be better engaged in the dialogues and exchanges. It furthermore emphasized the important role of regional organizations in addition to the cooperation with the UN for the implementation and capacity-building of long-term comprehensive CT strategies. It therefore meets in an apolitical and technical setting and has over the years produced a set of non-binding good practices documents, recommendations, and toolkits (see more elaborate paragraph 3.2) that are the result of consultations between diplomats, practitioners, and experts, and are adopted with consensus of all members.⁷

In addition to the annual Ministerial meeting that takes place in September of each year during the Summit of the UN General Assembly, the GCTF has a Coordinating Committee, that meets at least once a year (in practice bi-annually) and provides strategic guidance regarding the GCTF priorities and activities and oversees the mandates of the five working groups.⁸ Most of the work is done in these thematic and regional Working Groups. Currently, there are five Working Groups, namely: the Foreign Fighters Working Group (FF WG), the Criminal Justice and Rule of Law Working Group (CJ RoL WG), Countering Violent Extremism Working Group (CVE WG), Working Group on Capacity Building in the East Africa Region, and the Working Group on Capacity Building in the West Africa Region.

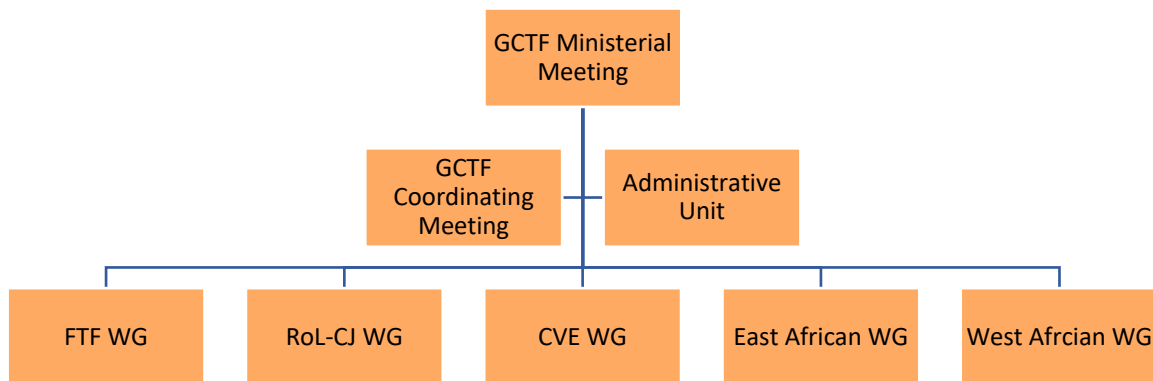
The focus of the regional and thematic working group is not set in stone but can change over time if the members feel this is merited. For instance, in 2017 it was decided that the activities of the Working Group on Detention and Reintegration would be integrated into the work of the three other thematic working groups.⁹ The fact that these themes had a cross-cutting impact and needed to be mainstreamed in the discussions regarding FF, rule of law and CVE issues, was the reason behind this decision. The Horn of Africa Capacity Building Working Group was renamed the Working Group on Capacity Building in the East African Region in 2017, just as the Sahel Capacity Building Working Group was renamed the Working Group on Capacity Building in the West African Region, to broaden the mandates and scopes of these Working Groups to include neighboring countries.¹⁰

⁷ For a full list of all the framework documents that have been adopted by the GCTF, please see the website www.thegctf.org. A list of the documents that have been adopted during the co-chairmanship of the Netherlands, please see the Annex.

⁸ See the GCTF Terms of Reference, as adapted on 4 August 2017, available online at <https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Foundational%20Documents/GCTF%20Revised%20Terms%20of%20Reference%202017.pdf?ver=2020-01-21-095304-547> (last visited on 5 March 2021).

⁹ GCTF Co-Chairs' Strategic Report on the Global Counterterrorism Forum, September 2017, p. 6, on file with IOB.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*



The GCTF as such and the five Working Groups are always chaired by a partnership of two members from different regions for a period of two years, with a possibility for one renewal of the two-year term.¹¹ From 2016 until 2019 the co-chairmanship of the GCTF was in the hands of Morocco and the Netherlands, who succeeded the US and Turkey. The co-chairmanship of the Netherlands partly overlapped with the co-chairmanship of the Netherlands and Morocco of the FF WG.

Finally, the Administrative Unit provides administrative and logistical support to the Coordinating Committee of the GCTF and the co-chairs of the Working Groups and facilitates the development of the activities and initiatives of the Working Groups. The Administrative Unit is also responsible, under the guidance of the co-chairs, for the content on the GCTF's website.

3.2 Working procedures and outcome documents

The GCTF, different from international organizations with legal personality, does not have an official mandate with organs with specific powers to further the objective of the organization. The GCTF is a members-driven platform. It has, however, formulated 'Terms of Reference'¹² that captures the functional aspects of how the GCTF operates. For instance, it lists the responsibilities of the Coordinating Committee and the Working Groups, and the selection and rotation of the GCTF and Working Group co-chairs. All Members of the GCTF will be represented in the Coordinating Committee, usually by the national counterterrorism coordinator or the focal point from the MFA, or another appropriate senior counterterrorism policymaker.

It has become practice that during the Coordinating Committee, or Coco meetings for short, the GCTF's Co-Chairs strategy and the Working Groups' working plans are discussed and

¹¹ GCTF Terms of Reference 2017, *op cit.*

¹² GCTF Terms of Reference 2017, *op cit.*

endorsed. The Co-Chairs of the Working Groups thus present an overview of the activities they intend to organize in a draft work plan. This could entail a series of expert meetings, leading to the development of a good practice document or a set of non-binding guidelines or recommendations on a specific topic that falls within the working scope of the Working Group (see for the difference between the documents below). It could furthermore entail an initiative to develop a practitioners' toolkit, or the initiative to organize training workshops or capacity-building activities on issues that were addressed in the GCTF framework documents.

The regional Working Groups specifically focus on identifying the CT challenges and policy and capacity gaps in their own region, and -according to the Terms of Reference- consider and develop innovative, coherent, and concrete activities that address these needs, and mobilize the political will, resources and expertise to implement these activities. The idea is that the regional Working Groups complement and reinforce any relevant existing regional mechanisms and activities. It is therefore stressed that, where appropriate, also relevant experts from local embassies of non-GCTF Members participate in the Working Group's activities. This is an important aim, as only a few African states are actually members of the GCTF, while the activities of these Working Groups target the East and West African regions as a whole.

In addition to the activities of the Working Groups, GCTF Members can alone, or in cooperation with another GCTF Member, a GCTF-Inspired Institution (see below), or a non-member partner, also develop or implement stand-alone initiatives on emerging topics. These initiatives need to be presented to and endorsed by all GCTF Members.

The Terms of Reference¹³ furthermore set the guidelines for the invitation for non-members to the various activities. UN Member States, representatives of the various UN organs, representatives of other relevant international, regional, and sub-regional bodies, and other appropriate stakeholders including appropriate civil society experts are eligible to participate in meetings, if they demonstrate support for the GCTF's founding principles and objectives. The (co-) hosts of GCTF activities should, before issuing invitations to non-members submit a list of non-member invitees to the Co-Chairs of the Working Group and the Co-Chairs of GCTF for their consent and to all other GCTF members for their information. Consent is assumed after a two-week silence procedure after circulating the list by the Administrative Unit. In practice, this is a cumbersome procedure and because of lack of transparency in times also leads to arbitrary decisions (see more elaborate paragraph 5.3.3).

The outcome documents developed within the GCTF and endorsed by the GCTF Members have different formats, and no specific criteria are formulated regarding their form except from the fact that they are non-binding. The most used formats are Good Practice Documents, Recommendations, Guiding Principles, Addendums and Toolkits.

¹³ The first GCTF Terms of Reference were issued at the launch of the GCTF in 2011, and subsequently amended in April 2015 and August 2017, *op cit*.

Good practice documents capture good practices as developed within States and by relevant stakeholders regarding certain CT and CVE practices, and aim to inspire others and share innovative approaches of CT and CVE. Since an evaluation of the effectiveness of these practices is not executed before they are included in these GCTF documents, the selection of practices is somewhat arbitrary. On the other hand, the GCTF aims to be an agile and action-oriented platform and offers plenty of opportunities to redesign policies if new analyses point to a better approach.

Especially, when the GCTF is acting ‘ahead of the curve’ and entering uncharted territory, state practices, let alone good practices, are scarce, and Co-Chairs would rather develop non-binding guidelines or recommendations, which typically use cross-references to already existing -yet more general- international legal obligations or human rights principles. They offer a blueprint on how the CT obligations can be implemented in practice while respecting human rights. On occasion, a new initiative builds on a previous outcome document, in which case the document is oftentimes entitled an Addendum.

Finally, the Toolkits are used to develop a hands-on instruction for practitioners with relevant references to practical cases, jurisprudence, policies, or legal frameworks. Toolkits oftentimes provide a more elaborate ‘how to’ guide for an earlier endorsed framework document.

When the above-mentioned documents were part of the working plan of a Working Group, they need to be endorsed by the GCTF Members by consensus, “based on the spirit of trust, solidarity and transparency”¹⁴ in order to become official GCTF outcome or framework documents. In many cases, an implementer party¹⁵ is contracted to develop under the supervision of the Co-Chairs of the Working Group, a draft text based on the input of the GCTF Members through expert meetings, questionnaires, and interviews with experts. These draft texts will be submitted for comments by the Members in different rounds and discussed during a review meeting. In practice, it is mostly a handful of Member States that actively participate in the expert meetings to share their experiences and are actively involved in the review of the documents. Particularly, references to regionally adopted documents or practices by regional organizations and references to the obligation to respect human rights can lead to many text amendments. This often leads to a somewhat watered-down version of the text, in order to reach consensus. A final text of the outcome document will be submitted for endorsement by consensus during a silence procedure. If the silence is broken, because a GCTF member still insists on text adaptation or identifies red lines, the Co-Chairs of the Working Group need to negotiate the text until finally consensus can be reached, and the document can be endorsed by all the GCTF Members (see also paragraph 3.4).

¹⁴ GCTF Terms of Reference 2017, *op cit*.

¹⁵ In the past organizations such as UNICRI, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, and the Global Center for Cooperative Security have acted as implementing partners to the various Co-Chairs of the Working Groups.

3.3 Partnerships

In accordance with the GCTF Political Declaration and the Terms of Reference, cooperation with other stakeholders is very important. Three so-called GCTF-inspired institutions play a particular role in this cooperation. They also have a standing invitation to attend the Coordinating Meeting and the Plenary meetings of the Working Groups. The GCTF-inspired institutions are independent organizations but have a preferred status within the GCTF regarding the participation in GCTF activities and the implementation of its framework documents. They focus on main themes relevant for the work of the GCTF, namely justice and the rule of law, CVE, and community engagement. The International Institute for Justice and Rule of Law (IIJ) in Malta focuses on justice and the rule of law, and mainly organizes training workshops for criminal justice actors. Hedayah in Abu Dhabi focuses on CVE, and mainly develops manuals on CVE practices and organizes workshops to assist countries in developing PVE Action Plans. The Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) situated in Geneva is dedicated to community engagement and local capacity-building and therefore rather focuses on PVE. It thereto mainly offers funds to local initiatives by NGOs who contribute to PVE.

Particularly IIJ and Hedayah present themselves as a delivery arm of the GCTF's CVE and international justice and rule of law efforts. Hedayah, for instance, manages the Catalogue of FTF-related CVE and returnee programs under the auspices of the FTF Working Group, and provides training and assistance for the implementation of the Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Good Practices for Education and Countering Violent Extremism.¹⁶ IIJ in particular partners with the Working Group on Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law to provide training to criminal justice practitioners and experts on the recommendations and good practices developed by this working group. The GCERF is less linked to the agenda of the GCTF. (See more elaborate on the perceptions by stakeholders on the activities of the GCTF inspired institutions paragraph 5.3.1).

According to the Political Declaration issued at the launch of the GCTF, one of the Forum's objectives is to contribute to the implementation of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy. The Terms of Reference furthermore explicitly mention the cooperation and a strengthened relationship with UN entities as a priority. In 2018, this relationship was further strengthened with the intention to regularly organize meetings between the GCTF Co-Chairs and the UN Counterterrorism Centre (UN CTC) and other UN entities in order to exchange work plans and mutually supportive activities and identify potential joint priorities. The ratio behind the cooperation is to support the operationalization and impact of the UN Global CT legal framework in national legislations and policies, harnessing support for discussion regarding new terrorist threats and challenges, and complementing the mutual approaches to

¹⁶ GCTF, Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Good Practices for Education and Countering Violent Extremism, available online <
<https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Framework%20Documents/2016%20and%20before/GCTF-Abu-Dhabi-Memorandum-ENG.pdf?ver=2016-09-01-151304-897>> (last visited 5 March 2021).

implementation of CT and CVE policies. (See more elaborate on the cooperation with the UN paragraph 5.3.3).

In addition to the aim to strengthen the cooperation with the UN, the Terms of Reference also underline the importance of cooperation with regional and sub-regional organizations. In the Annex (paragraph 7.2.2), an overview is provided of the key international and (sub-)regional organizations and their activities in the CT and CVE field. No structural agreement of cooperation, comparable to the one with the UN, has been concluded with any of the (sub-) regional organizations. On many occasions, and if considered relevant according to the Co-Chairs of a Working Group, (sub-) regional organizations are invited to expert meetings or meetings of regional Working Groups. (See more elaborate on the potential for more intensive cooperation with (sub-) regional organizations paragraph 5.3.3).

3.4 The added value of the GCTF in the CT landscape and its key characteristics

Main findings

The analysis shows that although there is indeed a lot of overlap in the topics addressed, the GCTF adds to the CT landscape in particular in one manner: by paving the way for other international organizations to address certain topics, that are initially considered to be very sensitive. The apolitical, practice-oriented approach of the GCTF, provides a setting in which countries feel more comfortable discussing the issues, after which other organizations can pick up on the topic as well. It can be concluded that the Co-Chairs have ensured that the GCTF can sometimes operate ahead of the *policy curve*.

The GCTF, once established to also function as an incubator for the implementation of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy, is, however, less successful in the implementation of policies than it intended to be. Moreover, the establishment of UNOCT has brought a positive change to the abilities and resources available within the UN to initiate capacity-building activities. With regard to the implementation of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy, the GCTF has thus less of an added value.

The limited membership of the GCTF, compared to other international organization that also take a global approach to counterterrorism, is a debated issue. Whereas some favor the limited membership, because it would keep the Forum agile and action-oriented, others criticize the limited membership, because of the lack of a balanced geographical representation which undermines the legitimacy.

One of the unique selling points of the GCTF is the fact that it is the only international CT platform that organizes an annual high level Ministerial meeting. Although, this is certainly an important way of ensuring that GCTF keeps its political relevance, there are risks of decreasing commitment, which need to be addressed.

All in all, the assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the key characteristics of the GCTF, namely its apolitical and informal character, with its action-oriented and technical approach, and its limited membership, offers a mixed picture, with at times contradictory conclusions.

According to the GCTF's Political Declaration and underlined by practically all stakeholders who submitted a questionnaire or who were interviewed, the key characteristics of the GCTF are its apolitical and informal character, its action-oriented and technical approach, and its limited membership.

An assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of these characteristics offers a mixed picture, and at times leads to a contradictory conclusion. According to the majority of interviewees, the apolitical character has indeed offered an opportunity to discuss issues and develop policies that given the sensitive nature would not have been discussed in the context of the UN.¹⁷ The informal manner of operating – compared to the way of operating in other international organizations - by inviting practitioners, experts, and civil society representatives to share their experiences, results in a more action-oriented and technical approach, focused on hands-on solutions for problems, away from the political disagreements. Once agreement is reached on a GCTF Framework Document, this opens avenues for other organizations to pick up on the topic. Even though the GCTF documents are non-binding in nature, the fact that the permanent five Members of the UNSC are on board, subsequently paves the way for other international organizations to follow and build on the agreement already reached.

This relates to - what most interviewees consider to be - the *added value* of the GCTF to the international CT landscape.¹⁸ At the moment of establishment, there was already a significant number of international actors active within the field of CT and PCVE (see the Annex, paragraph 7.2.2). But one of the key objectives for the establishment of the GCTF was to support the work of the UN and the implementation of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy.¹⁹

The topics that have been addressed seem to fall in line with international policy discussions taking place in many different fora, and particularly the UN. It is certainly true that the GCTF has addressed many topics that also feature on the agendas of other international organizations. These include issues regarding criminal justice and rule of law responses, FTFs, detention and rehabilitation, and travel and border control. Cross-references to the Good Practice documents of GCTF are often made in the documents of these other organizations, which is remarkable given the non-binding status of the GCTF documents.²⁰

In some situations, the GCTF has set a benchmark for states and international and regional organizations to follow, and thus operated 'ahead of the *policy curve*'. There are examples of a direct and an indirect relation. An example of such a direct relation is the adoption of the

¹⁷ See interview reports no. 3, 5, 8, 9, 16,17, 18, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 30, 31, 33, 35, and 36, on file with IOB.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ UN Doc A/RES/60/288, adopted 20 September 2006.

²⁰ An analysis has been made by the Administrative Unit regarding the synergies between particularly the UN and GCTF: GCTF Analytical Report 'From Working Relations to Structural Partnership: UN-GCTF Cooperation beyond 2018', on file.

UN SC Resolution 2178,²¹ as well as with the Council of Europe's 'Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism'²² that also focuses on criminal law responses regarding the FTF phenomenon, and which turns the GCTF recommendations into binding obligations. Another example follows from the adoption of UN SC Resolution 2482²³ following the GCTF The Hague Good Practices on the Nexus between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism,²⁴ and the adoption of UN SC Resolution 2396,²⁵ which focuses on soft targets and follows the example of the GCTF The Antalya Memorandum on Good Practices on the Protection of Soft Targets in a Counterterrorism Context.²⁶

The indirect relationship can be seen in situations where the GCTF framework documents inform, for instance, the guiding documents of UN CTED, which form the basis of UN CTED's dialogue with UN Member States regarding their implementation obligations of UN SC Resolutions.²⁷ Beyond the UN, an example can be found in the 'Guidelines on the Links between Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime' developed by the Council of Europe, which follow the example of the GCTF 'Addendum to the Hague Good Practices on the Nexus between Transnational Organized Crimes and Terrorism: focus on criminal justice'.²⁸

Whereas a Dutch policy officer²⁹ underlined the focus on the practical implementation of policies as an important characteristic of the GCTF (or so he/she wishes the GCTF to focus on), most respondents also stated that this implementation and contextualization of policies remains a challenge which GCTF apparently has trouble delivering on.³⁰ In a way, this puts in question the action-oriented characteristic of the GCTF. The added value of the Forum within the CT landscape on this account, is, furthermore, also less prominent. This is particularly the case since the establishment of the UNOCT in 2017 (see the Annex, paragraph 7.2.2) brought

²¹ UN SC Resolution 2178 (2014), UN Doc S/RES/2178 (2014), 24 September 2014.

²² Council of Europe's 'Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism', CETS No. 219, Riga, 1 July 2017.

²³ UN SC Resolution 2482 (2019), UN Doc S/RES/2482 (2019), 19 July 2019.

²⁴ The Hague Good Practices on the Nexus between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism, September 2018, available online at < https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Framework%20Documents/2018/GCTF-Good-Practices-on-the-Nexus_ENG.pdf?ver=2018-09-21-122246-363> (last visited 5 April 2021).

²⁵ UN SC Resolution 2396 (2017), UN Doc S/RES/2396 (2017), 21 December 2017.

²⁶ The GCTF Soft Target Protection Initiative, The Antalya Memorandum on Good Practices on the Protection of Soft Targets in a Counterterrorism Context, September 2017, available online at < <https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Links/Meetings/2017/Twelfth%20GCTF%20Coordinating%20Committee%20Meeting/GCTF%20-%20Antalya%20Memorandum%20on%20the%20Protection%20of%20Soft%20Targets%20in%20a%20Counterterrorism%20Context.pdf?ver=2017-09-17-010844-720>> (last visited 5 April 2021).

²⁷ Counterterrorism Executive Directorate, Technical Guide to the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001) and Other Relevant Resolutions, 2017, available online < <https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/CTED-Technical-Guide-2017.pdf>> (last visited 21 March 2021).

²⁸ Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism, Working Group of Experts on Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime, 'Guidelines on the Links between Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime', 17 November 2020, CDCT-TTOC (2019) 01 rev 9.

²⁹ Interview report no. 7, on file with IOB.

³⁰ See interview reports no. 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, and 37, on file with IOB.

a positive change to the abilities and resources available within the UN to initiate capacity-building activities. With regard to the implementation of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy,³¹ the GCTF has thus less of an added value. Although, several of the GCTF documents attempt to offer ‘how to’ implement certain policies guidance, much like some of the guidance documents developed by UNODC or OHCHR,³² the contextualization of policies needed for effective implementation and capacity building is also still considered one of the main challenges for the GCTF.

In addition, a number of developments further undermine the apolitical, action-oriented and technical characteristics of the GCTF. As a result of the sheer number of meetings taking place, several interviewees,³³ representing Dutch policy officers, GCTF Members, implementing partners, and representatives of international organizations, warned that GCTF Members are no longer always able to send relevant subject-matter experts to these meetings, which has implications for the quality of the discussions and leads to less exchange of practices, which was initially the crux of the apolitical, action-oriented and technical approach (see more elaborate paragraph 5.3.4).

Furthermore, according to some interviewees,³⁴ representing GCTF Members and implementing partners, the negotiations on draft texts of new GCTF Framework Documents are more and more used to push for certain positions by GCTF Members, using the silence procedure at the end of the negotiations to increase the political pressure to agree to these positions, avoiding transparent debates with other GCTF Members to come to a compromise on the text (see more elaborate paragraph 5.3.4).

Since the GCTF is the only international platform regarding counterterrorism issues that organizes an annual Ministerial meeting, this high-level profile certainly attracted much attention and ministerial commitment in the early years of the GCTF. However, according to representatives of some Member States and experts, this attention seems to be eroding.³⁵ They argued that during the annual Ministerial meeting it becomes more difficult to attract ministerial attendance of all GCTF Members,³⁶ and thus high-level commitment. One interviewee³⁷ representing a GCTF Member, explained that according to them these high-level

³¹ UN Doc A/RES/60/288, adopted 20 September 2006.

³² See for instance OHCHR, *Human Rights Principles Applicable to Watchlisting*, United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures, 2020, See website < <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Terrorism/Pages/Research-papers-and-Inputs.aspx> > (last visited 22 February 2021); OHCHR, *Guidance to States on Human Rights Compliant Responses to the Threat posed by Foreign Fighters*, 2018, available online at < <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/newyork/Documents/Human-Rights-Responses-to-Foreign-Fighters-web%20final.pdf> > (last visited 5 April 2021); See also the website of UNODC regarding their Technical Assistance Tools and Publication, < <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/terrorism/technical-assistance-tools.html> > (last visited 5 April 2021).

³³ Interview reports no. 6, 17, 18, 24, 25, and 34, on file with IOB.

³⁴ Interview reports no. 18, 22, and 26, on file with IOB.

³⁵ Interview reports no. 3, 17, 24, 25, and 35, on file with IOB.

³⁶ During the co-chairmanship period, the Netherlands has always sent the Minister of Foreign Affairs to chair the Ministerial Meeting.

³⁷ Interview report no. 24, on file with IOB.

meetings are important as it triggers a reinforcing dynamic for commitment. After all, a country is more committed to send representation on ministerial level if other states are also attending on that level. Furthermore, the attendance of a minister oftentimes goes hand in hand with an offer to financially supporting an activity or otherwise pledging a certain commitment. This fact generally makes it easier for policy makers to keep their minister interested in GCTF and secure political support. Without attendance there is a risk of erosion.

The informal character of the GCTF leading to the development of non-binding documents, according to a GCTF Member and a representative of an international organization, is perceived as a way of working outside of the legitimate frameworks, to push for new policies without ensuring full accountability for a rule of law compliant approach.³⁸ During this last decade, the informal GCTF has developed into an authoritative body that guides States and other international organizations in their policy development.³⁹ In that sense, an interviewee argued, “the GCTF is a norm setting platform, in anything but name!”⁴⁰

Not formally embedded in the international legal framework of human rights, the lack of binding guidance on a rule of law compliant implementation of GCTF policies, opens the doors for policy laundering by others. Not all states have a similar benign view of the norm-creating in these informal networks, and the fast tracking of the norm development. Others take example from the way things work within GCTF to apply that for their own system, which opens door for abuse.⁴¹ The authority within the international CT landscape attained by the GCTF, should therefore, several critics within international organizations and independent experts claim,⁴² come with the responsibility to ensure States are held accountable for any human rights abuses.

Reflecting on this opinion, it is important to underline that clearly the non-binding character of the framework documents endorsed by the GCTF does not in itself provide an instrument to hold States accountable, but by consistently referring to the binding character of existing human rights framework it can be made clear that States can be held accountable for violations through the relevant human rights framework. And even though, the GCTF claims

³⁸ See interview reports no. 24 and 29, on file with IOB. This view is also expressed in the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, 22 August 2019, UN Doc A/74/335.

³⁹ In addition to the example the GCTF sets for other organizations in developing policies, and the cross-references made to GCTF documents in the documents and decisions adopted or developed by other international organizations, other countries that are not members of the GCTF also take inspiration from the policies developed by the GCTF. And even though, the interviewees representing GCTF members were not able to point to specific national policies that have been amended or implemented following the endorsement of GCTF policies, the GCTF documents nevertheless play a guiding role in focusing the governments attention to specific developments.

⁴⁰ Interview report no. 33, on file with IOB.

⁴¹ Risks are particularly expressed by human rights advocates in relation to, for instance, the sharing of (biometric) data without clear safeguard to prevent the arbitrary interference in the privacy of individuals, the collection of information to be used as evidence in court by military in conflict zones without fully respecting due process and the rights regarding a fair trial, or the use of administrative measures in situations that are easily labelled as posing a risk to national security in order to curb any activities of political opponents.

⁴² See interview reports no. 29, 34, 35, and 38, on file with IOB.

to be an apolitical platform, it does not operate in a vacuum of international norms, and it also cannot be denied that it is concerned with topics with a highly political impact. GCTF thus is - or at least has the potential to grow into - an authoritative platform that, although it does not have the power to change policies with binding decisions, it has the authoritative influence to stir change.

Others, representing GCTF Members, international organizations and experts, also criticize the lack of meaningful inclusiveness of the GCTF.⁴³ The informal character does allow for participation in meetings by non-Members, yet the lack of transparency in who is allowed to participate and why, and the fact that hardly any sustainable relationships are built with relevant stakeholders, renders the informal character void (see more elaborate on this topic paragraph 5.3.3).

The limited membership, finally, is a much-debated issue. This limited membership is certainly appreciated by some GCTF Member States,⁴⁴ because of the fact that the limited number of members facilitates reaching consensus on the draft texts of the framework documents and helps to prevent the Forum becoming a more political platform. Others, representing Dutch policy officers, GCTF Members, implementing partners, international organizations and experts, however, have criticized the lack of a balanced geographical representation, arguing that the selection of states seems very arbitrary, or at best only representative of the situation in 2010-2011.⁴⁵ Another criticism related to the fact that oftentimes security issues or policy gaps in particular regions are discussed, while the concerning States do not have a seat at the table as a Member State.⁴⁶ This, one argued, undermines the legitimacy, the ability to contextualize the recommendations and good practices, and the ownership among those states or stakeholders targeted. Particularly, the limited representation of African States in the GCTF, even though, there are two regional Working Groups on East and West Africa, is considered a hindrance to effective implementation, ownership and legitimacy of the policies developed. An obvious solution, without expanding the membership of the GCTF, would be to invite African States to become Members of the two Regional Working Groups.

⁴³ See interview reports no. 18, 20, 24, 29, 33, 36, 37, and 38, on file with IOB.

⁴⁴ See interview reports no. 3 and 22, on file with IOB.

⁴⁵ See interview reports no. 6, 12, 13, 18, 19, 25, 29, 34, and 37, on file with IOB.

⁴⁶ See interview reports no. 3, 12, 13, 14, 19, 22, 24, 25, 33, 34, and 37, on file with IOB.

4 The main outcomes of the Dutch Co-Chairmanship

4.1 Appreciation by GCTF Members and others of the Dutch/Moroccan Co-Chairmanship

Main findings

Other stakeholders have appreciated the Netherlands in the role of Co-Chair as efficient, hardworking, professional, knowledgeable, and creative. GCTF Members underlined the efforts made to keep the GCTF a relevant platform. Some Members suggested more emphasis is needed on attracting donor resources.

In particular, the expertise and knowledge regarding GCTF activities of the various Dutch diplomats and policy officers at the embassies was highlighted as a positive feature. They were considered as go-to persons regarding CT and PCVE topics.

In partnership with Morocco, the Netherlands was also praised for their efforts to strengthen the relationship with the UN, and to transform the GCTF into a truly multilateral forum.

Overall, the appreciation by various stakeholders, representing other GCTF Members, international organizations, NGOs, implementers, and experts, of the role of the Netherlands in their role as Co-Chair is very high. Key words shared in the questionnaires and during interviews include: efficient, hardworking, professional, knowledgeable, and creative. GCTF Members have appreciated the fact that the Netherlands as Co-Chair has contributed to keeping the GCTF a relevant platform despite the changes in the CT landscape which also had its influence (see also the Annex, paragraph 7.2). Some Dutch policy officers, representatives of GCTF Members and experts suggested that more public emphasis on and appreciation for donor pledges (in cash or in kind) during the meetings could have been stimulating, and possibly could have worked to attract more pledges.⁴⁷ Burden sharing remains a challenge, given the fact that most GCTF activities are still mainly shouldered by the Co-Chairs of the Working Groups. These additional resources would, according to GCTF Members and experts, be particularly important to fund follow-up activities, such as implementation projects.⁴⁸

The first co-chairmanship duo, Turkey, and the US, had especially focused on putting GCTF on the map and making it a relevant forum. The co-chairmanship terms by Morocco and the Netherlands were particularly characterized, according to most stakeholders, by their effort to strengthen the multilateral focus of the Forum, and to ensure that all Members would feel ownership of the agenda.⁴⁹ The Netherlands, in partnership with Morocco, were able to strengthen the platform-function, lowering the (perceived) threshold for the Members to contribute to the debate.

⁴⁷ See interview reports no. 8, 14, 17, 18, 24, and 35, on file with IOB.

⁴⁸ See interview reports no. 17, 18, 20, 21, 35, and 36, on file with IOB.

⁴⁹ See interview reports no. 8, 9, 15, 17, 22, 24, 25, 27, 30, 33, 35, and 37, on file with IOB.

However, there is the perception among several Dutch policy officers, GCTF Members and representatives of international organizations,⁵⁰ that some Members have become more involved in the GCTF activities, whereas other Members -who acted as a driving force in the first years of the GCTF - have also become less active. Clearly co-chairmanships of the various working groups have changed over time, and not all former Chairs have accepted new chairmanship positions or launched an initiative. However, commitment can also be shown by the active participation during (expert) meetings, input on draft texts, or by taking responsibility for implementation activities, and the perceptions among several stakeholders are thus that there is less involvement among certain Members.

The efforts undertaken to strengthen the relationship with the UN are also recognized by the various stakeholders, most certainly by representatives of UN agencies.⁵¹ Arguments provided for this positive feedback relate to the fact that one finds that this intensified cooperation makes much sense, since there is clear overlap in the thematic focus, geographical focus and implementation activities undertaken. Better cooperation furthermore is expected to facilitate better alignment and efficient use of the financial resources available. Most stakeholders, however, suggested that this close cooperation between the UN and the GCTF could be used as an example to also intensify the cooperation between the GCTF and regional organizations.⁵² This would moreover be beneficial for the legitimacy of the activities, and contextualization of the good practices.

Many stakeholders, representing Dutch policy officers, GCTF Members, implementing partners and experts, are appreciative of the high level of expertise on the topics and knowledge about the various activities of the GCTF by the various Dutch officers working at the embassies, and considered them go-to persons.⁵³ The pro-active attitude of the liaison officers and some of the RSCs in setting up (informal) meetings, and sharing information has contributed to the reputation of the Netherlands as a country with knowledge on the issue, and the willingness to support or contribute to effective capacity-building activities. The role of particularly the RSCs in the African regions was considered particularly useful for the Regional Working Groups, for instance with regard of their efforts to update their interlocutors on GCTF developments and in promoting the exchange of (good) practices. The liaison officers have played an important role in keeping a regular information flow going towards their counterparts and organizing preparatory meetings for the Coordinating Committee and Ministerial meetings. These meetings were also used to test whether any new initiatives could be launched. According to the liaison officers, it would sometimes during these meetings, already become clear that certain topics would not be fit for the GCTF, but possibly better suited for the Global Coalition against IS/Daesh.

⁵⁰ See interview reports no. 3, 17, 24, and 34, on file with IOB.

⁵¹ See interview reports no. 1, 8, 14, 18, 20, 23, 27, 30, and 31, on file with IOB.

⁵² See interview reports no. 1, 3, 4, 5, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 33, 35, and 37, on file with IOB.

⁵³ See interview reports no. 6, 12, 14, 17, 18, 21, 25, 27, and 35, on file with IOB.

Finally, the efforts of the Netherlands regarding the reform of the Administrative Unit into the permanent, yet nimble secretariat that supports the GCTF with logistical and administrative activities, has according to the interviewed GCTF members contributed to the professionalization of the GCTF.⁵⁴ Several interviewees, representing Dutch policy officers, GCTF Members, implementing partners, and experts suggested that, given the position the Administrative Unit finds itself in, with the best overview of the various ongoing activities and the positions of the Members, it could play a more prominent role with analytical support.⁵⁵ Some Dutch policy officers therefore regret that this analytical role has not been strengthened.⁵⁶

4.2 Cost-benefit analysis

Main findings

There were three main considerations for the Netherlands to accept the invitation to become Co-Chair of the GCTF. During the co-chairmanship period, the Netherlands has indeed been able to ensure synergies between the topics addressed in the GCTF and the themes identified in the National Counterterrorism Strategy, and to use the platform to showcase the Dutch approach. Most importantly, during the co-chairmanship period, the Netherlands has indeed attained a prominent position in the international CT debate. This has been accomplished due to the pro-active attitude and the knowledge and expertise of the Dutch diplomatic network. This contributed to easy access in diplomatic circles and improved bilateral relations.

The request to become the Co-Chair of GCTF was made by the US during the Coordinating Meeting held in New York in September 2014. According to some Dutch policy officers, this was an offer they could not refuse.⁵⁷ Officially, the main reasons for the Dutch MFA to accept the invitation to become the Co-Chair of the GCTF were threefold:

- 1) the focus areas of the GCTF corresponded with the themes identified in the National Counterterrorism Strategy of 2011-2015;
- 2) the role would provide a great opportunity for the Netherlands to attain a prominent position in the international CT debate and influence the agenda; and
- 3) it would provide visibility, publicity, and recognition for the Dutch efforts to curb the threat posed by FTFs.⁵⁸

According to Dutch policy officers, the NCTV was less outspoken about their strategic interest in the co-chairmanship.⁵⁹ They accepted the task provided that the MFA would take the lead. This had to do with the fact that this opportunity presented itself while they found themselves

⁵⁴ See interview reports no. 9, 18, 19, and 21, on file with IOB.

⁵⁵ See interview reports no. 4, 5, 19, 20, 27, 35, and 37, on file with IOB.

⁵⁶ See interview reports no. 4 and 14, on file with IOB.

⁵⁷ See interview reports no. 9 and 15, on file with IOB.

⁵⁸ Internal Memo DVB/TN/190/14, 12 December 2014.

⁵⁹ See interview reports no. 9, 15, and 16, on file with IOB.

in the middle of the storm handling the (national) crisis concerning the steep rise of FTFs. It can thus be concluded that the NCTV's main interest merely corresponded with the third reason stated by the MFA, namely to showcase the practices and policies developed in the Netherlands.

Assessing the themes and topics that have been addressed during the co-chairmanship period, it can be concluded that these indeed correspond with the themes identified in the National Counterterrorism Strategy (see Annex paragraph 7.3), and thus fulfill the first ambition regarding the co-chairmanship position. The responses provided in the questionnaires and the interviews, furthermore, support the conclusion that the Netherlands has been able to position itself as a knowledgeable CT partner in the international CT community.⁶⁰ This cannot only be attributed to the policy officers of DVB-TN, but also to the liaison officers, the RSCs, and the diplomats at the embassies in regions of interest. The last three categories are particularly considered to be go-to persons by officials and representatives in the countries/region they work in. The position acquired, moreover, easily opened doors for diplomats with relevant counterparts. And even offered a point of entry for a dialogue, where relations were otherwise difficult, or other topics considered sensitive. Examples given in this context, mostly relate to human rights concerns. Since CT policies, due to the fact that these issues are part of the GCTF agenda, could offer a point of entry to engage in a diplomatic discussion, the need to implement CT policies in a human right compliant manner could therefore become part of the discussion. Entering a discussion on an isolated human rights concern could in these cases be more complicated.

According to Dutch policy officers, the co-chairmanship has also strengthened bilateral diplomatic relations, particularly with regard to the CT agenda with certain countries. This was certainly the case with the US, also in their role as former Co-Chair. Despite the smooth cooperation between the two countries during the co-chairmanship period, the bilateral diplomatic relationship with Morocco was not strengthened as such. The difficulties in the bilateral relationship regarding the social allowances' dossier between the two countries at the beginning of the co-chairmanship were rather isolated in order to prevent that the dispute would undermine the cooperation. Although Morocco is a very important partner for the Netherlands with regard to its own national CT policies, the perception is that Morocco rather considers Spain to be the most important partner in its CT policies.⁶¹

Both policy officers of the MFA and NCTV have underlined that the participation in the GCTF has offered them better insight in the institutional and managerial organization regarding CT issues in different countries, and the division of mandates and responsibilities between the different government organs and agencies.⁶² It has furthermore offered better understanding of the threat perceptions in some countries and the policies used considering the local context. Finally, both policy officers of the MFA and NCTV have experienced good

⁶⁰ Questionnaires and interview reports no. 6, 17, 18, 21, 25, 27, and 35, on file with IOB.

⁶¹ Interview report no. 6, on file with IOB.

⁶² Interview reports no. 6, 15 and 16, on file with IOB.

opportunities to enlarge their network of experts, practitioners, and relevant points of contact.⁶³ However, considering the fact that particularly MFA policy officers regularly change professional position, the question is how sustainable these networks are.

An important objective for both the MFA and the NCTV was to make use of the privileged position of the co-chairmanship to share the CT policies and practices developed in the Netherlands. And indeed, particularly NCTV has made ample use of the opportunities provided to showcase, for instance, the local multidisciplinary consultation model.

The investments in terms of financial funds and extra manpower have been substantial for the purpose of the co-chairmanship period. DVB-TN attributed a substantial part of its resources, in terms of finance and staff, towards the GCTF.⁶⁴ With these funds, DVB/TN was able to recruit extra staff in the form of 'GCTF-liaisons' which were designated to strategic posts⁶⁵ in support of the chairmanship. Most Dutch policy officers have considered the period in which they were involved as very interesting, but also labor intensive.⁶⁶ Considering the original considerations for accepting the task, these investments have contributed to achieving the aims identified when accepting the position.

4.3 Sustainability of the benefits

Main findings

To maintain the prominent position in the international CT arena and its reputation as a proactive and knowledgeable partner, it will be important for the Netherlands to continue to take the lead with regard to issues that are close to the core values the Netherlands aims to promote, such as human rights, gender issues and a multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder approach.

The rotation of policy officers, and the fact that the constant flow of information regarding GCTF activities during the co-chairmanship period has dried up, has led to the erosion of the position of the Dutch policy officers as go-to persons, who can also easily open doors regarding sensitive political and diplomatic issues.

The benefits of the co-chairmanship highlighted in the previous paragraph, beg the question whether this also yielded any sustainable results. The most important accomplishments are:

- 1) the prominent position of the Netherlands in the international CT arena,
- 2) the reputation of being a knowledgeable partner that takes the lead on the agenda,

⁶³ Interview reports no, 6, 9, and 14, on file with IOB.

⁶⁴ For example, in February 2015 extra funds were allocated by the Dutch cabinet: *'In view of the expected long-term nature of the current threat assessment, the government has decided to substantially strengthen the security chain on a number of points.'* (Kamerbrief Versterking veiligheidsketen, 27 February 2015, available in Dutch at <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2015/02/27/kamerbrief-over-de-versterkingen-in-de-veiligheidsketen>) (last visited 3 April 2021).

⁶⁵ There were four liaison officers in support of the GCTF co-chairmanship. They were placed at the Dutch embassies in Ankara, Washington DC, Rabat and at the Dutch permanent representation in New York.

⁶⁶ Interview reports no. 3, 4, 5, 9, 14, 15, and 16, on file with IOB.

- 3) the diplomats in the network who are considered go-to persons by relevant stakeholders in their region, and
- 4) the ability to easily open doors for political dialogue.

In general, the reputation of the Netherlands as an important player in the international CT arena has not only been acquired due to its leading role in the GCTF, but overall due to its proactive contributions in multiple international fora. This position has, however, certainly, been strengthened by the co-chairmanship of the GCTF, as it offered plenty of visibility of the Netherlands on CT issues, and the expertise with which this role was fulfilled was recognized by the international community. To maintain this reputation, it will be important to continue to take the lead with regard to issues that are close to the core values the Netherlands aims to promote, such as human rights, gender issues and a multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder approach.

Following the co-chairmanship period, the Netherlands therefore supported the lobby for a strong human rights paragraph in the UN GA Resolution that will be adopted at the occasion of the Review of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy in 2021. The Netherlands also co-lead a new GCTF Initiative countering the financing of terrorism while safeguarding civic space, with Morocco and the UN, which should lead to the endorsement of a new framework document in September 2021. The Netherlands is also considering the options regarding follow-up activities for this Initiative. Finally, the MFA in cooperation with NCTV is once again looking into the options of accepting a new co-chairmanship role of another Working Group of the GCTF when a vacancy presents itself.

During the co-chairmanship period, DVB-TN invested a lot in keeping the diplomats in the field informed on the various activities undertaken in the GCTF and inviting them to share their observations from the field in terms of risks and policy developments. This was acknowledged by the various stakeholders in the field, and many were indeed recognized as go-to persons (see paragraph 4.2). This, furthermore, contributed to the fact that the doors were easily opened for otherwise sensitive political and diplomatic dialogues. The latter was also attributed to the co-chairmanship of the Netherlands.

From interviews with policy officers of the MFA it becomes clear, that these accomplishments, run the risk of eroding.⁶⁷ There are a couple of reasons given for this erosion. Firstly, this is due to the fact that the constant flow of GCTF updates has dried up. Secondly, many policy officers have moved on to new positions, and newly appointed policy officers to particularly the positions at the embassies lack the historical memory on the important files, the knowledge of the network of important stakeholders, and still have to develop the necessary expertise. Without a proper transition of portfolios from the leaving diplomat to the newly arriving one, the investments made, and the successes achieved are lost. Following the examples of some other States, it might be worth considering keeping a number of policy officers on a more permanent position as subject-matter experts on these portfolios.

⁶⁷ Interview reports no. 12, and 13, on file with IOB.

The MFA has, however, decided that because of its strategic position, it is worth continuing the positions of liaison officers in the post-co-chairmanship period. Their portfolio has furthermore been expanded to encompass a broader CT agenda.

5 The effectiveness of the Co-Chairs' Priorities

5.1 The five priorities

The Co-Chairs developed a Strategic Plan of Action for their co-chairmanship period. This plan was endorsed by the GCTF Members. In preparation of this plan, a Food for Thought paper on options to operationalize the GCTF and the Netherlands' priorities was developed by DVB-TN.⁶⁸ Not all the ideas originally developed, however, were included in the Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action.⁶⁹ In this Plan of Action, five priorities with specific deliverables per priority were presented. These priorities were: *Results, Resources, Relations, Reinforcement, and Renewal*.

According to the Strategic Plan of Action, the *Result* priority strived to enhance the impact of GCTF framework documents, best practices, and recommendations. The *Resources* priority is intended to increase members' mobilization and commitment by multiplying their efforts and contributions to GCTF activities. The *Relations* priority championed the Forum's ties with non-member countries and organizations and with institutions established under its auspices. The *Reinforcement* priority intended to strengthen the Forum's capacity to supply the appropriate tools to accomplish its objectives. And finally, the *Renewal* priority intended to consolidate the GCTF's capacity to anticipate trends in the dynamics of terrorist threats and violent extremism. In the next paragraphs, first the soundness of the underlying plans will be assessed, followed by paragraphs in which the scope of the five priorities and the related deliverables will be elaborated, as well as the effectiveness of the implementation.

5.2 Reconstructing the attainability of the objectives

Main findings

The ambitions of the Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action were probably too high. Unfortunately, some of the plans proposed in the internal Food for Thought paper that was prepared by DVB-TN, were not included in the Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action, even though they would have offered better instruments to the realization of the five priorities. They furthermore lack a need assessment and a properly developed theory of change. The key to a theory of change is, furthermore, to formulate objectives in a SMART manner, ensuring goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound. Since it was not clear from the outset, which results the GCTF (and the Co-Chairs in their capacity) wanted to achieve, it becomes impossible to specific and measurable results.

⁶⁸ Food for Thought paper on options to operationalize the GCTF and the Netherlands' priorities, on file with IOB.

⁶⁹ GCTF Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action 2016-2018, on file with IOB.

The assessment of the effectiveness of the GCTF and the co-chairmanship starts with a reflection on the underlying plans. It becomes clear that the ambitions of the co-chairmanship were high. Arguably, too high, given the context in which the Co-Chairs had to operate, and the key features of the GCTF as such. Furthermore, the reconstruction of the development of the plans shows that there were discrepancies between the ideas developed in the Food for Thought paper that circulated within the Dutch MFA in preparation of the co-chairmanship and eventually the Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action. Not all the plans, including some good and relevant plans suggested in the Food for Thought paper, were included in the Strategic Plan of Action that was eventually agreed upon between the Co-Chairs (see for instance the example included below).

It is also worth noticing that a needs assessment and a properly developed theory of change was not included in the Strategic Plan of Action. Particularly when one of the objectives is to improve implementation, it would be necessary to assess where implementation is needed and regarding what policies. This assessment has, however, not been made. Initially, this seemed to have been the intention of the Netherlands, as it was included in Food for Thought paper. These plans included a professionalization of the questionnaires sent to Members to assess the level of implementation of the GCTF documents, additional input gathering by on-site missions, and the development of a monitoring and evaluation mechanism. Apparently, during the deliberation between the Co-Chairs it became clear that there was no mutual support to keep the needs assessments in the Strategic Plan of Action.

It was also not always clear what the underlying analysis was of the ideas presented and thus what purpose or objective they served. A proper theory of change behind the formulated (sub) objective(s), to improve, for instance, the *Results* priority seemed to be lacking, or at best was somewhat flawed. A strategy envisioned on how to realize the set priorities should include a clear mechanism on how to realize them, and whether the resources needed are available or how they can be attained. This was also not included in the Co-Chairs' plans, even though some suggestions for these mechanisms were developed in the Food for Thought paper, such as the idea to spend time at each GCTF meeting to make an inventory of the actual needs and resources available among countries to facilitate implementation.

The key to a theory of change is, furthermore, to formulate objectives in a SMART manner, ensuring goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound. To give an example, in the Food for Thought paper,⁷⁰ it was explained that it was not clear from the outset which results the GCTF aimed to achieve. Without any further specification on the objectives, it becomes impossible to come to any specific or measurable results.

Again, during the deliberations between the Co-Chairs, the decision was taken to not specify the mechanisms to further the objectives in the Co-Chairs' Plan of Action. It did not become clear from the interviews, however, whether the Co-Chairs had differences of opinion

⁷⁰ Food for Thought paper on options to operationalize the GCTF and the Netherlands' priorities, p. 7, on file with IOB.

regarding these points, or whether they decided that there would not be support from the other GCTF Members for these specifications.

5.3 Realization of the five Priorities

Based on the analysis of the Co-Chair’s Legacy Paper,⁷¹ which was presented by the Co-Chairs at the end of their term, and the input received through the questionnaires and the interviews, it can be concluded that not all the objectives have been achieved (See table I). Some, however, again feature in the recently presented Strategic Plan of Action of the new Co-Chairs.

Priority	Proposed Deliverables	Output	Sustainable impact
Results	1. Mapping exercise/needs assessment	Not executed	
	2. Contextualization of Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing Partners Exposition in 2017 Panel discussion connecting multilateral and local levels National CT coordinators meeting Panel discussion on impact CT measures on CSOs Activities by GCTF-inspired institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Without a clear objective, no sustainable impact; no sustainable relations build, or mechanisms set up to facilitate better contextualization Initial discussion has led to a new Initiative, and ultimately to a new GCTF document Two meetings, without plans for follow-up Panel discussion has led to new Initiative by the Netherlands, Morocco, and UN Trainings provided without prior needs or policy gap assessment are no guarantee for real impact and proper implementation; Links between activities of Hedayah and GCERF and GCTF are often missing
	3. Practitioner guidance documents and toolkits	3 Policy toolkits developed	Provide more hands-on tools for implementation. More impact and visibility could be possible if better packaged with the development of GCTF documents and disseminated as such
	4. GCTF project portal to enhance visibility	Not realized	
Resources	1. Central mechanism to identify gaps and avoid overlap in activities (ICCM)	Only a pilot project was run in Kenya, Nigeria and Tunisia. The project was discontinued	
	2. Build network of experts and practitioners	See <i>Relations</i> priority	
	3. Use FTF Knowledge Hub	Discontinued	
	4. Organize local donor coordination meetings	Only ad hoc initiatives on local level	These local initiatives are helpful and could be used as an example for other regions.
	5. Ensure strategic cooperation with implementers and enhance guidance to implementers	No further plans developed	
Relations	1. Meetings with (sub-) regional and international organizations	Cooperation with UN strengthened with Ministerial Declaration. No efforts are made to strengthen cooperation with regional organizations.	Cooperation with UN merely concerns exchange of activities and does not concern strategic co-planning.

⁷¹ Morocco and the Netherlands, Legacy Paper; 4 years of the Global Counterterrorism Forum Co-Chairmanship 2015-2019, available online < <https://www.thegctf.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Jm7n19uSdBE%3d&portalid=1>> (last visited 5 April 2021).

	2. Raise awareness among non GCTF members	Of the total of 55 (regional) expert meetings and WG meetings, 13 were organized in non-member states.	Of these 13 meetings, only seven were co-hosted with non-members, or at least took place in a non-member State. The other meetings concerned the regular meetings of the CJ RoL WG that always take place at the IJ in Malta.
	3. Raise awareness among non-state actors and build partnerships	More than 100 different stakeholders participated in activities	Perception among stakeholders is that cooperation has ad hoc character; structural relationships or partnerships are not built; participation as such is not the same as inclusiveness
	4. Strategic partnership with private sector	No clear accomplishments have been reported, and no record is kept on these events	
	5. Develop renewed communication strategy	See <i>Reinforcement</i> priority	
	6. Organize outreach activities in margins of UNGA	No record is kept of these events, even though activities have most likely been organized	
Reinforce-ment	1. Enhance interaction between WGs on cross-cutting themes	Coordinating Meetings set up with the Co-Chairs of the WGs to ensure synergies, better information exchange, and to address cross-cutting themes	Cross-cutting themes are still not addressed in a coherent manner. Co-planning of activities between thematic and regional WGs has not taken structural form, while this could enhance contextualized implementation.
	2. Enhance intra-GCTF communication and activities between meetings	Communities for Practice Portal has not been realized. Proposals for development of communication strategy; website partly updated, but still incomplete and not all links work optimally; graphics introduced, and informative cartoon video clips have been developed; no other means of communication developed.	Website has been given a complete face-lift by the new Co-Chairs Canada and Morocco, and also a Twitter account has recently been launched to provide better information exchange and dissemination. It is not clear who the target audience is of the video clips on the various GCTF documents, which makes it difficult to measure the impact.
	3. Platform for and sustainable funding for GCTF-inspired institutions	No efforts reported	
	4. Development of new CT institutions	No efforts made	
	5. New vision regarding future configuration of WGs	No efforts made	
	6. Enhanced information sharing network with embassies	Only NL invested in their own diplomatic network for this purpose with particularly the GCTF liaison officers	NL acquired a reputation as knowledgeable go-to partner during the co-chairmanship period. However, with rotation in positions, and a discontinued flow of information on the activities of the GCTF towards the corps diplomatique, this position is not sustainable. A vision on how to maintain this position in the post-chairmanship period is lacking.
		Reform of the Administrative Unit regarding the coordination of activities and the logistical support. Strengthening of the analytical support role and the monitoring and evaluation function of the Administrative Unit has not been effectuated. Streamlining of the drafting procedures of GCTF documents.	Question is whether the nimble character of the Administrative Unit is still fit for purpose. The sheer number of GCTF documents drafted within the same period, make it difficult to ensure a high level of input by Members. Deadlines are not always respected. The increase in frequency of breaking of silence at the end of the negotiations for other issues than specific red lines, or for political reasons, undermines the apolitical and technical and transparent character of the Forum.
Renewal	1. Better engagement with stakeholders and ability to identify new trends	See also <i>Relations</i> priority. Mantra of the Co-Chairs have been to be ahead of the curve. Various topics have been addressed that paved the	No institutionalized mechanism is used to ensure that the Forum can address emerging security risks before they become serious threats. Issues addressed had already evolved into threats. The Forum has

		way for other international organizations to address these topics. Scenario-based discussion have been used to solicit input of the Members on threats and policy approaches. Development of toolkits to facilitate contextualization of GCTF documents.	rather acted ahead of the <i>policy</i> curve. Since the Co-Chairs (of the WGs) are driving the agenda, there is a risk that one is blind to certain developments, and that the Forum overall operates too much from a western-centric approach.
	2. Renewed focus on existing good practices to respond to developments	No specific actions have been taken	
	3. Promote UN projects	No specific accomplishments were mentioned. However, coherence with UN documents is strengthened by cross-referencing in GCTF documents to UN documents and resolutions.	
	4. Promote mantra Think global, act local	No specific accomplishments were mentioned. However, a special expert meeting organized during the Co-Chairmanship period, has led to the development of a new GCTF document.	Implementation and contextualization of the Forum's policies in the regional, national, or even local level remains a challenge.

Table I: Realization of the five priorities of the Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action

Apart from the flawed theory of change behind some of the objectives, it is important to stress that another factor played a role. This relates to the lack of willingness among GCTF members to reform and change the approaches of the GCTF. Interestingly enough, the representatives of GCTF Members interviewed (which only represent mostly Western GCTF Members, see also the section on Limitations in this study, paragraph 7.1.3), do nevertheless indicate that they support the idea that some reforms are needed to keep GCTF fit for purpose (see more elaborate paragraph 5.3.4 on the Reinforcement Priority).⁷² Particularly, since over the last 10 years, GCTF is recognized within the international CT community as an important player (see paragraph 3.4 on the added value of the GCTF), the acquired authority goes hand in hand with expectations regarding effective operation, implementation and legitimacy. This position is shared by representatives of international organizations, and several experts and implementers.⁷³ Representatives of GCTF Members, international organizations, experts and NGOs have furthermore stressed the need for more transparency, and inclusiveness.⁷⁴

⁷² Interview reports no. 8, 9, 18, 20, 25, and 35, on file with IOB.

⁷³ Interview reports no. 17, 20, 24, 29, 34, 35, and 38, on file with IOB.

⁷⁴ Interview reports no. 18, 19, 20, 22, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 36, 37, and 38, on file with IOB.

5.3.1 Results Priority

Main findings

Not all four deliverables as proposed by the Co-Chairs have been achieved. The key focus regarding the *Results* priority was to ensure implementation, and better contextualization of policies. Without the proper needs assessment and mechanism to ensure implementation, the Co-Chairs instead placed more emphasis on improving the relevance of the documents and on raising awareness among stakeholders, as a strategy to facilitate implementation. Several initiatives were undertaken to facilitate the contextualization. Although each of these initiatives were commendable, they nevertheless missed a clear vision on how they contributed to better contextualization, and how these activities could have a sustainable impact on the work of the GCTF.

Implementation thus remains a bottleneck for the GCTF. The thinking in the planning seems to be very much top down oriented, whereas it could also be guided from a more bottom-up approach, or at least in a better balance between the two.

None of the GCTF Member States were able to share examples of national policies that have been developed or amended as a result of the GCTF framework documents. Also the Dutch policy officers were not able to share any concrete examples of how the GCTF documents had impacted national policies.

With regard to the *Results* priority, four deliverables were proposed in the Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action:

- 1) a mapping exercise to identify potential gaps in the implementation of GCTF Good Practices and ensure the complementarity of various efforts, in order to support the implementation and the formulation of recommendations tailored to the needs of specific practitioners;
- 2) tailoring efforts to the needs of specific regions, sub-regions or countries, building on the GCTF documents, including capacity-building workshops with customized content;
- 3) developing practitioner guidance documents and thematic toolkits, in tandem with new initiatives; and
- 4) develop a GCTF project portal to enhance the visibility of available instruments.⁷⁵

The Co-Chairs thus aimed for a mapping exercise regarding the gaps in implementation of GCTF Good Practices, better contextualization of policies, translation of policies into toolkits, and better visibility and awareness raising. However, a mechanism to ensure that implementation would take place, was missing in the plans. A mapping exercise, as proposed in the plans, moreover, was never executed. Whereas, introducing a reporting mechanism for Members, which could -in parallel to the way this tool is used by, for instance, UN CTED- be the beginning of a dialogue between the GCTF and a Member State on the underlying reasons for lack of implementation, was also never discussed. The fact that the GCTF is a state-driven, informal platform, most probably, prevents the Forum to take this more pro-active approach. Although understandable, it is also a missed opportunity given the fact that GCTF is supposed

⁷⁵ GCTF Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action 2016-2018, pp. 2-3, on file with IOB.

to be a platform for exchange of experiences, and such a 'reporting mechanism light' would rather fulfill the function to start a dialogue, than the monitoring functions used to oversee the implementation of, for instance, human rights mechanisms.

Without the proper needs assessment and mechanism to ensure implementation, the Co-Chairs instead placed more emphasis on improving the relevance of the documents and on raising awareness among stakeholders, as a strategy to facilitate implementation. The philosophy was to improve the relevance by ensuring more contextualized and tailored practices that are cognizant of the specific needs and lack of resources, to ensure that better results can be achieved.

In the Legacy Paper, the Co-Chairs list a number of accomplishments, which they contribute to the efforts to achieve better results.⁷⁶ First of all, reference is made to the output of the GCTF-inspired institutions. Figures are presented regarding training courses and the number of people trained, the drafting and implementation of National Action Plans on PVE in four countries, and the community support projects in seven countries executed by the GCTF-inspired institutions. Although, this kind of output is obviously necessary to attain any result, without a clear connection to openly conducted needs assessments, and better contextualization of the documents developed by the GCTF, this in itself is no guarantee for achieving any impact by the GCTF. The few pre-course questions that, for instance, IJ sometimes sends out to course participants to assess their pre-course knowledge and practical experience on the topic of the course, do not sufficiently fulfil this requirement.

Furthermore, representatives of GCTF Members and international organizations, experts, implementers, and NGOs interviewed did not see a clear link between the agenda of the GCTF working groups and the training workshops organized.⁷⁷ For instance, the training activities were not presented as part of or follow-up in a package deal that starts with the development of new framework documents to ensure the contextualization and capacity building efforts. Based on this information, it can be concluded that if any link existed, it would serve the GCTF and its effectiveness to make this effort more explicit. Although, many interviewed did recognize at least a rather ad hoc working link between IJ and the CJ-RoL Working Group, this working relationship is less prominently perceived regarding the activities by Hedayah and GCERF and the other Working Groups.⁷⁸ A few interviewees furthermore suggested that GCERF could on a more regular basis share analyses on the local assessments to better feed the GCTF and help the members understand the disconnect between national policies and the realities on the ground.⁷⁹

Although, an evaluation of the coherence, relevance, and effectiveness of the GCTF inspired institutions falls outside the scope of this study, it is fair to conclude that it is not sufficiently

⁷⁶ Morocco and the Netherlands, Legacy Paper; 4 years of the Global Counterterrorism Forum Co-Chairmanship 2015-2019, *op cit.*, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁷ See interview reports no. 5, 12, 13, 14, 22, 24, 25, and 27, on file with IOB.

⁷⁸ See interview reports no. 5, 13, 14, 18, 21, 24, 25, and 37, on file with IOB.

⁷⁹ See interview reports no. 13, 14, 21, 27, and 36, on file with IOB.

clear how these GCTF inspired institutions could strengthen the objectives of the GCTF. Having said that, the implementation of GCTF policies does not need to be depending on a strengthened relationship with the GCTF inspired institutions *per se*. After all, the implementation can also be strengthened in cooperation with other (local) partners.

In reference to the objective/deliverable to achieve better contextualization, four achievements are listed in the Legacy Paper, namely:

- 1) the organization of an Implementing Partners Exposition in 2017,
- 2) a panel discussion with the aim of connecting multilateral and local levels,
- 3) a meeting with the National Counterterrorism Coordinators to further underline the importance of implementation, and
- 4) a panel discussion to highlight the possible negative effects of counterterrorism measures on the work and efforts of civil society and humanitarian organizations.⁸⁰

Although, each of these initiatives are commendable, it nevertheless seems that a clear vision on how they contribute to better contextualization, or how these activities can have a sustainable impact on the work of the GCTF is lacking. Asked about the objective behind the organization of the Implementing Partners Exposition that took place in September 2017, both a Dutch policy officer as some implementers during the interviews admitted that they had no clear idea what the exact objective of the Exposition was, and what results had been attained, or how the lessons learned from that Exposition impacted or altered the way of operating within the GCTF.⁸¹ Also, the experts, implementing partners and CSOs who attended the Exposition, and who could be interviewed, did not have the impression that their participation resulted in a more structural or sustainable relationship with the GCTF.⁸²

The other achievements listed, namely a panel discussion with the aim of connecting multilateral and local levels by inviting high-level local government officials, local practitioners, and civil society organizations, and a session to discuss the possible effects of CT measures on the work and efforts of civil society and humanitarian organizations, were successful and did eventually get a follow up with official Initiatives that have resulted in new GCTF documents.⁸³

⁸⁰ Morocco and the Netherlands, Legacy Paper; 4 years of the Global Counterterrorism Forum Co-Chairmanship 2015-2019, *op cit.*, pp. 2-3.

⁸¹ See interview reports no. 4, 26, 27, on file with IOB.

⁸² See interview reports no. 26, 27, and 29 on file with IOB.

⁸³ Under the auspices of the CVE Working Group the Memorandum on Good Practices on Strengthening National-Local Cooperation in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism was developed, September 2020, available online <<https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Framework%20Documents/2020/GCTF%20Memorandum%20on%20Good%20Practices%20on%20Strengthening%20NLC%20in%20PCVE.pdf?ver=2020-09-29-100315-357>> (last visited 5 April 2021). See for more information on the Countering the Financing of Terrorism Measures while Safeguarding Civic Space Initiative, co-led by the Netherlands, Morocco and the UN, the GCTF website <<https://www.thegctf.org/What-we-do/Initiative-Activities/ArtMID/815/ArticleID/150/Countering-the-Financing-of-Terrorism-Measures-While-Safeguarding-Civic-Space>> (last visited 5 April 2021).

No further reference is made in the Legacy Paper to the other two deliverables listed in the Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action, namely the development of practitioner guidance documents and thematic toolkits in tandem with new initiatives, and the development of a GCTF project portal.⁸⁴ Although not mentioned in the Legacy Paper, it is relevant to mention that three policy toolkits⁸⁵ have been developed during the period of evaluation, although perhaps not presented as the package or tandem deal as was intended. These toolkits are nevertheless considered important steps towards offering more hands-on tools for implementation of the policy guidance documents in the different contexts for which they were intended. The proposal to develop a GCTF project portal, however, was never realized.

Implementation thus remains a bottleneck for the GCTF. The thinking in the planning seems to be very much top down oriented, whereas it could also be guided from a more bottom-up approach, or at least in a better balance between the two. As one Dutch policy officer rightfully stated: "Documents do not solve problems."⁸⁶ A representative of an international organization explained that many framework documents lack contextual relevance and often mostly provide western-centric guidance.⁸⁷ To remedy this flaw, it would be necessary to promote more input from the unusual suspects and the less vocal members of GCTF to offer suggestions for initiatives, better interaction and cooperation with regional organizations, a more leading role for Regional WGs by contextualizing recommendations and good practices to fit the purpose of the region.

Also, the lack of a needs assessment mechanism or a feedback mechanism, as was suggested in the Food for Thought paper,⁸⁸ to assess to what extent members implement or give any kind of follow up to the framework documents is not helpful. The informal and apolitical character of the GCTF seems to be the main impediment in this regard.

Although strictly not an evaluation question within the context of this study, it is nevertheless interesting to take account of the perceptions of Member States regarding the impact of the GCTF documents on their national policies. When asked about the impact of Good Practice documents on (their own) national CT policies, none of the respondents or interviewees of the GCTF Members could point out any clear examples of implementation or adjustment of policies as a result of GCTF documents in their own country or in any other country.⁸⁹ This might, of course, also be related to the lack of a reporting mechanism within the GCTF.

When assessing the impact GCTF Good Practices documents have had on Dutch CT policies, Dutch policy officers admitted that hardly any changes have been made as a result of the GCTF

⁸⁴ Morocco and the Netherlands, Legacy Paper; 4 years of the Global Counterterrorism Forum Co-Chairmanship 2015-2019, *op cit.*, pp. 2-3.

⁸⁵ Policy Toolkit on the Zurich-London Recommendation on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism Online, Policy Toolkit on The Hague Good Practices on the Nexus between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism, and the Lifecycle Initiative Toolkit.

⁸⁶ See Questionnaire no. 12, on file with IOB.

⁸⁷ See Questionnaire no. 29, on file with IOB.

⁸⁸ Food for Thought paper on options to operationalize the GCTF and the Netherlands' priorities, pp. 6-7, on file with IOB.

⁸⁹ Questionnaires and interview reports on file with IOB.

documents.⁹⁰ No examples of domestic policies were shared. For the Netherlands, the indirect impact should rather be found in the fact that international (informal) cooperation was strengthened regarding curbing the threats of FTFs and returnees.

5.3.2 Resources Priority

Main findings

The Co-Chairs have not been very successful in achieving the five deliverables they had proposed for the *Resources* priority. Several of the instruments proposed, such as the ICCM and the FTF Knowledge Hub, did not receive enough practical support by GCTF Members to develop into helpful instruments to ensure better use could be made of the limited resources available.

If one considers the limited resources to basically consist of financial funds, time and expertise of the relevant stakeholders, and the information regarding threats and policies shared among them, it can be concluded that the Co-Chairs have not sufficiently been able to adapt to the changing circumstances, to achieve the overall objective to ensure more effective use is made of the limited resources available.

With regard to the *Resources* priority, the focus was on efforts to ensure more effective use of the limited resources available. The analysis made by DVB in the Food for Thought Paper was that there were too many meetings, and that they were not result-oriented enough.⁹¹ It was thus suggested that these meetings should be more designed as part of a strategy that aims for concrete outcomes and results in a mid-long period.

The Co-Chairs in the Strategic Plan of Action stressed the importance of securing available resources needed to facilitate implementation and capacity-building, also in order to ensure a sustainable and relevant future for the GCTF. The *Resources* priority was thus a logical second priority after the aims formulated under the *Results* priority. After all, without the proper resources, no results. The Co-Chairs thereto proposed five deliverables:

- 1) a central GCTF mechanism to identify gaps in programming and avoid overlap by building on the International CT and CVE Clearinghouse Mechanism (ICCM) pilot project;
- 2) build a diverse network of experts and community practitioners;
- 3) use a FTF Knowledge Hub as a tool for exchange of knowledge;
- 4) organize local donor coordination meetings; and
- 5) ensure strategic cooperation with and enhance guidance to implementers.⁹²

Except for the second deliverable, all other deliverables seem to suggest that specific action will be taken to set up mechanisms and organize events to better target the available resources and find new ones. The second deliverable is presented as a continuation of an

⁹⁰ See interview reports no. 2, 14, 15, and 16, on file with IOB.

⁹¹ Food for Thought paper on options to operationalize the GCTF and the Netherlands' priorities, p. 10, on file with IOB.

⁹² GCTF Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action 2016-2018, pp. 3-4, on file with IOB.

ongoing activity, while the actual translation of informal networks into networks that provide focused and tailored technical support where it is needed, might need institutionalization of these networks. A detailed model on how to do that, seems to be missing.

Both the ICCM and the FTF Knowledge Hub (mentioned in deliverable 1 and 3), in design were interesting ideas but in practice did not yield the results expected, due to the fact that several GCTF Members were in general reluctant to share such information. The FTF Knowledge Hub was supposed to operate as a GCTF Members only portal on the GCTF website. The FTF Knowledge Hub, however, never developed into a useful analysis tool to inform the work of the GCTF for two reasons. First, only a limited number of GCTF Members were willing to share information on the numbers of FTFs and their policies. Others considered this kind of information as sensitive and confidential. Secondly, ICCT as the implementer of the FTF Knowledge Hub was not allowed to complement the information shared by Members with open-source information on other countries. This could be related to the fact that, for instance, certain countries for political reasons used a different definition to keep the number of FTFs artificially low.

The ICCM was supposed to develop into a central GCTF mechanism to identify gaps in programming and eliminating duplication of efforts to ensure effective use of resources. A pilot project was run for a period of one year in Kenya, Nigeria, and Tunisia.⁹³ As an idea this made perfect sense, however, once again, in practice not all GCTF Members were willing to share information on their capacity-building activities, nor did the recipient countries want to be 'publicly' registered for the kind of support they received. The added value of this mechanism, instead of ad hoc and bilateral coordination, was therefore no longer there.

The second proposed deliverable has strong overlap with the objective regarding *Relations* and will be addressed in that paragraph. The fourth deliverable to organize local donor coordination meetings has not been translated into a clear, regularly used mechanism. Yet, a Dutch RSC in the East African region, at times, organized meetings on an ad hoc basis and individually related with donor countries to exchange plans and coordinate capacity-building initiatives.⁹⁴

The fifth deliverable regarding strategic cooperation with and better guidance to implementers, lacks further clarification in the Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action, and also the Food for Thought paper did not shed any light on how to interpret this deliverable, making it impossible to assess whether this deliverable has been achieved.

In reporting on the achieved effectiveness regarding the *Resources* objective the Co-Chairs in the Legacy Paper made no reference to the earlier listed deliverables.⁹⁵ The Co-Chairs rather

⁹³ GCTF Co-Chairs' Strategic Report on the Global Counterterrorism Forum, September 2016, p.10, on file with IOB.

⁹⁴ Interview report no. 12, on file with IOB.

⁹⁵ Morocco and the Netherlands, Legacy Paper; 4 years of the Global Counterterrorism Forum Co-Chairmanship 2015-2019, *op cit.*, p. 4.

pointed to five other reasons to argue that commitment, adaptability, and support was ensured, namely:

- 1) the continued commitment of GCTF Members to counter the threat of terrorism,
- 2) the flexibility of the Forum as nimble, action-oriented platform to stay ahead of the curve,
- 3) the increased synergies between the Working Groups, Initiatives, and partner organizations,
- 4) the restructuring of the GCTF working methods with the amended Terms of Reference, and
- 5) the restructured Administrative Unit.

Although true, they are rather the results of the realization of deliverables under the *Reinforcement* and *Renewal* Priorities (see below).

With regard to the commitment by GCTF Members, Dutch policy officers, GCTF Members, implementing partners and experts during the interviews pointed out that commitment by Members still seemed to be there, although the GCTF features less prominent on the agenda.⁹⁶ As an example, they pointed out that particularly the high political profile of the GCTF seems to be decreasing, given the diminishing willingness of States to send a Minister to represent them during the Ministerial Meeting. As one representative of a GCTF Member State explains during an interview: “After 10 years, we cannot keep announcing Good Practice documents during the Ministerial Meeting, and keep ministers interested to prioritize the GCTF during the busy week of the UNGA summit in New York. In order to stay relevant, something needs to be done.”⁹⁷ In addition, representatives of Member States, international organizations, NGOs and other experts pointed to the developments within the UN, with the more pro-active role of UNOCT, as well as the proliferation of like-minded fora, such as the IGAD Centre of Excellence for PCVE and the Strong Cities Network, on the issues of CT and PCVE, as developments that potentially undermine the unique position of GCTF.⁹⁸

The main aim of the *Resources* priority was to ensure more effective use of the limited resources available. If one considers the limited resources to basically consist of financial funds, time and expertise of the relevant stakeholders, and the information regarding threats and policies shared among them, the question is whether the Co-Chairs have achieved their objective. Clearly, the developments described above have influenced the ability for the Co-Chairs to achieve the results that they aimed for. However, the GCTF, and the Co-Chairs in their position, have also not been able to adapt to these changing circumstances, and it seems that rigorousness and lack of flexibility in protocols has hindered this ability. In this sense, one can even question whether the self-claimed ‘agility’ of the Forum is still a characteristic that distinguishes the GCTF from other international organizations or mechanisms. In any case, it

⁹⁶ See interview reports no. 1, 3, 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 27, and 35, on file with IOB.

⁹⁷ See interview report no. 24, on file with IOB.

⁹⁸ See also E. Rosand, ‘Preparing the Global Counterterrorism Forum for the Next Decade’, USIP Special Report No. 476, August 2020, p.5.

can be concluded that the Co-Chairs either seemed to have lost track of their initial plans or made the assessment that the deliverables as initially proposed were indeed not achieved and therefore did not refer back to them in the Legacy Paper.

5.3.3 Relations Priority

Main findings

Of the six deliverables proposed by the Co-Chairs, three have been more or less accomplished. The most prominent accomplishment is the strengthened relationship with the UN in order to better align the activities of the UN and the GCTF. So far, this has mainly led to an exchange of agendas, and not yet evolved into a more strategic cooperation. A strengthened cooperation with regional organizations has so far not taken any shape, although representatives of regional organizations argue that this could be mutually beneficial, and moreover contribute to enhancing legitimacy, local ownership, and contextualization of the policy recommendations.

The Co-Chairs made an effort to invite a significant number of non-members to the various GCTF activities. Although also intended to strengthen the network of experts and practitioners, the perception among these stakeholders is that the cooperation had mostly an ad hoc character. There are furthermore differences of opinion regarding the inclusiveness of the GCTF. Participation by other stakeholders as such is important, but not the same as inclusiveness.

As an international platform with limited membership that aims to be apolitical and action-oriented, strengthening *Relations* with other stakeholders is a key focus point. Strengthening relations with various stakeholders entails, first of all, relations between the GCTF Members, and secondly with the GCTF-inspired institutions, international and (sub-)regional organizations, experts and with civil society organizations (CSOs). The GCTF thereto strives to create an environment that fosters exchange of expertise and practices among various stakeholders. In the Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action six deliverables were proposed to achieve this objective:

- 1) to organize various activities and meetings together with regional, sub-regional and international organizations;
- 2) create greater awareness of and support for the GCTF by non-members through their participation in various events;
- 3) foster greater awareness among and partnership with various non-state actors, including civil society;
- 4) promote strategic partnership with private sector;
- 5) develop a renewed communication strategy; and
- 6) organize virtual and in-person GCTF outreach activities in the margins of the UN GA.⁹⁹

Interesting to notice, is the fact that none of the deliverables targeted the relationship between the GCTF Members. In contrast, the Food for Thought paper did mention that some Member States had been very active in the first four years, whereas others stayed more

⁹⁹ GCTF Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action 2016-2018, pp. 4-5, on file with IOB.

passive.¹⁰⁰ In line with the *Resources* priority, it would thus have made sense to also target the relationships between GCTF Member States to strive to re-engage some members to become more active contributors through more targeted awareness raising, for instance during the Ministerial Meeting, or in bilateral meetings, to interest them in, for instance, hosting meetings or co-sponsoring an initiative. The very concrete and useful proposal made in the Food for Thought paper to set up the Communities of Practice Portal to foster the engagement between Members in a more continuous manner,¹⁰¹ was not included in the Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action.

In the Legacy Paper,¹⁰² the Co-Chairs especially pointed in general terms to the more than 100 non-member countries, international organizations, and civil society actors who participated in GCTF activities as proof of the achievements regarding the *Relations* objective. Also, the support for the engagement with 13 non-members in (co-) hosting regional meetings was highlighted. More specifically, the strengthened relationship with the UN was underlined, as emphasized by the UN-GCTF Ministerial Statement of 2018. In practical terms, this strengthened relationship is taking shape in the regular meetings between the UN and the GCTF in the margins of the biannual GCTF Coordinating Committee Meetings.

During the co-chairmanship period, indeed some – yet a limited number of - meetings were organized in non-GCTF member states.¹⁰³ The Border Security Initiative, co-led by the US and Morocco, was a cooperation with the UNCCT.¹⁰⁴ One workshop on the Role of Religious Education in Fostering Peace and Countering Violence was organized by Morocco in 2016 in cooperation with the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).¹⁰⁵ In addition, Co-Chairs of the various working groups oftentimes worked with other organizations or implementing partners, such as UNICRI, DCAF, IJ, ICCT, OIC, and ISD for the development of framework documents or policy toolkits.

¹⁰⁰ Food for Thought paper on options to operationalize the GCTF and the Netherlands' priorities, p. 14, on file with IOB.

¹⁰¹ Food for Thought paper on options to operationalize the GCTF and the Netherlands' priorities, p. 11, on file with IOB.

¹⁰² Morocco and the Netherlands, Legacy Paper; 4 years of the Global Counterterrorism Forum Co-Chairmanship 2015-2019, *op cit.*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁰³ According to the closed portal at the GCTF website, out of the total of 55, seven (regional) expert meetings were co-hosted by non-members of the GCTF, or at least took place in a country which is not a Member of GCTF, namely: 1) Regional workshop on the initiative on addressing challenges of returning families of foreign terrorist fighters, in Tunis in February 2018; 2) Regional Workshop on the Nexus between Transnational organized crime and terrorism, in Tirana in February 2018; 3) Regional Workshop on the Nexus between Transnational organized crime and terrorism, in Singapore in March 2018; 4) Regional Workshop on the Nexus between Transnational organized crime and terrorism, Nairobi in May 2018; 5) Capacity building in East Africa Region Working Group Plenary Meeting, in Nairobi in February 2019; 6) Workshop on the Initiative to counter unmanned aerial systems threats, in Seoul in March 2019; and 7) Workshop on the Initiative on improving capabilities for detecting and interdicting terrorist travel through enhanced terrorist screening and information sharing, in Kuala Lumpur in May 2019. Furthermore, the regular meetings of the Working Group on CJ-RoL often take place at the GCTF inspired institution IJ in Malta. Malta is not a Member of the GCTF.

¹⁰⁴ GCTF Co-Chairs' Strategic Report on the Global Counterterrorism Forum, September 2016, p. 10, on file with IOB.

¹⁰⁵ GCTF Co-Chairs' Strategic Report on the Global Counterterrorism Forum, September 2017, p. 7, on file with IOB.

According to the views of many respondents in the interviews,¹⁰⁶ representing Dutch policy officers, GCTF Members, international organizations, and implementing partners, the Co-Chairs have certainly managed to improve and strengthen the relationship with the UN. However, they also assess that this relationship is still in the ‘dating phase’, during which an exchange of notes and agendas takes place. Many respondents furthermore pointed to the lack of vision on how both organizations can profit from each other also given the changes in terms of resources available and the more pro-active mandate of the UNOCT.¹⁰⁷

Furthermore, particularly representatives of regional organizations (such as the CoE, OSCE, AU, ECOWAS and ASEAN), experts and implementers pointed out that no structural relations have been developed with regional organizations, even though these organizations also focus on CT and PCVE (see the overview in the Annex paragraph 7.2.2) and have a lot to offer for a mutually beneficial relationship.¹⁰⁸ This is considered a missed opportunity regarding the fact that this could contribute to enhancing legitimacy, local ownership, and contextualization of the policy recommendations. These benefits were, interestingly enough, also listed by DVB in the Food for Thought Paper.¹⁰⁹ Unfortunately, it did not lead to inclusion as a guideline regarding the implementation of the deliverables for the *Relations* priority in the Co-Chairs’ Strategic Plan of Action. It is also not mentioned in the Legacy Paper. Representatives of regional organizations, however, did stress they see an added value for a more intensive and reciprocal relationship, particularly regarding awareness raising and dissemination, and even implementation and capacity-building.¹¹⁰ The OSCE, for instance, organized twelve seminars across the OSCE regional area regarding the Rabat Memorandum, and also refers to the Neuchâtel Memorandum in the seminars that touch upon gender and age sensitive responses to terrorism. And indeed, it would make sense to also strengthen the relationship with regional organizations, as that could also contribute to better contextualization of policies and thus ultimately to better implementation.

With regard to the relations with other non-state actors, particularly experts, implementers and representatives of NGOs in their responses,¹¹¹ shared the impression that this relation has a very ad hoc character. This ad hoc character hinders the possibility to build a more structural relationship and partnerships that, for instance, would offer a more regular seat at the table during GCTF meetings, including the Coordinating Committee Meeting. The perception of inclusiveness is not shared by some GCTF Members, CSOs and other non-actors. They referred to the lack of transparent procedures to be admitted during a meeting, lack of openness on

¹⁰⁶ See interview reports no. 1, 8, 14, 18, 20, 23, 27, 30, and 31, on file with IOB.

¹⁰⁷ See interview reports no. 8, 14, 18, 20, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, and 34, on file with IOB.

¹⁰⁸ See interview reports no. 1, 3, 4, 5, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 33, 35, and 37, on file with IOB.

¹⁰⁹ Food for Thought paper on options to operationalize the GCTF and the Netherlands’ priorities, pp. 14-15, on file with IOB.

¹¹⁰ See interview reports no. 33 and 34, on file with IOB.

¹¹¹ See interview reports no. 8, 13 and 14, on file with IOB.

the agendas and running projects, and lack of open vetting procedures to get accreditation, such as for instance offered by the UN, to have permanent access to GCTF meetings.¹¹²

Although, clearing procedures do exist to admit non-members to attend the meetings,¹¹³ the clearing of non-GCTF participants needs to be done very early in the process, sometimes before agendas of meetings are drafted which makes it complicated to identify the relevant people. Procedures are considered cumbersome by implementers.¹¹⁴ In some situations, it has been made clear that certain CSOs, despite their important contributions and clear expertise on key issues, are not welcome to participate in or provide input to GCTF good practice development.¹¹⁵ As a result there is also a risk that particularly the ‘usual suspects’ secure a seat at the table, which undermines the ambition of championing dialogues between a wide variety of stakeholders.

Respondents and interviewees from GCTF Members, on the other hand, have an opposite view, and praise the ambition of inclusiveness of the GCTF and the interaction with multiple stakeholders during the meetings.¹¹⁶ Clearly, there are strongly opposing perceptions regarding this point depending on the group of stakeholders asked on this point. In accordance with the revised Terms of Reference, non-members can be invited, after vetting by the Co-Chairs of the Working Group and the GCTF Co-Chairs and when none of the GCTF Members oppose the nomination. The Terms of Reference, however, only in general terms explains that non-members need to demonstrate support for the GCTF’s founding principles and objectives as enumerated in the Political Declaration and need to have relevant expertise to share in counterterrorism.¹¹⁷ No other objective criteria are included. Experiences shared by non-members suggest the selection in practice can be very arbitrary, and at times even be motivated by political reasons.¹¹⁸

Some representatives of NGOs, international organizations, and experts also pointed to the consequence of the - in their eyes perceived - lack of inclusiveness in combination with the development of non-binding policies that inspire the development of binding policies in other fora and the ‘uncontrolled’ implementation with less or no respect for human rights principles.¹¹⁹ Despite the differences in appreciation of the possibility of attendance at meetings, it is fair to conclude that diversification of the stakeholders that participate in the meetings, is not the same as inclusiveness, which implicates to be fully recognized as a meaningful and equal partner in the conversation.

¹¹² See interview reports no. 18, 19, 20, 22, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 36, 37, and 38, on file with IOB.

¹¹³ Terms of Reference, 2017, *op cit.*, para. 9 and 12

¹¹⁴ See interview reports no. 26, 27, and 28, on file with IOB.

¹¹⁵ These situations are known to IOB, but not explicitly shared in order to not further complicate working relationships. See interview reports no. 29 and 38, on file with IOB.

¹¹⁶ See interview reports no. 1, 15, 17, and 23 on file with IOB.

¹¹⁷ Terms of Reference, 2017, *op cit.*, para. 9 and 12.

¹¹⁸ See interview reports no. 26, 27, 35, 36, 37, and 38, on file with IOB.

¹¹⁹ See interview reports no. 27, 26, 29, 32, and 38, on file with IOB, and also the Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, 22 August 2019, UN Doc A/74/335.

With reference to the other deliverables that were announced in the Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action, it is important to stress that there is no public record of meetings or initiatives to strengthen the public-private partnership. Some meetings did, however, take place,¹²⁰ but it is a missed opportunity in terms of raising awareness, and communicating the importance of building various relationships with non-GCTF members, that no information on this is publicly available. The same is true regarding the side-events organized at the margins of the annual UNGA summit in New York in September with reference to GCTF activities. These points are related to the communication strategy, which will be addressed in the next paragraph.

5.3.4 Reinforcement Priority

Main findings

Of all the priorities, the Co-Chairs have been most successful in achieving the deliverables aimed to maintain the strengths of the GCTF, namely to be apolitical, technical, action-oriented and nimble, and to adjust the working methods and structure to meet the changes in the CT landscape. Yet, and despite these efforts, these characteristics nevertheless run the risk of being undermined.

It has not been possible to expand the tasks of the Administration Unit with an analytical unit to support risk and needs assessments and offer monitoring and evaluation to the GCTF. The Administration Unit has, nevertheless been successfully reformed, and working methods have been streamlined. This was necessary to keep up with the increased number of activities and documents developed. However, the strict protocols that are imposed by the Administrative Unit are overall considered to be too rigid and burdensome.

The Forum's function is to create a platform for exchange of experiences, to strengthen network contact, and facilitate the exchange of views between diplomats, policymakers, and practitioners. Respondents to the questionnaires and interviewees report that the GCTF certainly had that edge in the early years of the GCTF, and also certainly still offers that potential. Yet, many warned that there is a risk that the emphasis shifts back to a diplomatic forum, instead of a platform for true exchange between diplomats, policymakers, and practitioners. Also due to the dense calendar of meetings, there is a risk of meeting fatigue. As a result, Member States do not always send the subject-matter experts to these events, which has an impact on the quality of the exchange.

The development cycle of new GCTF documents is relatively quick, and typically takes a maximum of 12 months. As all initiatives follow the same rhythm, the review of these documents always falls in the early summer. When multiple documents are developed at the same time, this becomes very labor intensive for the Member States. Proposals for text amendments by Member States are not transparently shared among the Members. Text negotiations, furthermore, run the risk of turning into a game of powerplay, undermining the apolitical character of the GCTF.

The Co-Chairs have improved the synergy between the different Working Groups by organizing coordinating meetings between the Co-Chairs of the Working Groups to facilitate alignment between the working plans.

A communication plan to improve the outreach and dissemination activities of the GCTF was prepared, but due to the indecisiveness of the GCTF Members no substantial improvements were implemented.

¹²⁰ The Second Symposium on Presenting and Countering Terrorists' Use of the Internet (TUI), hosted by the People's Republic of China, also focused on the cooperation with the private sector; also the Antalya Memorandum on the Protection of Soft Targets in a Counterterrorism Context developed as part of the Soft Targets Initiative, led by Turkey and the United States, developed guidance for the private sector, see for both the GCTF Co-Chairs' Strategic Report on the Global Counterterrorism Forum, September 2017, p. 11, on file with IOB.

With the *Reinforcement* priority, the Co-Chairs mainly aimed to restructure the GCTF, to streamline the working methods, to develop a communication strategy, and to restructure the supporting role of the Administrative Unit. These objectives were related to the key characteristics of the GCTF of being an apolitical, technical, action-oriented, and nimble platform, as laid down in the GCTF's Political Declaration, and underlined by most stakeholders interviewed.¹²¹ The Co-Chairs thus aimed to maintain these strengths and adjust the working methods and structure to meet the evolving challenges and changes in the CT landscape.

The plans of the Co-Chairs therefore focused on the restructuring of the Administrative Unit, the dynamics within the Working Groups to enhance interaction on cross-cutting issues and to rethink the orientation of the Working Groups, the need to strengthen interaction between Members and raise awareness and dissemination regarding GCTF documents by improving the communication strategy. Accordingly, the deliverables proposed in the Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action focus on:

- 1) enhanced interaction between Working Groups on cross-cutting, multidisciplinary topics;
- 2) enhanced intra GCTF communication and continuity of action between meetings, for instance through the establishment of a discussion platform;
- 3) provision of a platform and facilitation of sustainable and predictable funding for the GCTF-inspired institutions;
- 4) development of proposals for the establishment of, or contribution to new CT institutions or centers of excellence;
- 5) increased capacity at the Administrative Unit to provide analytical support for the Co-Chairs and Working Groups;
- 6) development of a view on the future configuration of the Working Groups; and
- 7) enhanced information sharing by GCTF embassy networks in The Hague, New York, Rabat and Washington DC.¹²²

According to the Legacy Paper, the capacity of the GCTF has been strengthened in order to supply the appropriate tools to continue to reduce the vulnerability of people worldwide to terrorism and violent extremism, by organizing 65 expert meeting in four years.¹²³ In itself, the number of expert meetings clearly cannot be the key to deliver appropriate and demand-driven tools, strategies and policy recommendations. Noteworthy in this context is to mention once again that the MFA in the Food for Thought Paper had already noted that there were too

¹²¹ See interview reports no. 3, 5, 8, 9, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 30, 31, 33, 35, and 36, on file with IOB.

¹²² GCTF Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action 2016-2018, pp. 5-6, on file with IOB.

¹²³ Morocco and the Netherlands, Legacy Paper; 4 years of the Global Counterterrorism Forum Co-Chairmanship 2015-2019, *op cit.*, pp. 5-6.

many meetings, and they were not action-oriented enough.¹²⁴ As stated in the Legacy Paper, the GCTF aims to use a unique approach to bring together policymakers with experts in the field, and indeed, mayors, child protection officers, civil society organization, prosecutors, police officers and private sector partners have been brought to the table to discuss various topics.¹²⁵ The question is, however, whether the working approach has indeed been demand-driven (word used in the Legacy paper), apolitical, and action-oriented: ensuring a proper and meaningful exchange between the various stakeholders with policy officers. And whether these interactions have contributed to a sustainable network of practitioners, subject matter experts, diplomats, and policymakers.

The Forum's function is to create a platform for exchange of experiences, to strengthen network contact, and facilitate the exchange of views between diplomats, policymakers, and practitioners. Respondents to the questionnaires and interviewees, representing Dutch policy officers, GCTF Members and implementing partners, reported that the GCTF certainly had that edge in the early years of the GCTF, and also certainly still offers that potential.¹²⁶ Yet, many warned that there is a risk that the emphasis shifts back to a diplomatic forum, instead of a true exchange between diplomats, policymakers and practitioners.¹²⁷ They pointed to the sheer number of meetings taking place all over the world. Because of the density of the calendar of meetings, it becomes a challenge for Member States to send the subject matter policymakers and practitioners to the relevant meetings. For instance, one of the Co-Chairs listed 95 meetings that they attended in the course of four years, which amounts to approximately two meetings per months. As a result, oftentimes diplomats of the Member States working at the Embassy in the country where the meeting takes place are attending the meeting. These diplomats do not necessarily have knowledge of the topic, and can therefore only report back on the headlines, and not make a meaningful contribution to the dialogue or exchange of views of practices.

It can therefore be concluded that this trend undermines the objective to contribute to a strengthened network of contacts of stakeholders working in the field. A suggestion made by several respondents¹²⁸ is to appoint focal points for the various Working Groups at the MFAs of the GCTF Members in order to ensure that they are well informed about the issues on the agenda, and furthermore can build meaningful networks with their counterparts and other subject-matter experts. This suggestion is certainly worth considering, particularly regarding the issues that countries have a particular interest in.

¹²⁴ Food for Thought paper on options to operationalize the GCTF and the Netherlands' priorities, p. 10, on file with IOB.

¹²⁵ Morocco and the Netherlands, Legacy Paper; 4 years of the Global Counterterrorism Forum Co-Chairmanship 2015-2019, *op cit.*, p.1.

¹²⁶ See interview reports no. 4, 7, 8, 9, 16, 18, 24, and 25, on file with IOB.

¹²⁷ See interview reports no. 3, 5, 16, 17, 18, 22, 24, 25, 34, and 35, on file with IOB.

¹²⁸ See interview reports no. 6, 14, 24, 26, 29, and 35, on file with IOB.

Some stakeholders,¹²⁹ moreover, warned for GCTF meeting fatigue, which undermines the commitment. This is, they explain, not only due to the dense meeting agenda of the GCTF, but also the result of the proliferation of more platforms organizing meetings on similar topics.

More in general, respondents observed that the contribution of GCTF Members is rather uneven, with sometimes one or only a few GCTF Members dominating the discussion.¹³⁰ This problem had also, as mentioned above, been mentioned in the Food for Thought Paper of the MFA, so it should not come as a surprise to the Co-Chairs. And even though most respondents underlined the importance and relevance of GCTF (as described in paragraph 3.4), the lack of ownership among a significant number of GCTF Members should be considered to be a worrisome development.

Interviewees, representing Dutch policy officers and GCTF Members also expressed concerns regarding the sustainability of the Forum as an apolitical platform.¹³¹ They pointed to the trend regarding the text negotiations of GCTF framework documents, which are turning more and more into typical political negotiations that no longer focus on the texts of framework documents as such but bring not related political or diplomatic topics into the debate.¹³² And indeed, it is also the author's own experience, in her occasional role as implementer, that these text negotiations are becoming more political over the years.

With regard to the proposed deliverable to enhance interaction between Working Groups on cross-cutting and multidisciplinary topics, the Co-Chairs initiated coordinating meetings between the Working Group Co-Chairs to contribute to better alignments of the working plans and ensure better information exchange during the processes of document development. GCTF Members in the interviews¹³³ confirmed that these initiatives were taken and considered it a positive development to facilitate these exchanges.

Nevertheless, certain themes, such as gender issues and respect for human rights, have - in addition to being stand-alone topics - a cross-cutting relevance, yet they are not considered focus topics to be discussed during the coordination meetings between Working Group Co-Chairs. Analysis shows however, that they are not always addressed in the same manner, or with the same eye for the more detailed instruction on how to address gender issues and how to respect human rights while regulating certain other policies regarding security.¹³⁴ The question is whether the Co-Chairs should play a stronger role in giving direction to ensure coherence in language and the way these cross-cutting themes are addressed (see also paragraph 6.2.3 on Coherence of policy). It did not become clear from the interviews

¹²⁹ See interview reports no. 18, 25, and 28, on file with IOB.

¹³⁰ See interview reports no. 3, 4, 12, 17, 20, 24, 25, and 34, on file with IOB.

¹³¹ See interview reports no. 1, 8, 9, 22, on file with IOB.

¹³² See interview reports no. 18, 22, and 26, on file with IOB.

¹³³ See interview reports no. 18, 19, and 22, on file with IOB.

¹³⁴ Global Center on Cooperative Security, 'Independent Review of the Policy and Programming supported by the Global Counterterrorism Forum's Criminal Justice and Rule of Law Working Group', 12 September 2019, report commissioned by the Co-Chairs of the GCTF CJRoL WG, Switzerland and Nigeria, on file.

conducted whether the Co-Chairs made an effort to better streamline the way gender and human rights issues are addressed.

Furthermore, with reference to the working methods of the Working Groups, it is not clear whether the Co-Chairs have developed a view on a new configuration of the Working Groups other than the integration of the themes of detention and reintegration in the other thematic Working Groups, and the broadening of the mandates and scopes of the regional Working Groups to include neighboring countries.¹³⁵ The earlier mentioned Communities of Practice Portal, as suggested in the Food for Thought Paper,¹³⁶ could have been an interesting new approach though, to activate the actions between Member States and in between Working Group meetings. The idea was to use such a tool to share unclassified information and maintain and expand an experts' network for GCTF relevant areas of work.

The Legacy Paper of the Co-Chairs did not report on the deliverables regarding the provision of a platform and facilitation of sustainable and predictable funding for the GCTF-inspired institution, nor on the development of proposals for the establishment of, or contribution to new CT institutions or centers of excellence.¹³⁷ In practice, GCTF-inspired institutions are responsible for their own funding. Regarding the deliverable on the enhanced information sharing through the use of the diplomatic networks in The Hague, Rabat, New York and Washington DC, it can be concluded that this has not been developed in a mechanism used by all GCTF members. As will be explained in paragraph 6.1.2, the Netherlands, though, did invest in making use of their diplomatic network to enhance information sharing. This is a unique characteristic of the commitment of the Netherlands, but not a model followed by other States.

During the co-chairmanship period, the Administrative Unit moved to The Hague, and needed to be set up in a more robust manner. The Co-Chairs worked out the proposals for the mandate of the Administrative Unit and the working processes of the GCTF and the role the Administrative Unit plays in facilitating those.¹³⁸ These proposals also included a vision regarding a stronger analytical support role and a role in monitoring and evaluation of GCTF policies, and proposals regarding communication, information sharing and contact with third parties.

Many stakeholders are satisfied with the clarity communicated by the Administrative Unit regarding procedures for the organization of events and the development of framework documents.¹³⁹ They supported the need for stricter coordination of all these activities, considering the increase in the number of framework documents that have been developed

¹³⁵ GCTF Co-Chairs' Strategic Report on the Global Counterterrorism Forum, September 2017, p. 6, on file with IOB.

¹³⁶ Food for Thought paper on options to operationalize the GCTF and the Netherlands' priorities, p.11, on file with IOB.

¹³⁷ Morocco and the Netherlands, Legacy Paper; 4 years of the Global Counterterrorism Forum Co-Chairmanship 2015-2019, *op cit.*, pp.1-2.

¹³⁸ Internal Memo, Werkafspraken Admin Unit-GCTF Voorzitterschap, 2015, on file with IOB.

¹³⁹ Questionnaires and interview reports no. 22, 23, 24, 28, 33, 34, and 37, on file with IOB.

and the events organized. However, the strict protocols that are imposed by the Administrative Unit are overall considered to be too rigid and burdensome.¹⁴⁰ Some initiatives would benefit from a more flexible approach to support a more impactful outcome of certain meetings. Also, some implementers have complained that they felt they were not treated with respect by the Administrative Unit who showed no patience when telling them the strict procedures without taking the time to explain the ratio behind it to implementers that normally do not work in these settings heavy on protocol.¹⁴¹ On the other hand, ultimately Members mostly commented that the Administrative Unit works very efficiently in organizing the meetings.

In reference to the working methods regarding the development of framework documents and the timelines set that have been streamlined during the co-chairmanship period, several experts and implementers shared some critical observations. They commented that the developed workflow is causing more and more challenges for implementers as Members seem to delay the moment to provide input on new initiatives.¹⁴² It is also the author's experience that Members rather wait to comment on a developed draft text, instead of sharing experiences and good practices during the expert meetings that precede the drafting period that offers guidance to the implementers. It is not clear whether this is caused by lack of interest, lack of resources, or a calculated diplomatic decision.

Deadlines for offering feedback to draft texts are, moreover, often not respected, causing challenges to keep the overall timeframe set for the process. Furthermore, silence procedures are no longer only used to iron out ultimate red lines for Members, but rather as a last-minute political power tool to enforce certain changes with the risk of the text not passing. Lastly, the fact that text comments by Members are not shared among all Members to maintain an open debate, is undermining the transparency of negotiations. These last points go to the heart of the apolitical character of the GCTF, as the text negotiations are no longer safeguarded from some political powerplay. The Co-Chairs have during their co-chairmanship not been able, to prevent these developments from unfolding, whereas as guardians of the process this had well been within their mandate.

Furthermore, the lifecycle of document development typically starts after the Co-Chairs of the Working Groups have presented their own new plans during the Coordinating Committee meeting in New York, after which it mostly takes 12 months¹⁴³ to develop and endorse the document. One GCTF Member observed that because of this planning, the reviews of the documents, which are quite labor intensive, all take place in the same 2-3 months in the summer.¹⁴⁴ They suggested that a better spreading of initiatives might yield better input.

¹⁴⁰ See interview reports no. 25, 26, 27, 28, and 37, on file with IOB.

¹⁴¹ See interview reports no. 25 and 28, on file with IOB.

¹⁴² See interview reports no. 26 and 27, on file with IOB.

¹⁴³ Compared to the time needed to draft for instance a UN SC Resolution, 12 months might seem very long. However, it makes more sense to compare the drafting of the framework documents to negotiations concerning the drafting of new treaties, which are also driven by the States.

¹⁴⁴ See interview report no. 21, on file with IOB.

Another comment of some GCTF Members regarding the workflows for the development of new framework documents, concerned the lack of transparency regarding the input provided for the development of documents.¹⁴⁵ Reference is made to the possibility of submitting a public amicus curiae letter, or shadow report, often used in the context of other organizations. This way it would be transparent which comments or criticisms by, for instance, NGOs have been taken on board in the final text, and which ones were ignored. Without diverting from the fact that the GCTF is a Members-driven Forum, such a proposal could indeed improve the transparency of the drafting procedure, and contribute to the objective of GCTF to function as a platform for exchange between diplomats, policy-makers, practitioners and experts.

Despite some attempts to strengthen the analytical capacity of the Administrative Unit, it seemed that there was no strong support among the GCTF Members to facilitate this during the co-chairmanship period. In this respect, it is interesting to note that many respondents do (now) stress the need for a stronger role for the Administrative Unit, and particularly regarding monitoring and evaluation.¹⁴⁶ They argued that the original nimble set up with only a small Administrative Unit may no longer be fit for purpose and might need to be reconsidered.

With regard to the attempts to strengthen the intra GCTF Members communication and exchange of information as proposed in deliverable 2 of the Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action, for instance, by setting up a special platform to facilitate this, it can be concluded that this has not been developed. Possibly the platform mentioned is the same as the Communities of Practice Portal, mentioned in the Food for Thought paper,¹⁴⁷ but so far, the Communities for Practice Portal has also not been realized. It is not clear whether no attempt has been made, or whether there was no appetite for such a tool among the GCTF Members. The latter is quite likely, also considering the fact that other initiatives such as the FTF Knowledge Hub and the ICCM never fully came to fruition.

Regarding the communication and dissemination strategy, the Co-Chairs with the assistance of the Administrative Unit, did indeed develop a paper regarding the necessary changes and the various options regarding a more effective communication strategy.¹⁴⁸ According to the analysis made regarding the communication of the GCTF in the first years, it is concluded that the communication was flawed and a strategy non-existent. It pointed out that the website is disorganized and unattractive, and there is a need for improvements to make the website more attractive for public outreach. Furthermore, press releases and social media channels were not used by the GCTF.

In reference to the internal GCTF communication, the paper pointed to the closed section at the website for Members only, the so-called Portal, which offers information on GCTF meetings and the relevant materials for these meetings. Lastly, a Weekly Roundup newsletter

¹⁴⁵ See interview reports no. 18 and 20, on file with IOB.

¹⁴⁶ See interview reports no. 4, 5, 19, 20, 27, 35, and 37, on file with IOB.

¹⁴⁷ Food for Thought paper on options to operationalize the GCTF and the Netherlands' priorities, p.11, on file with IOB.

¹⁴⁸ Administrative Unit, Communication Strategy, on file with IOB.

is used as a communication tool to keep Members informed about upcoming events and other important information. A Partners Edition is furthermore available for non-members with more limited information that can be shared, including a calendar of international CT and CVE events.

The communication plan raised some important questions regarding the target audience, the goal and purpose of the communication, the message that one wants to communicate, the strategy on how to reach the target audience, and the means of communication. In the 'Food for Thought' paper, the point was raised that the GCTF Members need to decide what level of ambition they have regarding communication: continuation of the status quo (maintaining a discrete low profile), modest expansion (mainly improvements regarding internal communication), or external expansion (working towards a public profile).¹⁴⁹

Indeed, some changes have been made to the website, and investments have been made to develop graphics and cartoon video clips to promote the GCTF framework documents, yet these alterations do not sufficiently fulfil the need for better and more effective communication. The paper developed by the Administrative Unit was very clear in the need to specify the target audience, the goal and purpose of the communication, the message it wants to communicate, the strategy on how to reach various target audiences, and the means of communication. However, it does not seem that these criteria have fully been taken into account in the few reforms made.

Respondents to the questionnaire and interviewees explained that they either do not use the website, or only sporadically to look for certain documents.¹⁵⁰ And although they considered that the website does function as a resource for these documents, they also had several complaints, and suggestions for improvements:¹⁵¹ Not all links on the website are working, and the website is hard to navigate, lacking a certain logic in the way it is organized. The topics or documents are sometimes organized by relevance, sometimes per topic, and sometimes chronological, with the most recent document at the end. Outcome documents are also not properly archived, and a systematic annotation for reference purposes, such as a date, or reference number, is missing. Not all Working Groups provide the same kind of information, for instance regarding the role played by implementers working on certain initiatives. Particularly, non-members and other stakeholders criticized the fact that upcoming events are not consequently announced in a calendar well in advance, allowing them not enough time to express their interest to attend the meeting or to contribute to the discussion by way of another tool, such as a post box to which suggestions and contributions can be submitted.

¹⁴⁹ Food for Thought paper on options to operationalize the GCTF and the Netherlands' priorities, p.12, on file with IOB.

¹⁵⁰ See interview reports no. 14, 15, 24, 27, and 29, on file with IOB.

¹⁵¹ See interview reports no. 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 29, 31, 33, 35, and 37, on file with IOB.

When asked about the added value of the videos that have been produced as a tool to raise awareness for the framework documents, several respondents said that they feel a clear vision regarding the target audience one wants to reach out to is missing.¹⁵²

To conclude, the ambitions regarding improving the internal and external communication, have partly suffered from the indecisiveness of the GCTF Members, to allow any significant reforms to for instance the website. It was not until the new Co-Chairs, Canada, and Morocco, shared their plans, that major steps towards a modern way of communication were taken. Since 24 March of 2021, the GCTF has even (finally) launched a Twitter account.

5.3.5 Renewal Priority

Main findings

Particularly the first of the four deliverables of the Renewal priority proposed by the Co-Chairs yielded some results. This deliverable was once again aimed to be ahead of the curve (see also Chapter 6), and to strengthen the exchange between various stakeholders, also addressed in the paragraph on the *Relations* priority. Indeed, some important topics have been addressed during the co-chairmanship period, but a systematic method is missing to ensure that emerging threats are automatically picked up and addressed. The introduction of the scenario-based discussions was appreciated by the GCTF Members and allowed for easier input on risks and policy options by the Members.

Finally, with regard to the *Renewal* priority, the main aim was to be ahead of the curve. DVB, in the Food for Thought Paper, had also stressed the importance of keeping momentum and continuing to place the GCTF in the global CT arena.¹⁵³ In the Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action, it is highlighted that the GCTF has acted as a pioneer in the CT policy arena identifying trends and developing new policy responses. The ambition was set to continue the leading role for the GCTF and thus the following deliverables were presented:

- 1) engagement with members, non-members, academia, the private sector and think tanks to discuss developments in terrorism and identify new trends, especially regarding the role of technology in PCVE;
- 2) renewed focus on existing good practices to respond to developments in terrorism and -if needed- build additional tools;
- 3) consider ways to promote UN projects; and
- 4) embrace the mantra 'think global – act local' and therefore set joint initiatives with the UN or regional or sub-regional organizations to strengthen tailored CT approaches, and use mutual cross references in the various documents to both GCTF documents and other resolutions or decisions of other organizations.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² See interview reports no. 14 and 26, on file with IOB.

¹⁵³ Food for Thought paper on options to operationalize the GCTF and the Netherlands' priorities, p.16, on file with IOB.

¹⁵⁴ GCTF Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action 2016-2018, p. 6, on file with IOB.

In the Legacy Paper,¹⁵⁵ the Co-Chairs only reflected on the first deliverable, and repeated the importance of a pro-active approach and flexible cooperation of the GCTF, especially considering the fact that the terrorist threat is not diminishing but evolving continuously. Although, the Co-Chairs stated that this approach has enabled the Forum to stay ahead of the curve and react immediately to new developments (of which a couple of examples are included in the Legacy Paper)¹⁵⁶, they failed to report how this approach works in practice and what activities they have undertaken in line with the deliverables proposed in the Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action to ensure that this approach is fit for purpose. The accomplishments listed in the Legacy Paper rather referred to the development of specific documents on topical issues (also covered by paragraph 6.3 the *Relevance* of the activities), and the translation of framework documents into policy toolkits.¹⁵⁷ Although, both facts clearly contribute to the need to stay ahead of the *policy* curve and to contextualize policies, an institutionalized method and strategy to ensure this is the case for each of the initiatives is missing. Also, this approach only allows to respond to new threats after they have emerged, but before other international actors respond to them. To be able to act ahead of the *threat* curve, policies would need to be based on future foresight studies. That way one could really claim to be ahead of the curve since it would allow to nip any emerging threats in the bud and stay ahead of the curve of new security threats with the development and implementation of effective preventive and responsive policies. This is not something that the GCTF does.

The innovation of scenario-based discussions, which was used twice, is, however, well appreciated by GCTF Members. By using fictive case studies based on a scenario, GCTF Members were invited to reflect on the situation keeping their own contextual circumstances and existing policies in mind. It offers a method to raise awareness of emerging threats or policy gaps, and to gather input from all GCTF Members in an a-political manner, lowering the threshold for some Members to offer contributions to the discussions. It would be worth considering including this method, or the method of tabletop exercises, used in the CVE Working Group¹⁵⁸ as a regular tool to reflect on new developments.

The fact that many of the initiatives undertaken are considered by the Co-Chairs to be relevant contributions, is, however, still not the same as ensuring that the GCTF is able to be relevant,

¹⁵⁵ Morocco and the Netherlands, Legacy Paper; 4 years of the Global Counterterrorism Forum Co-Chairmanship 2015-2019, *op cit.*, p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ The Legacy Paper lists the following examples: the GCTF Initiative to Address the Life Cycle of Radicalization to Violence, the scenario-based discussion, the GCTF FTF Knowledge Hub, the Good Practices on Addressing the Challenge of Returning Families of Foreign Terrorist Fighters, the Good Practices on Prevention, Detection, Intervention and Response to Homegrown Terrorism, The GCTF Antalya Memorandum on the Protection of Soft Targets in a Counterterrorism Context, the Hague Good Practices on the Nexus between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ A tabletop exercises (TTX) was used by the CVE WG for the initiative on National-Local Cooperation. TTXs are useful platforms for structured brainstorming designed to strategically evaluate current terrorism related challenges and trends and to develop plans, policies and programs as responses to evolving threats. TTXs place participants in a role play environment to help clarify responsibilities, frame contributions, and stimulate creative dialogue on questions, issues, and circumstances; move beyond theory to practice, and promote whole of society engagement.

context-specific, conscious of specific regional needs, and responding timely to new threat developments, when the mechanisms needed to ensure such an approach are not in place.

It is nevertheless fair to conclude that the Co-Chairs can successfully claim that the GCTF has - certainly at times - been ahead of the *policy* curve. They listed the threat of FTFs, returnees, the attacks on soft targets and the increasing linkages of terrorism and transnational organized crime as examples to support that conclusion.¹⁵⁹ Being the first international platform to address a new policy issue, and paving the ways for other international organizations, has contributed to the relevance of the GCTF.

6 Cooperation, coherence of policy and relevance of the GCTF activities

The results of the co-chairmanship greatly depended on the cooperation between the different key actors, namely the cooperation between the Dutch MFA and the NCTV, the cooperation between the different actors within the MFA, and the cooperation between the Co-Chairs. In this chapter, the various forms of cooperation will be reflected upon.

Other key aspects of this evaluation concern the coherence and relevance of the policies. For the evaluation of coherence, the internal coherence of Dutch CT and PCVE policy will be assessed. In addition, an assessment will be made regarding the synergies and consistencies between the (international) Dutch CT policy and the issues addressed within the GCTF. And finally, an assessment will also be made of the coherence of the GCTF policies as such.

Regarding the evaluation of the relevance of policies, there is some overlap with the evaluation of the effectiveness of the *Renewal* priority discussed above in paragraph 5.3.5. The relevance of the GCTF lies in the ability to address *the relevant topics* considering the actual threat assessments and developments, and *the added value* the GCTF can offer to the CT landscape.

6.1 Coordination

The cooperation concerns the way in which the various Dutch departments and officials cooperated and whether there was any overarching and shared vision on CT and PCVE related issues. It also concerns the cooperation between the Co-Chairs.

¹⁵⁹Morocco and the Netherlands, Legacy Paper; 4 years of the Global Counterterrorism Forum Co-Chairmanship 2015-2019, *op cit.*, p. 2.

6.1.1 Interdepartmental coordination

Main findings

The Dutch co-chairmanship task was a joint operation of DVB-TN of MFA and NCTV of the Ministry of Justice and Security, the former acted as the lead on the GCTF work. Although, the cooperation was good, with hindsight, NCTV would have benefitted from a joint task force, or a liaison officer at DVB-TN.

When the decision was made within the Netherlands to prepare a joint bid together with Morocco to succeed the US and Turkey as the Co-Chairs of the GCTF, it was decided that it would be a joint effort of the MFA and the NCTV. The MFA, and in particular DVB-TN would be in the lead, meaning they would function as main point of contact together with the Co-Chair Morocco for the Co-Chairs of the Working Groups and the other GCTF Members. DVB would also communicate with the Administrative Unit on logistical and administrative issues, supervise the deadlines and the silence procedures, chair the meetings, and consolidate the input gathered from different internal stakeholders regarding the development of GCTF framework documents.

The MFA had also appointed a Special Envoy on CT, who would operate in the official function of the Co-Chair. This appointment was received with certain reservations at the side of the NCTV.¹⁶⁰ In the beginning of the cooperation this also led to some friction regarding the lead chair position in the international meetings, since the NCTV had a preference for the National CT Coordinator in that position. NCTV eventually agreed to the fulfilment of the chair position by the Special Envoy, also given the dense character of the agendas, and the enormous workload that would come with the task, in a time that NCTV was very busy managing the internal security situation.

MFA and NCTV frequently held strategic meetings at Director General level, as well as coordination meetings at the working level to discuss day-to-day operational issues. These meetings although frequent, were held on an irregular basis. There was not a permanent NCTV policy officer seconded to the MFA to participate in the permanent MFA GCTF team. The MFA would mostly consult with NCTV on content related issues, as NCTV is considered the subject matter expert organization with the relevant network of practitioners. The input of NCTV was therefore more targeted towards comments on relevant papers, reports and presentations. The MFA took the lead regarding the planning and drafting of agendas for meetings, and the logistics and overall coordination. They also were in close contact with Morocco as the other Co-Chair. Also, decisions regarding representation by MFA and NCTV to relevant GCTF meetings were made during these interdepartmental meetings.

Although, the MFA had clearly articulated the reasons why it considered it to be of strategic importance to accept the role of Co-Chair of the GCTF, the NCTV did not articulate any specific strategic advantages for their own organization or international role.

¹⁶⁰ See interview reports no. 15 and 16, on file with IOB.

All Dutch policy makers considered the cooperation between the MFA and the NCTV in their shared responsibility concerning the co-chairmanship to have worked well in good spirit of collegiality.¹⁶¹ However, with the division of tasks between the lead role for the MFA as point of contact, and the NCTV as the subject matter expert partner, the lack of an institutionalized inter-departmental task group which could also overlook the strategic choices of the co-chairmanship with representatives of the two ministries was considered a shortcoming.¹⁶² Particularly policy officers of NCTV suggested that it would have helped to work with an inter-departmental task force to better ensure strategic objectives for the NCTV.¹⁶³ However, they also explained that this omission is largely related to the fact that the NCTV was, at the time of acceptance of the co-chairmanship of the Netherlands, in the middle of managing the security crisis due to the steep rise in FTFs, leaving little time to develop a more long-term vision regarding the strategic benefits of the co-chairmanship.

In addition to the meetings between the MFA and the NCTV, a so-called steering group consultation mechanism was set up with a broader set of stakeholders, which could -if considered relevant considering the topics on the agenda- also include the General Security and Intelligence Agency (AIVD), the Military Intelligence Agency (MIVD), the Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences, Ministry of Finance, and the Administrative Unit. This steering group would meet in principle four times a year, in any case in preparation of any Coordinating Committee in March and September.¹⁶⁴ Upcoming events, contributions, delegations, deliberations and preparations with Morocco, and emerging security trends and policy practices were topics that were discussed in the broad sense in the steering group.

During the interview with Dutch policy officers, this steering group consultation mechanism was never mentioned, not in a positive, nor in a negative way. Since there are also only limited documents available regarding the agenda or the minutes of the meetings, it is not possible to assess whether this steering group consultation mechanism was considered to have an added value in coordinating the activities of the Netherlands as Co-Chair.

6.1.2 Intradepartmental coordination

Main findings

Within the MFA, DVB-TN is considered the lead actor on CT and CVE topics. Thematic and regional departments consider their interactions with these topics as secondary to their main focus and would therefore refer to DVB-TN to design the policies. For that reason, they also took a back seat regarding the design of the overall CT and PCVE strategies, and the input regarding the GCTF. They

¹⁶¹ See interview reports no. 4, 5, 9, 14, 15, and 16, on file with IOB.

¹⁶² See interview reports, no. 4, 9, 14, 15 and 16, on file with IOB.

¹⁶³ See Questionnaire no. 13, on file with IOB>

¹⁶⁴ Internal memo, on file with IOB.

were, however, regularly informed by DVB about the activities of the GCTF and when asked, provide input related to their field of expertise. This would thus not be on their own initiative. The cooperation between DVB-TN and the liaison officers and regional security coordinators on related issues, on the other hand, worked quite well.

Within the MFA, DVB-TN kept other relevant departments such as the regional sections (mainly Africa section) and the department on stabilization and humanitarian aid, informed of the agendas and the activities within GCTF. These departments were also asked to provide input if requested on certain topics. This cooperation, however, mostly had an ad hoc character, and was not used for the development of a comprehensive strategic vision on the CT and PCVE agenda (see more elaborate paragraph 6.2 on coherence of policy).¹⁶⁵

Regional and country specific developments regarding terrorism and violent extremism threats, and CT and PCVE policies or policy gaps, were closely monitored by diplomats at the different embassies. The MFA, furthermore, has set up a network of RSCs for six regions of particular interest regarding security and terrorism developments, namely: North Africa, West Africa, East Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Western Balkan. The RSCs, in general, played an important role in sharing information with their counterparts and relevant stakeholders regarding the activities of the GCTF, in enhancing awareness concerning the Good Practices, and assessing the need for implementation. Particularly the RSCs in the three African regions had the opportunity to tune into the agendas of the GCTF Regional Working Groups and to contribute to the efforts to contextualize the good practice documents. This possibility was best used in the East African region, where the GCTF Working Group had set up a mechanism of local coordination groups.¹⁶⁶ The RSCs also played a role in the regional need assessments and due to the position of the Netherlands as the Co-Chair had easy access to relevant governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

For the period of the co-chairmanship, the MFA appointed four GCTF liaison officers in New York, Washington DC, Rabat (Morocco) and Ankara (Turkey) in order to strengthen the outreach capacity and the bilateral relations regarding GCTF issues with key partners ((former) Co-Chairs and the UN). Internationally, these are unique positions; no other country has appointed dedicated officers at their embassies or permanent representations. Interviews with the key GCTF Members, and representatives of the UN confirm that particularly the liaison officers in Washington DC and New York, fulfilled an important liaison function in the preparation towards GCTF meetings. These liaison officers would, in close contact with the MFA, thus set up consultations bilaterally and multilaterally through the diplomatic networks

¹⁶⁵ See interview reports no. 8, 11, and 13, on file with IOB.

¹⁶⁶ The East African region Working Group had allocated a local coordinator to each Horn of Africa partner country. France was appointed to Djibouti, Australia to Ethiopia, the US to Kenya, Turkey to Somalia and Yemen, Germany to Tanzania, and the Netherlands to Uganda and Sudan. Not all local coordination groups were as effective. The coordination of activities for Uganda and Sudan by the Netherlands worked well and particularly focused on an exchange between the Ugandan and Sudanese government and countries interested in supporting capacity-building projects.

to inform others regarding the GCTF activities and Good Practices, to organize informal exchanges regarding policies and threat assessments, and to consult representatives of other GCTF Members concerning support for the introduction of specific topics for the agenda and working plans of the GCTF. The liaison officer in New York, furthermore, facilitated a permanent exchange between the UN CT entities and the GCTF Co-Chairs regarding agendas and initiatives, in order to champion the mutual coherence and cross-referencing in documents. The liaison officers in Rabat and Ankara were mostly focused on the bilateral relations.

A positive observation made by Dutch policymakers related to the close cooperation of DVB with the regional departments within the MFA, but more particularly with the diplomats at embassies, for instance in their role as liaison officer or as RSCs.¹⁶⁷ They played an important role in informing DVB regarding security and threat developments in the regions, the development and implementation of regional and country specific CT and PCVE policies, and the contact with relevant interlocutors.

The cooperation between the different actors within the MFA on the issues of CT and PCVE, and the particular role and focus attributed to each of these actors with a key role for DVB-TN, in general seemed to work well, and to the satisfaction of all in terms of efficiency. However, this way of organizing the cooperation had its impact on the coherence of policy, which also becomes evident from the questionnaires and the interviews with Dutch policy officers (see paragraph 6.2).¹⁶⁸

6.1.3 Cooperation between the Co-Chairs Morocco and the Netherlands

Main findings

After some initial problems, the GCTF teams of Morocco and the Netherlands took a practical approach to co-lead the GCTF. The cooperation was professional and exercised with mutual respect.

To ensure smooth and efficient cooperation between the Co-Chairs, Morocco and the Netherlands set up dedicated GCTF teams within their MFAs. The focus of these teams was uniquely dedicated to GCTF issues, in order to prevent that any bilateral diplomatic disagreements between the two countries would hinder the cooperation. Such bilateral diplomatic disagreements certainly existed in the beginning of the co-chairmanship period, particularly concerning the issuance of Dutch social benefits to dual nationals who permanently reside in Morocco.¹⁶⁹ In addition, both teams also needed to get to know each other and familiarize themselves with the cultural differences and differences in way of operating. According to Dutch policy officers, the direct way of operating of the Dutch might have raised some eyebrows on the side of the Moroccan team in the beginning. Yet the dedicated GCTF co-chairmanship teams decided to take a practical approach and isolate their

¹⁶⁷ See interview reports no. 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, and 14, on file with IOB.

¹⁶⁸ See interview reports no. 3, 8, 11, 13, and 14, on file with IOB.

¹⁶⁹ See interview reports no. 2, 6, 9, and 16, on file with IOB.

GCTF cooperation from other bilateral diplomatic agendas. This seems to have been a good approach, given the overarching positive experiences and mutual appreciation of the Dutch and Moroccan policy officers in their responses to the questionnaire and during the interviews.¹⁷⁰

There was not a pre-set division of tasks for the co-chairmanship. Rather, all tasks were executed in close consultation. The only exception related to differences regarding (bilateral) outreach activities through the respective embassies to for instance encourage participants to attend the Coordinating Committee and Ministerial meetings in September in New York.

6.2 Coherence of policy

Main findings

The cooperation on CT and PCVE topics within the MFA has not led to the formulation of a shared vision regarding a comprehensive CT and PCVE strategy.

The assessment of the coherence of policies shows that to the maximum extent possible, coherence was secured within the Netherlands between the CT and PCVE policies on the international, national, and local level.

Although a masterplan did not exist concerning which topic would best be handled in which international forum, efforts were made to ensure synergies were secured between the policies developed in different international fora by providing regular updates by the Co-Chairs for Members of other international fora on the developments in the GCTF. This approach was not followed in a systematic manner in regional and sub-regional organizations of which the Netherlands is not a member.

Synergies were also ensured by making cross-references in GCTF documents to the documents of other international organizations, or vice versa by suggesting, where appropriate, the cross-referencing to GCTF documents in documents by other international organizations.

Within the GCTF, the Co-Chairs were furthermore in the position to ensure that coherence in the way certain topics were addressed in the various GCTF documents was preserved. However, it can be concluded that there is still room for improvement with regard to this aspect of the coherence of policy. This concerns the references to already existing binding rules under international law. Particularly certain cross-cutting themes such as gender issues, and human rights, are not always addressed in a similar manner.

There are three different aspects to the assessment of coherence of policy. Following the evaluation of the intra-departmental coordination, the internal coherence of the Dutch CT and PCVE policy will first be assessed. Next, the focus will be on the coherence of the Dutch local and national CT and PCVE strategy and policies with the contributions of the Netherlands in various international fora. And finally, coherence of policies also depends on the consistent and coherent manner in which reference is made to certain issues in various GCTF framework documents, and the language that is used.

¹⁷⁰ See interview reports no. 4, 5, 9, 14, 15, and 23, on file with IOB.

6.2.1 Internal coherence of Dutch CT and PCVE policy

The cooperation on CT and PCVE topics within the MFA (as discussed in the previous paragraph), has not led to a more integrated approach where all relevant departments contribute in a joined effort to the formulation of a CT and PCVE strategy, resulting in a shared view on what a comprehensive CT and PCVE strategy entails. The benefit of such an integrated approach would be that different disciplinary lenses are used to look, for instance, at the underlying problems of radicalization, and the various policy approaches to address this. This is a missed opportunity to ensure better coherence of national CT and PCVE policies and does also no longer sit in line with the international policies where a trend toward more comprehensive approaches is developing.

The initiative and the lead on the GCTF affairs, and the Co-Chairmanship tasks clearly lied with DVB-TN, who did inform other departments and asked for comments if relevant. DVB-TN, however, did not actively facilitate the gathering of input spurring from the specific lenses used by these other departments, in order to ensure a multidisciplinary assessment of certain developments could be made, leading to common position. Neither did these departments take the initiative on their own account to propose certain topics. When asked, policy officers of other thematic departments did not consider their focus areas to be of any relevance to CT and PCVE policies per se.¹⁷¹

This way of working is in contrast with the comprehensive whole of government and whole of society approach to CT and PCVE promoted by the Netherlands in international fora. This approach is thus not internalized within the work of the MFA, where, in general, there seems to be a siloed view on CT and PCVE policies. Issues related to terrorism are considered by most MFA policy officers¹⁷² as specialist topics that belong solely to the scope of interest of the DVB-TN, who mainly uses a security lens to look at issues. This, however, is a reflection of an obsolete view of what a comprehensive strategy entails.

As explained in the Annex (paragraph 7.2.1), the views of the international community regarding an effective CT strategy have evolved over time. The focus of the policies after 9/11 was mostly on the security agendas, with a primacy of the security actors that took the lead in the counter terrorism activities. This focus shifted over time towards a strategy with more attention for root causes of radicalization towards violent extremism, conditions that create vulnerabilities in communities, and the importance of respecting and promoting human rights while countering terrorism. Within the UN, this shift had implications for the variety in actors that became more actively involved in the development and implementation of policies. The most prominent example is the pivot in orientation of the UNDP,¹⁷³ which in the beginning did

¹⁷¹ See interview reports no. 13 and 14, on file with IOB.

¹⁷² See interview reports no 1, 4, 5, 9, 11, 13, and 14, on file with IOB.

¹⁷³ See for a more elaborate account of this pivot, B. van Ginkel, "Violent extremism and development: Witnessing a fundamental pivot", Clingendael Alert, November 2017, available online

not want to have anything to do with CT, but at a certain time realized that the risk of terrorism and violent extremism was undermining the effectiveness of their ODA programs. This was the prelude to the development of the views on PVE as a key objective promoted by the UN, and which by now is also considered to have become an integral and necessary component of an overall effective CT and PCVE policy. Within the UN, this shift in orientation has also guided the internal organization, leading to the establishment of the more effective UN Global Compact to ensure the input of all relevant agencies and actors regarding the development and implementation of CT and PCVE policies could be taken into account.

An example that illustrates the siloed view on these issues within the MFA can be found in the fact that the nexus between an ODA and a PVE approach did not feature in the input of the Netherlands for the GCTF. This is remarkable given the fact that the Dutch MFA had financially supported the publication of the much-cited UNDP report 'Journey to Extremism in Africa',¹⁷⁴ which i.a. triggered the development of the ODA-PVE toolkit within the MFA to assist policy makers to ensure that ODA programs would be VE sensitive, or even also target PVE.¹⁷⁵ None of the policy officers interviewed, however, regarded the challenges regarding the linkage between ODA and PVE of importance for the work of the Netherlands in the GCTF.¹⁷⁶

Another example relates to the perceptions regarding the need to make use of input from civil society organizations to assist in the development of a coherent Dutch vision on CT and CVE policies, including for the purpose of informing the GCTF input. Even though the MFA has set up a network of civil society organization (CSO) actors to assist in reflecting on and developing policies and programs in the ODA and PVE sector, and thus already has institutionalized a CSO consultation framework, it was not considered relevant to make use of this network for the development of a comprehensive view on the Dutch foreign CT and PCVE strategy, nor to collect their input in relation to the GCTF work.

6.2.2 Coherence between Dutch local, national and international policies

Another aspect of the coherence of policy relates to the overarching strategy guiding the contributions of the Netherlands in various international fora and regarding the agenda-setting in the GCTF, and the way the input followed from both the National Counterterrorism

<https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/C_Alert_Violent_extremism_and_development.pdf> (last visited 5 April 2021).

¹⁷⁴ UNDP, 'Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and Tipping Points for Recruitment', 2017, available online <<https://journey-to-extremism.undp.org/en>> (last visited on 15 March 2021).

¹⁷⁵ PVE Toolkit, developed by Human Security Collective, available online <<https://www.hscollective.org/assets/PVE-toolkit-Factsheet.pdf>> (last visited on 15 March 2021).

¹⁷⁶ Questionnaires and interview reports on file with IOB.

Strategy,¹⁷⁷ as well as the Integrated International Security Strategy.¹⁷⁸ The Netherlands used its position within the GCTF to share the policy practices developed on CT and PCVE within the Netherlands, as well as the way they are implemented in a multidisciplinary tailored manner in the local context. This contributed to coherence in Dutch policy regarding the international, national and local level.

The main themes and thus the focus of the Dutch government efforts on counterterrorism was furthermore on denying terrorist organizations safe havens, cutting off flows of funds for terrorism, and disrupting transnational links between criminal and terrorist networks. The Integrated International Security Strategy also mentioned the importance of an integrated approach and coordination within the EU, the UN, the Global Coalition to Counter ISIS/Daesh, and the GCTF.¹⁷⁹ According to MFA policy officers,¹⁸⁰ a masterplan strategy regarding which forum would be best suited to address a certain topic did not exist. This was rather decided on an ad hoc basis, mostly depending on whether there was a certain appetite among the Member States to support placing a topic on the agenda.

During meetings of, particularly, the EU, the Global Coalition to Counter ISIS/Daesh, and NATO, the representatives of the Dutch MFA would make use of the opportunity to make an intervention to also refer to the ongoing activities or the developed policies in the GCTF to stimulate synergies. Most contributions referred to FTF issues. In general, third parties mostly recognize Dutch contributions on various CT or PCVE contributions in international fora on their consistent plea for human rights and gender issues.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, an informal EU head group of six or seven EU Member States worked together on CT/CVE/PVE and indirectly shared their lessons learnt with the GCTF between 2012-2015.

The approach to provide updates on the activities of the GCTF was not used in regional and sub-regional organizations of which the Netherlands is not a member. Only on the rare occasion that a Dutch diplomat or policy officer would attend a meeting of, for instance, a regional organization in Africa, would it make use of the opportunity to share information on the activities of the GCTF.¹⁸² Considering the special focus of the GCTF on Africa with two regional Working Groups, this is a missed opportunity for awareness raising and outreach.

Although, during the co-chairmanship the Dutch GCTF team was very much attuned to making maximum use of the opportunities to update others on GCTF activities, according to a Dutch

¹⁷⁷ Dutch National Counterterrorism Strategy 2016-2020, available in Dutch at < <https://www.nctv.nl/documenten/publicaties/2016/07/11/nationale-contraterrorismestrategie-2016-2020>> (last visited 4 March 2021).

¹⁷⁸ Integrated International and Security Strategy 2018-2022, Kamerstuk 33694 Nr. 12, 27 March 2018, p. 19, available in Dutch at < <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2018/03/19/notitie-geintegreerde-buitenland--en-veiligheidsstrategie-gbvs>> (last visited 4 March 2021).

¹⁷⁹ Integrated International and Security Strategy 2018-2022, Kamerstuk 33694 Nr. 12, 27 March 2018, p. 19, available in Dutch at < <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2018/03/19/notitie-geintegreerde-buitenland--en-veiligheidsstrategie-gbvs>> (last visited 4 March 2021).

¹⁸⁰ See interview reports no. 2 and 7, on file with IOB.

¹⁸¹ See Interview reports no. 25, 27, 30, and 33, on file with IOB.

¹⁸² See interview report no. 13, on file with IOB

policy officer, it was less conscious of how the combined efforts in the various international fora would have implications on the overall Dutch efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism. When asked to contribute to the quarterly threat assessment provided by NCTV, in particular the section on the various policy responses undertaken to counter the threat, apparently, the efforts regarding EU policies were not taken into account.¹⁸³ The common position was that reporting on those efforts would be done via a different channel and would therefore not be relevant for the overall picture. Another policy officer also stated that the link between the EU internal CT agenda and the national CT agenda was of a (very) limited nature and could have had a more structural character.¹⁸⁴

6.2.3 Coherence of GCTF policies

Coherence of policies also depends on the consistent and coherent manner in which reference is made to certain issues in various GCTF framework documents, and the language that is used. Clearly, the variety of Members of the GCTF, including the permanent members of the UNSC, means there are some significant differences of opinion vis-à-vis international policies on CT and PCVE, as well as on human right policies. These differences certainly play a role when new issues are discussed within the context of the GCTF. Despite these differences, some themes are repeatedly included on the agenda, and also feature in the framework documents that have been endorsed by the GCTF Members. It is particularly, in reference to these topics, that the coherence of GCTF policies is assessed.

Firstly, there are differences in the way references are made to international legal obligations and human rights frameworks. For instance, reference in GCTF framework documents to UNSC Resolutions is quite consistent, whereas reference to human rights obligations is less consistent and more often debated during the text negotiations.¹⁸⁵ A particular aspect is related to the kind of language that is used to refer to international obligations or international policies and practices and particularly the verbs that describe the binding nature of the international obligation or agreement. The differences between phrases like ‘States should respect’, ‘States are recommended to respect’, or ‘States have an obligation to respect’ can turn into so-called red-flag issues during text negotiations.

There also seems to be lack of consensus among the GCTF Members, leading to inconsistencies in the documents, regarding reference to certain concepts or terminology used, such as the difference between ‘(radicalization leading to) extremism’ or ‘(radicalization leading to) *violent* extremism’. Several respondents to the questionnaires and interviewees, representing GCTF Members and international organizations, stressed this issue as

¹⁸³ See interview report no. 16, on file with IOB.

¹⁸⁴ See interview report no. 17, on file with IOB.

¹⁸⁵ See interview reports no. 17, 18, 24, 30, 33, and 35, on file with IOB; See also Global Center on Cooperative Security, ‘Independent Review of the Policy and Programming supported by the Global Counterterrorism Forum’s Criminal Justice and Rule of Law Working Group’, 12 September 2019, report commissioned by the Co-Chairs of the GCTF CJRoL WG, Switzerland and Nigeria, on file.

problematic, as it seemed that central coordination regarding the use of certain terms was expected but was not provided by the Co-Chairs.¹⁸⁶ On the positive side, the references to earlier developed and endorsed GCTF framework documents is frequent and quite coherent, contributing to the development of a GCTF acquis on CT and CVE. Many documents, furthermore, build on the recommendations or good practices earlier developed, to further contextualize them or elaborate on the various aspects related to them.

6.3 Relevance

The analysis was -at the eve of the co-chairmanship of the Netherlands-, that in the previous four years (2011-2015), the GCTF had indeed been able to attain an important position within the international CT landscape and had contributed effectively to the international CT debate. For the Netherlands -in the role of Co-Chair- it was thus important to ensure that the GCTF would maintain this position and this reputation. The question is therefore whether the focus of the agenda has been on the right security challenges. In addition, and given the ambition of the Netherlands when accepting the position, it would also be important to ensure that the topics on the agenda of the GCTF *related to the issues identified in the threat assessments by the national security agencies*, the NCTV and the AIVD. It would also be important, that the co-chairmanship position provided the opportunities to share the Dutch expertise, vision and practices regarding the policies addressing these threats.

6.3.1 Focusing on the right topics?

Main findings

The GCTF does not make use of an institutionalized security or risk assessment tool. There is therefore not an objective fact-based method to assess whether the GCTF has been focusing on the right topics, *i.e.* the most important global terrorism threats. Based on a comparison with the main threats identified renown security agencies and think tanks during the period of the co-chairmanship, it can nevertheless be concluded that many of the important security and terrorism risks have been addressed in the context of the GCTF. However, since these topics are in general proposed by the Co-Chairs of the Working Group, there is a risk of a biased preference for certain issues, and blindness to emerging threats in regions that are less represented and less active and vocal within GCTF.

The responses from the interviews conducted among all different stakeholders and all submitted questionnaires¹⁸⁷ showed that from a list of characteristics of the GCTF, the respondents valued the relevance of the topics on the agenda of the GCTF the most.¹⁸⁸ Also,

¹⁸⁶ See interview reports no. 17, 18, 24, and 35, on file with IOB.

¹⁸⁷ Questionnaires and interview reports no. 3, 5, 8, 9, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 30, 31, 33, 35, and 36, on file with IOB.

¹⁸⁸ The characteristics of the GCTF listed were: agility, speediness of developing policy documents, limited membership of 30 members, consensus of decision-making, transparency of procedures, relevant topics, focus on practical implementation of policies, geographical spread of membership, variety in output documents to fit

the agility of the Forum, according to the interviewees and submitted questionnaires, contributes to this characteristic. The ability to respond relatively quickly to new threat developments is attributed, according to the respondents, to the nimble organization, the limited membership, and the a-political and technical orientation of the GCTF.

The topics placed on the agenda are mostly proposed by the Co-Chairs of the WGs and sometimes by individual members as a stand-alone initiative. Presumably, these topics have a relevance based on a risk/security assessment or policy gap assessment made by the Co-Chairs themselves (either or not based on security reports of their own security services).

When comparing the topics addressed by the GCTF with the threat and security developments in the period of evaluation (see the analysis in the Annex, paragraph 7.2.3), one can conclude that many of the main threat developments have featured on the agenda of the GCTF. One of the themes that was identified in international security reports is the increasing risk of kidnapping for ransom. This topic had already been addressed in 2012, leading to a very modest document.¹⁸⁹ Given this threat developments, it would have made sense to revisit or further elaborate on this topic, or use the 2012 document to develop the practices into capacity-building initiatives. In terms of the focus on specific forms of terrorism and regions, the emphasis of GCTF activities is mostly on jihadi terrorism, and activities of terrorist organizations in Syria and Iraq and some African regions. Compared with the security reports analyzed in the Annex, it thus seems that attention for other forms of terrorism based on different ideologies (such as racially and ethnically motivated terrorism), and the increasing (jihadi) terrorist threats in other regions (such as Central and South-East Asia) have not been addressed by the GCTF.

So, although there is no doubt that the topics that have been addressed are indeed relevant, this way of operating comes with a risk of a biased preference for certain issues, and blindness to emerging threats in regions that are less represented and less active and vocal within GCTF. Furthermore, the membership of the GCTF is limited, and not all members are equally active and vocal within the Forum, meaning that certain voices are not heard in placing topics on the agenda.

6.3.2 Alignment with the security issues identified in Dutch security reports

Main findings

The topics on the agenda of the GCTF corresponded with the main threats identified in the Dutch security assessments and the policy strategies. The GCTF meetings were subsequently used as a podium to showcase the Dutch approach in handling these threats, with an emphasis on the multidisciplinary and local context approach.

the purpose, non-binding character of output documents. Respondents were asked to choose three characteristics that they valued most. Questionnaires on file.

¹⁸⁹ Algiers memorandum on Good Practices on Preventing and Denying the Benefits of Kidnapping for Ransom by Terrorists, 2012, available online <<https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Framework%20Documents/2016%20and%20before/GCTF-Algiers-Memorandum-Eng.pdf?ver=2016-09-01-114738-100>> (last visited 21 March 2021).

Focusing more on the relevance of the topics on the agenda for the Dutch CT policy, it is clear that they corresponded with the main threats as they have been identified by the Netherlands in the International Security Strategy¹⁹⁰ and the National Counterterrorism Strategy¹⁹¹ (see the Annex, paragraph 7.3). According to policy-officers of the MFA, the Netherlands as the Co-Chair of the FF Working Group, used a variety of sources and data, i.a. the data by INTERPOL, showing the increase of numbers of FTFs, to guide them in identifying topics for the FF Working Group agenda.¹⁹² They also refer to the 2013 report of the AIVD¹⁹³ showing an increase of persons travelling to Syria and Iraq.

The GCTF meetings have furthermore certainly served a purpose for the Netherlands as a way of showcasing the multidisciplinary CT and PCVE approaches used in the Netherlands as effective policies in the Dutch context. Particularly, the NCTV has ensured that relevant practitioners and experts could present on the practices they use in, for instance, detention and rehabilitation, forensic investigation, and the multidisciplinary and whole of society ('security house') approaches during various GCTF meetings. Also, the importance of a local approach at municipality level was highlighted, and a special meeting was organized on this topic, for which mayors of different regions were invited to explain their local approach.

These meetings also contributed to the objective to build networks among practitioners. Some interviewees indicated that indeed building networks among practitioners and offering a forum for exchange of practices and expertise among a multitude of stakeholders was one of the objectives of the GCTF.¹⁹⁴ However, they also stated that the sheer number of GCTF meetings that takes place all over the world has become an impediment for GCTF Members to always send relevant experts to these meetings.¹⁹⁵ As a result, there is a risk that the discussions within the GCTF turn into a diplomatic exchange of views.¹⁹⁶ The Netherlands, conscious of this trend, had taken the initiative to organize a meeting with national CT coordinators to strengthen these relationships. This meeting was certainly appreciated by many. However, it only got followed up once, and did not turn into a more permanent setting, as not all countries have dedicated national CT coordinators within their government and had rather mandated an official from their MFA to participate.

¹⁹⁰ International Security Strategy, Kamerstuk 33694 Nr.1, 21 June 2013, available online < <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-33694-1.htm>> (last visited 5 April 2021).

¹⁹¹ Dutch National Counterterrorism Strategy 2016-2020, available in Dutch at < <https://www.nctv.nl/documenten/publicaties/2016/07/11/nationale-contraterrorismestrategie-2016-2020>> (last visited 4 March 2021).

¹⁹² Questionnaires and interview reports on file with IOB.

¹⁹³ Although not properly referenced in the response to the questionnaire, one is probably referring to the 2012 Annual Report of the Netherlands General Intelligence and Security Agency, in which the emerging trend of foreign fighters was signaled, available online < <https://www.aivd.nl/documenten/jaarverslagen/2013/04/23/jaarverslag-aivd-2012>> (last visited 15 March 2021).

¹⁹⁴ See interview reports no. 6, 9, and 14, on file with IOB.

¹⁹⁵ See interview reports no. 6, 17, 18, 24, 25, 34, on file with IOB.

¹⁹⁶ See interview reports no. 3, 5, 17, 22, 24, 25, 34, and 35, on file with IOB.

7 ANNEXES

7.1 Research approach:

7.1.1 Evaluation criteria

The *relevance* of the Dutch policy and the role of the Netherlands as Co-Chair of GCTF has two dimensions, namely an objective and a subjective dimension. The objective relevance is measured in two ways. Firstly, the relevance is related to the question whether the policies show a direct link with terrorist threat analysis or identified counterterrorism policy gaps. In other words, are the policies developed and the role of the Netherlands as Co-Chair focused on the right topics, considering the terrorist threats - in terms of actors, modus operandi and weapon and target choice - identified by renowned think tanks and agencies. Secondly, the objective relevance is related to the links to Dutch security strategy on the one hand, and international security strategies on the other hand. Evidence of the latter can be found in the cross-references in policy documents of other international organizations.

The subjective relevance of the Dutch policy and the role of the Netherlands as Co-Chair of GCTF relates to the awareness and appreciation among other key stakeholders of the policies and activities.

Coherence of policy has three different aspects: the internal coherence of Dutch CT and PCVE policy, the coherence of Dutch local and national CT and PCVE policy with the contributions of the Netherlands in international fora, and the coherence of policies within GCTF framework documents. The assessment of the internal coherence of Dutch CT and PCVE policies is based on the evaluation of the intra-departmental coordination, and the way this cooperation leads to the development of a shared vision on a comprehensive strategy.

Coherence is also assessed in reference to the overarching relevant Dutch strategies regarding counterterrorism and the linkages with the GCTF agenda. This is related to the question whether there is an overarching strategy to guide the activities and agenda setting in the various international platforms in which the Netherlands operates, including the GCTF. And finally, coherence of policies relates to the coherence of the GCTF policy with policies developed by other international organizations, and also depends on the consistent and coherent manner in which reference is made to certain issues in various GCTF framework documents, and the language that is used.

Effectiveness of the Dutch policy and the role of the Netherlands as co-chair of GCTF is measured in relation to the objectives as they were formulated at the beginning of the co-chairmanship. There is also a relation with the impact of the GCTF policies. However, an impact assessment with regard to how the policies developed contribute to curbing the threats they intend to address, falls outside the scope of this evaluation. The limited impact assessment is therefore rather focused on the awareness of the GCTF policies among

practitioners and in regions for which these policies were developed, and on the question whether these policies have influenced national policies.

7.1.2 Methods and Methodology

The findings of this study are based on the analysis of public policy documents and internal memos, and a total of 68 questionnaires and (follow-up) interviews conducted with Dutch and foreign policy makers, representatives of other international organizations and non-governmental organizations, implementing partners, NGOs, and independent experts. The questionnaires included questions tailored to the different groups of stakeholders. For instance, questions regarding adequacy of the budget and the internal working methods were only posed to Dutch policy makers; and questions regarding the added contribution another international organization could make to the GCTF was only posed to representatives of international organizations. The names of those who submitted a questionnaire or with whom an interview was conducted are known to IOB. In this annex, a list is included to identify in general terms representatives of GCTF Members, international organizations, Dutch policy makers, implementing parties, NGOs, and other experts. The Dutch policy makers that have been interviewed include current and past policy makers of the Security Department of the MFA, the Department on Humanitarian Aid and Stability of the MFA, liaison offers of the MFA, regional security coordinators of the MFA, and policy makers of the National Coordinator on Security and Counterterrorism.

For the analysis, the main considerations formulated by the Netherlands at the acceptance of the co-chairmanship and the five priorities identified by the Netherlands and Morocco as presented in the Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action were used as the baseline of the analysis. The assessment regarding the coherence, relevance and effectiveness of the policies and the contribution of the Netherlands as Co-Chair, was subsequently compared to the post-co-chairmanship report presented by the Netherlands and Morocco, the so-called Legacy Paper, and based on the appreciation of the stakeholders who submitted a questionnaire or who were interviewed, and the analysis of various documents and information on the GCTF website. In order to interpret certain findings regarding the relevance of the policies, an analysis was made of the international CT landscape with regard to the most important international policy developments, the key actors, and the main security and terrorism threat assessments that were made for the period of evaluation. Furthermore, to interpret the coherence of the GCTF policies with the Dutch foreign CT policy, an overview is included of the Dutch CT policy.

7.1.3 Limitations

Although a broad and representative number of GCTF Member States were approached to contribute to this evaluation,¹⁹⁷ a limited number of States responded.¹⁹⁸ Since most of these States are Western States, the outcomes of the evaluation might represent a Western-centric view on the operations of the GCTF.

Also, not all Dutch policy officers approached for the questionnaires and interviews were willing to cooperate. Some had only recently accepted a position dealing with GCTF issues and did not feel comfortable reflecting on the co-chairmanship period, as they had not or hardly been part of the GCTF team. Others felt it was too long ago to offer any meaningful reflections or were simply not willing to reflect on their own role as member or coordinator of the GCTF team.

In their responses, stakeholders from different GCTF Members or representatives of international organizations, CSOs or other experts, did not necessarily distinguish between the role of the Netherlands and the role of Morocco, when commenting on the accomplishments during the co-chairmanship. It is therefore not possible to specifically attribute certain successes or flaws to either one of the Co-Chairs.

Finally, the GCTF website and the Members only portal does not systematically place all relevant documents on the website, meaning it is not always clear whether all relevant documents have been consulted.

7.1.4 Questionnaire questions

The questionnaires were tailored to the specific stakeholders that were requested to reflect on the GCTF in general and the role of the Netherlands as Co-Chair specifically. Below is one example of a questionnaire.

GCTF in general

1. What security threats/risks or policy gaps have been addressed by the GCTF?
2. Do you consider the identified threats/risks/policy gaps to be the most prominent ones, deserving to be addressed by the GCTF?
3. Do you consider the outcome documents to offer effective responses to the threats/risks and policy gaps?
4. Are there themes/issues missing from the GCTF agenda that would need to be addressed in your opinion?
5. What do you consider to be the added value of GCTF compared to other organizations?

¹⁹⁷ The following GCTF Members were approached: Australia, Canada, Denmark, the EU, France, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Morocco, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Switzerland, Turkey, and the US.

¹⁹⁸ The following GCTF Members contributed to the evaluation: Australia, Canada, Denmark, the EU, Morocco, Nigeria, Switzerland, and the US.

6. What characteristics contribute most to the added value (Please circle max 3 answers)?
 - a. Agility
 - b. Speediness of developing policy documents
 - c. Limited membership of 30 members
 - d. Consensus of decision-making
 - e. Transparency of procedures
 - f. Relevant topics
 - g. Focus on practical implementation of policies
 - h. Geographical spread of membership
 - i. Variety in output documents to fit the purpose
 - j. Non-binding output documents
 - k. Other...(please specify)
7. What characteristics of the GCTF and its procedures would need improvement, and why? (Please name 3 characteristics)
8. How would you appreciate the discussions and input provided by GCTF members and other experts during the expert meetings?

Communication and awareness raising

9. Do you make use of the GCTF website? If so, what information are you looking for?
10. What is your opinion on the quality of the website in general, and in terms of accurateness and communicative value?
11. In your opinion, is there anything that is missing on the GCTF website?
12. How do you assess the awareness regarding GCTF outcome documents among relevant practitioners/stakeholders?

Impact

13. Which outcome documents of GCTF in general and/or in the period between 2015-2019 do you consider to be the most important? Please elaborate why.

Co-chairmanship

14. What is your appreciation of the way in which the policy strategy for GCTF co-chairmanship is designed, agenda-setting takes place, coordination regarding input for meetings takes place, as well as reporting back after meetings and evaluation of the results? Please also reflect on your role in this trajectory.

15. How would you assess the effectiveness of the Dutch co-chairmanship? Were policy objectives clearly formulated, achievable within the co-chairmanship period, and realistic?
16. How was progress on the policy objectives monitored?
17. Were the internal working methods (within the department and between departments) used in a supportive manner for achieving the policy objectives?
18. Was the budget available for the co-chairmanship adequate in your opinion? Please explain.
19. To what extent have the policy objectives for the co-chairmanship been achieved?
20. What would you consider to be the most important accomplishment/success of the co-chairmanship of the Netherlands of GCTF?
21. What would you consider to be the most important accomplishment/success of the co-chairmanship of the Netherlands of GCTF Foreign Fighters Working Group?

Workflow

22. How do you in general appreciate the workflow of drafting new GCTF outcome documents?
23. What are the positive and negative aspects of the workflow?
24. How do you appreciate the various phases and aspects in the process of drafting outcome documents (written rounds of input, review meetings, silent procedures, cooperation with WG co-chairs)?
25. How would you appreciate the procedure for inviting external participants to the expert meetings?
26. How would you appreciate the supportive role of the Administrative Unit of the GCTF in the process of organizing expert and review meeting, during the expert and review meetings, in the drafting process?

7.1.5 List of anonymized respondents to questionnaires

Below is the list of anonymized respondents to the questionnaires. The names and corresponding organizations/States of the numbers below are known to IOB.

The Netherlands

- | | |
|-------------------|-----|
| 1. DVB department | MFA |
| 2. Policy officer | MFA |
| 3. Policy officer | MFA |
| 4. Policy officer | MFA |
| 5. Policy officer | MFA |
| 6. Policy officer | MFA |
| 7. Policy officer | MFA |
| 8. Policy officer | MFA |
| 9. Policy officer | MFA |

10. Policy officer	MFA
11. Policy officer	MFA
12. Policy officer	MFA
13. Department	NCTV
14. Policy officer	NCTV
15. Policy officer	NCTV
16. Policy officer	NCTV

Other GCTF Members

17. Representative	Switzerland
18. Representative	Nigeria
19. Representative	Australia
20. Representative	US
21. Representative	EU
22. Representative	Morocco

Implementing partners

23. Expert	ICCT
24. Expert	Global Center on Cooperative Security

International organizations

25. Representative	UNODC
26. Representative	UN Monitoring and Sanction Team
27. Representative	OHCHR
28. Representative	Council of Europe
29. Representative	OSCE

Other experts/NGOs

30. Expert	Human Rights Watch
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7.1.6 List of anonymized interviewees

Below is the list of anonymized respondents to the questionnaires. The names and corresponding organizations/States of the numbers below are known to IOB.

The Netherlands

1. Policy officer	MFA
2. Policy officer	MFA
3. Policy officer	MFA
4. Policy officer	MFA
5. Policy officer	MFA
6. Policy officer	MFA
7. Policy officer	MFA
8. Policy officer	MFA
9. Policy officer	MFA
10. Policy officer	MFA
11. Policy officer	MFA
12. Policy officer	MFA

- | | |
|--------------------|------|
| 13. Policy officer | MFA |
| 14. Policy officer | MFA |
| 15. Policy officer | NCTV |
| 16. Policy officer | NCTV |

Other GCTF Members: Australia, Canada, Denmark, EU, Morocco, Nigeria, Switzerland, and US (alphabetical order does not correspond with the order of GCTF Members below)

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------|
| 17. Representative | GCTF Member |
| 18. Representative | GCTF Member |
| 19. Representative | GCTF Member |
| 20. Representative | GCTF Member |
| 21. Representative | GCTF Member |
| 22. Representative | GCTF Member |
| 23. Representative | GCTF Member |
| 24. Representative | GCTF Member |

Implementing partners: Global Center for Cooperative Security, ICCT, RUSI, and UNICRI (alphabetical order does not correspond with the order of implementing partners below)

- | | |
|------------|----------------------|
| 25. Expert | Implementing partner |
| 26. Expert | Implementing partner |
| 27. Expert | Implementing partner |
| 28. Expert | Implementing partner |

International organizations/mandates: Council of Europe, OSCE, OHCHR, UNCTED, UNODC, UN Special Rapporteur on Protecting Human Rights while countering terrorism (alphabetical order does not correspond with the order of international organizations/mandates below)

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| 29. Representative | International organization/mandate |
| 30. Representative | International organization/mandate |
| 31. Representative | International organization/mandate |
| 32. Representative | International organization/mandate |
| 33. Representative | International organization/mandate |
| 34. Representative | International organization/mandate |

Other experts/NGOs: Amnesty International, Brookings Institute, Human Security Collective, ISS (alphabetical order does not correspond with the order of experts/NGOs below)

- | |
|----------------|
| 35. Expert/NGO |
| 36. Expert/NGO |
| 37. Expert/NGO |
| 38. Expert/NGO |

7.2 International CT landscape

In order to evaluate the relevance, coherence and effectiveness of the role of the Netherlands as Co-Chair of the GCTF, it is important to provide an overview of the main policy developments in the recent years, the main actors that operate in the international

counterterrorism landscape (globally or regionally in Europe or Africa), and to reflect on the recent threat developments that may have informed the priorities and the agenda-setting of the co-chairmanship.

7.2.1 Policy developments

Policies to curb the threat of terrorism and violent extremism can be categorized in military responses, repressive and punitive measures, and preventive policies and approaches. Another way of characterizing the various policies relates to the acronyms CT, CVE and PVE. CT (counterterrorism) relates to policies and operations targeting terrorism after it occurs or when it is still ongoing. It targets the perpetrators but also tries to interfere with terrorist methods and operations of terrorist organizations. CVE (countering violent extremism) relates to policies and activities targeting the ideology behind the violence, and the recruitment tactics used by terrorists. Finally, PVE (preventing violent extremism) focuses on policies and projects targeting the vulnerabilities in society in order to create resilience against radicalization.

For years the security sector played the most prominent role in CT, which resulted mainly in military responses and punitive and repressive CT policies. The UN, for instance, mostly focused its CT policy on countering the financing of terrorism, with policies intended to freeze assets of listed individuals and organizations associated with terrorist activities and criminalizing the financing and aiding and abetting of terrorists and terrorist organizations.¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, it was mostly the UN Security Council that dictated the UN policies. In this reactive approach, there was hardly any room for debating the root causes behind terrorism. In fact, some States argued that debating root causes could even be considered a legitimization of terrorism.²⁰⁰ This was certainly the case in the years after 9/11.

In addition to the criminalization of the financing of terrorism, policies also focus on enhancing control mechanisms for transactions and stricter due diligence obligations for financial institutions and most notably non-governmental organizations (NGOs) pursuant to the Special Recommendations issued by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Other policies belonging to the category of CT policies include the developments to further criminalize preparatory acts of terrorism, such as incitement to commit terrorism, recruitment, conspiracy to commit terrorism, or the travel to join terrorist organizations.

Another set of measures, that fall into this category, include measures controlling travel movements, such as identification of travelers, storing and sharing data, designating suspected individuals for no-fly lists and other watchlists, or regarding the pre-flight luggage controls.

¹⁹⁹ See for an elaborate overview of the developments regarding CT within the UN, B. van Ginkel, 'Towards a Comprehensive and Effective Counter-Terrorism Policy within the United Nations', in: G. Molier, A. Ellian and D. Suurland, *Terrorism: Ideology, Law and Politics*, Republic of Letters Publishing, Dordrecht, 2011, pp. 277-303.

²⁰⁰ B. van Ginkel, *The Practice of the United Nations in Combating Terrorism from 1946 to 2008: Questions of Legality and Legitimacy*, Intersentia, 2010, p. 90.

After a few years of mainly hard security policies, a shift in approach became visible with more attention for human rights, and the importance to also look beyond the security spectrum. In 2005, the UN Commission on Human Rights, created a mandate for a Special Rapporteur on the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism.²⁰¹ In 2006, the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy was adopted in the UN General Assembly.²⁰² This strategy introduced the 'softer' CVE approach with more focus on 'conditions conducive to terrorism' and respect for human rights, in other words a comprehensive approach. Still the term 'root causes' was not used. Although, this approach propagated a whole of government approach and engagement strategies with civil society, the main driving actor remained the security sector. The Security Council, however, did stress the importance of respecting human rights in general terms in the resolutions it adopted.²⁰³ Within the UN Counterterrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) of the Security Council's Counterterrorism Committee (CTC), a human rights officer was appointed in 2005 to oversee the human rights implications of the adopted resolutions. In addition, the earlier mentioned UN SC resolution on countering incitement also included an objective to strengthen dialogue among different stakeholders as a means to counter violent extremist narratives.²⁰⁴ The policy objectives regarding countering hate speech and incitement, resulted in the development of a new policy focus, namely on the development of counter-narratives, and mandates to identify and take down extremist content on the internet and social media. At the other end of the radicalization process, States started to develop policies for disengagement or even deradicalization. These objectives particularly feature in rehabilitation and reintegration programs for instance for convicted violent extremist offenders.

Although the CVE approach did allow for a broader view on the issues, the critical voices of mainly civil society organizations were growing, complaining that it was still mainly the security sector that was 'running the show'. This was also an impediment to any constructive cooperation between the development sector and the security sector.

This criticism was acknowledged by the UN Secretary General, who subsequently presented the UN Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) on 24 December 2015.²⁰⁵ The PVE plan of action points out that the security-based approach to countering violent extremism and terrorism of the last two decades has not put a stop to the threat posed by violent extremist groups. It therefore stresses that there is "a need to take a more comprehensive approach which encompasses not only ongoing, essential security-based counter-terrorism measures, but also systematic preventive measures which directly address the drivers of violent extremism that have given rise to the emergence of these new and more

²⁰¹ UN Commission on Human Rights, Resolution 2005/80, April 2005.

²⁰² UN Doc A/RES/60/288, adopted 20 September 2006.

²⁰³ One of the first resolutions in which human rights were prominently mentioned is UN SC Resolution 1566, 8 October 2004, UN Doc S/RES/1566 (2004).

²⁰⁴ UN SC Resolution 1624, 14 September 2015, UN Doc S/RES/1624 (2015).

²⁰⁵ UN Doc A/70/674 (2015).

virulent groups.”²⁰⁶ PVE policies can thus take various forms, and focus on for instance, countering marginalization of certain vulnerable groups, empowering these same groups through education and skills training, strengthening economic development and entrepreneurship, improving political (youth and gender) engagement, fighting corruption, strengthening respect for human rights and access to justice.

7.2.2 The actors and cooperation

The United Nations

On the international level there is a plethora of actors involved with CT, CVE and PVE policies. The most prominent actor is the United Nations (UN), who -since 1972- has been active on this topic. In the early years, the UN’s action was mostly focused on codification of legislation criminalizing specific terrorist acts, such as hijacking or hostage taking. Discussions also started on a comprehensive legal definition of terrorism, but so far, no international consensus has been reached on this issue. The UN Security Council (UNSC), in the years 70s-90s, has mostly used its mandate to condemn specific terrorist attacks, followed in some instances with sanctions. Since 9/11, the UN has stepped up its engagement. Particularly the Security Council took up a leading role on the international level with the adoption of the mandatory and first-ever legislative UNSC Resolution 1373 (2001), which criminalized the financing of terrorist activities. This resolution also led to the establishment of the Counterterrorism Committee (CTC), and the CTC’s Executive Directorate (CTED), which is engaged with the implementation of various UNSC resolutions. To monitor the sanction resolutions, the UNSC has established various Sanction Monitoring Teams (MT), of which the Analytical Support and Sanction Monitoring Team has played a very important role. The MT furthermore regularly drafts threat and trend assessment reports. The Ombudsperson, established by the UNSC in 2009, allows individuals whose financial assets have been frozen pursuant to the designation on the MT’s financial freezing list to petition delisting.²⁰⁷

Another important actor within the UN family is the General Assembly. In 2005, the GA set up the Counterterrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) with different thematic working groups. A total of 24 UN entities, such as the UNODC, OHCHR, MT, UN Women, UNDP, and OCHA, and Interpol were member of these thematic working groups, in which one attempted to break through the different silos and strive towards better cooperation of the various policies and their implementation.²⁰⁸ Although, the intention was certainly a good one, in practice it did not yield the results one hoped for. In 2017, the General Assembly therefore decided to set up the UN Office on Counterterrorism (UNOCT).²⁰⁹ The objectives of the UNOCT

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ The Office of the Ombudsperson was established by UNSC Resolution 1904, 17 December 2009, UN Doc S/RES/1904 (2009).

²⁰⁸ B. van Ginkel, *The Practice of the United Nations in Combating Terrorism from 1946 to 2008: Questions of Legality and Legitimacy*, Intersentia, 2010, p.205.

²⁰⁹ UN GA Resolution 71/291, 15 June 2017, UN Doc A/71/291 (2017).

are to provide leadership on the UN's CT agenda, enhance coherence and coordination among the UN Global Counterterrorism Coordination Compact (replaced the CTITF in 2018)²¹⁰ entities to ensure a balanced implementation of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy, to strengthen the capacity-building delivery, and to enhance the visibility and advocacy role of the UN on counterterrorism. The establishment of the UNOCT, with its strengthened mandate and - just as important- its largely increased budget, significantly changed the role the UN plays on the international CT agenda.

Other important actors within the UN family are *inter alia* the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR), the UN Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC), the UN Development Program (UNDP), and the already mentioned Special Rapporteur on promoting and respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms while combating terrorism. Each of them is engaged on the UN CT, CVE or PVE agenda in relation to their own field of expertise either in cooperation with Member States or within the context of programs set up by the UN Global Counterterrorism Compact Coordination mechanism.

Since the establishment of the GCTF, there has been a working relationship between the GCTF and the UN. This had in particular to do with one of the main aims formulated in the Political Declaration issued at the establishment of the GCTF, namely that the GCTF aimed to assist in the implementation of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy. In 2018, a Joint UN-GCTF Ministerial Statement was issued by the GCTF and the UN in which the importance of strengthened cooperation in the field of prevention, accountability, evidence gathering and border control was highlighted.²¹¹

The European Union

Outside the UN, there are various regional organizations that also have developed CT policies. Of these regional organizations, the European Union (EU) is most developed in terms of the topics that are covered, the mandate available to act, and the funds to follow up with various engagement, training, information exchange and capacity building activities. The EU has adopted a counterterrorism strategy, with a focus on Prevent, Protect, Pursue and Respond (3PR Strategy). Although there is one comprehensive strategy, a wide variety of actors and organs within the EU, with different mandates and powers, is responsible for the translation to specific policies, and the implementation of them. For instance, there is a big difference between on the one hand, the binding measures on combatting the financing of terrorism, the tools and databases set up for operational cooperation, and, on the other hand, data

²¹⁰ On 23 February 2018, the UN Secretary-General signed the UN Global Counterterrorism Coordination Compact to replace the CTITF coordination mechanism.

²¹¹ Joint UN-GCTF Ministerial Statement, 26 September 2018, New York, available online < https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Links/Meetings/2018/14th%20Coordinating%20Committee/GCTF%20Ministerial%20Plenary%20Meeting_Joint%20UN-GCTF%20Ministerial%20Statement.pdf?ver=2018-09-26-184858-417> (last visited 5 April 2021).

exchange that depends on the voluntary contribution by Member States to feed the databases, and the (non-binding) recommendations on preventing violent extremism. Worth mentioning are the quarterly and annual threat assessment reports that are respectively produced by the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre and Europol that feed the various actors within the EU concerned with policy development, with relevant data and trend analyses.²¹² Furthermore, the EU has set up a variety of coordination and cooperation mechanisms to facilitate data sharing and criminal justice cooperation, including mechanisms to enhance external border security. For the purpose of countering and preventing violent extremism, programs are set up to assist actors within the EU as well as actors outside the EU. For the programs within the EU, the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) plays an important role by bringing together first-line practitioners in different fields (e.g. prison, youth, education, police) to exchange good practices and to develop hands on practical guides to strengthen the interventions.²¹³ With regard to programs targeting third countries to support rule of law and human rights compliant responses to prevent radicalization and to address root causes of radicalization to violent extremism, the EU mainly uses its European Neighbourhood Policy and the Instrument to Stability and Peace. These programs have a focus on capacity-building. The EU is a member of the GCTF, and thus participates in all activities of the GCTF.

The Council of Europe

The Council of Europe (CoE) has mostly focused on codification of international legislation and criminal justice cooperation and protection of human rights.²¹⁴ The Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism (CDCT) is the main driving actor behind the activities of the CoE.

The CoE frequently participates in the activities of the CJ RoL Working Group of the GCTF. The adoption of the GCTF The Hague-Marrakesh Memorandum on Good Practices for a More Effective Response to the FTF Phenomenon, has, furthermore, inspired the development of the CoE's Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism. Also the development of the CoE Guidelines on the Links between Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime followed the example of a GCTF Framework Document, namely the GCTF Addendum to the Hague Good Practices on the Nexus between Transnational Organized Crimes and Terrorism; focus on criminal justice.

²¹² The reports of EUROPOL are publicly available on their website: TE-SAT reports, available online < <https://www.europol.europa.eu/tesat-report>> (last visited 5 April 2021).

²¹³ See for more information on RAN their website < https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network_en> (last visited 5 April 2021).

²¹⁴ For instance, the Council of Europe's 'Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism', CETS No. 219, Riga, 1 July 2017, or the Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism, Working Group of Experts on Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime, 'Guidelines on the Links between Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime', 17 November 2020, CDCT-TTOC (2019) 01 rev 9.

The Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe

The Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has a special focus on countering terrorism as part of its efforts to counter transnational threats to security. To guide its efforts the 'OSCE Consolidated Framework for the Fight against Terrorism' is developed, which highlights operational principles and identifies the strategic focus of future OSCE counter-terrorism activities. The focus of the activities is on promoting the implementation of the international legal framework against terrorism, and on countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (CVERLT). Thereto, the OSCE issues practical guides and handbooks, and regularly organizes capacity building activities.²¹⁵

The OSCE regularly attends the meetings of the FF Working Group, the CJ RoL Working Group, and the CVE Working Group. The OSCE has, furthermore, organized twelve seminars across the OSCE regional area regarding the Rabat Memorandum, and also refers to the Neuchatel Memorandum in the seminars that touch upon gender and age sensitive responses to terrorism.

African actors

There are various African actors that are involved in CT and PCVE. Although regularly invited to the GCTF Regional Working Groups, the cooperation between the GCTF and the African actors has -at best- an ad hoc character.

Within the context of the *African Union* (AU), the 'OAU Convention on Combating and Preventing Terrorism' was adopted in 1999 and requires that States Parties criminalize terrorist acts under their national laws as defined in the Convention. It defines areas of cooperation among states, establishes state jurisdiction over terrorist acts, and provides a legal framework for extradition as well as extra-territorial investigations and mutual legal assistance.²¹⁶ In 2002, the AU adopted a Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism. The Plan of Action adopts practical CT measures that substantially address Africa's security challenges, includes measures in areas such as police and border control, legislative and judicial measures, financing of terrorism and exchange of information.

In addition, the Peace and Security Department (PSD) of the African Union Commission (AUC) supports the Peace and Security Committee (PSC), which is the standing decision-making organ of the AU for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts.

²¹⁵ See for more information on the activities of the OSCE, 'OSCE overview of counter-terrorism related commitments', July 2020, available online < https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/5/107686_1.pdf > (last visited on 1 March 2021).

²¹⁶ OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, adopted on 1 July 1999, entered into force 6 December 2002, available online < https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37289-treaty-0020_-_oau_convention_on_the_prevention_and_combating_of_terrorism_e.pdf > (last visited 1 March 2021).

The Department on Peace and Security oversees the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (CAERT), which was established in 2004. CAERT's objective is to serve as a structure for centralizing information, studies and analyses on terrorism and terrorist groups and to develop CT capacity building programs. CAERT also provides a forum for interaction and cooperation among Member States and Regional Mechanisms. Since 2010, the director of CAERT is furthermore mandated to operate as the AU Special Representative for Counter-Terrorism Cooperation.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is an intergovernmental organization of East African states. IGAD's Security Sector Program has a special CT pillar. According to their own website, the CT pillar's "main goals and activities are geared towards building national and regional capacity of the Horn of Africa countries in the fight against terrorism, radicalization and extremist's violence."²¹⁷ Capacity building programs focus on implementing the rule of law and human rights and good practices in cooperation with other international partners. In 2018, IGAD furthermore established the *IGAD Centre of Excellence* for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism offering a dedicated platform to institutionalize the prevention and countering of violent extremism in the Horn and Eastern Africa Region.²¹⁸ This Center of Excellence is intended to serve as a resource for governments, civil societies, youth, religious leaders, experts, practitioners, businesspeople, and others interested in addressing violent extremism. Activities focus on training, exchange and engagement, counter-messaging and research and innovation.

In the West African region, it is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that also contributes to African CT activities. ECOWAS, for instance, established the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA) in 1999, with a focus on the protection of West African economies and financial systems against money laundering and terrorist financing.²¹⁹ In 2013, ECOWAS also issued the ECOWAS Counterterrorism Strategy, followed by a Plan of Action for the implementation.²²⁰

Military cooperation

Finally, this overview would not be complete without also mentioning the role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and its role in combating terrorism. NATO's work on counter-terrorism focuses on improving awareness of the threat, developing capabilities to

²¹⁷ See the website of IGAD < <https://www.igadssp.org/index.php/components-mainmenu/counter-terrorism> > (last visited 1 March 2021).

²¹⁸ See Press Release, available online < <https://igad.int/press-release/1797-igad-inaugurates-its-center-for-preventing-and-countering-violent-extremism> > (last visited on 1 March 2021).

²¹⁹ See for more background information the website < <https://www.ecowas.int/institutions/the-inter-governmental-action-group-against-money-laundering-and-terrorism-financing-in-west-africa-giaba/> > (last visited on 1 March 2021).

²²⁰ See online < <https://www.ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/IMPLEMENTATION-PLAN-CT.pdf> > (last visited on 1 March 2021).

prepare and respond, and enhancing engagement with partner countries and other international actors. Most of the work is concentrated in the Defense against Terrorism Program of Work (DAT-PoW). The Centre of Excellence of Defense against Terrorism (CoE-DAT), furthermore, is a multi-nationally sponsored entity, which offers recognized expertise and experience to benefit the Alliance, especially in support of transformation, and advised the Alliance on CT related issues.

The adoption of the GCTF Abuja Recommendation on the Collection, Use and Sharing of Evidence for the Purposes of Criminal Prosecution of Terrorist Suspects had particular impact on developments within NATO regarding the use of battlefield evidence.

NATO is also a member of the *Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh/ISIS*, along with 82 other partners. Established in 2014, its aim is to fight Daesh/ISIS on all fronts, also beyond the military confrontation. The Global Coalition therefore also focuses on fighting the financing and economic infrastructure of ISIS, countering the propaganda, and stabilizing and restoring institutions for public service delivery. An important theme is the prevention of the movement of foreign terrorist fighters.²²¹ To coordinate the activities on the different themes, the Global Coalition has set up various Working Groups.

Although the lens through which the Global Coalition assesses themes mostly has a military or security focus, there is overlap between the issues addressed by the Global Coalition and the GCTF. A clear delimitation regarding the question which actor should for instance address an issue related to the FTF Phenomenon, cannot be made. Noteworthy, in this context, is the fact that the Netherlands also chaired the FTF Working Group of the Global Coalition.

7.2.3 Security and threat developments

In order to answer the question whether the GCTF has been focusing on the right topics, it is important to provide an overview of the most important security and threat developments as they have been identified by renowned organizations. Their analysis can subsequently be compared with the topics that have been addressed by the GCTF.

The last decades have shown that the terrorist threat is perpetually changing, whether it is the terrorist cause or objective of the organization, the way of organizing the movement, the modus operandi, the targets chosen, or the weapons used. Several international organizations have their own analytical unit that provides the organization with threat assessments and security reports. This is the case for the UN, the EU and NATO (see previous paragraph). States, clearly, also have their agencies that provide the government with intelligence reports and threat analysis and sometimes foresight studies. Furthermore, there are various

²²¹ See for more background information the website < <https://theglobalcoalition.org/en/mission/>> (last visited on 1 March 2021).

internationally renowned think tanks that issue regular terrorist threat reports: Rand Cooperation, The Soufan Center, ISS, ICCT, Global Terrorism Database of the Maryland University, and the ICSR. The analytical units of organizations, the intelligence and security services of States, and reports of think tanks all offer important input for policy platforms such as the GCTF to discuss and form a clear picture of the threats they are dealing with, or which they can anticipate.

During the period of evaluation, one of the most prominent threats with global implications²²² were posed by the rise of ISIS, the establishment of the Caliphate, and the enormous numbers of foreign fighters who travelled from more than 110 countries to join ranks with various armed groups in the conflict region of Syria and Iraq.²²³ In addition, important threats are posed by the home grown followers or lone actors that acted merely in name of ISIS after a call by ISIS, the threats posed by returning foreign fighters also after the decline of the Caliphate,²²⁴ and the regrouping of ISIS fighters. Yet, within the Syria/Iraq region, ISIS is not the only terrorist organization that is active. Others include Al Nusra, Tahrir al-Sham, and various Al Qaida-affiliates. Beyond the region of Syria and Iraq, attacks in Central Asia, the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and Western Europe particularly showed the vulnerability of so-called soft targets, public places which have a symbolic meaning or in general draw a large crowd and represent a Western or non-Islamic way of life. These attacks also turned out to be very deadly when, not explosives, but trucks or kitchen knives were used as weapons, thereby weaponizing ordinary life.

Meanwhile, at a regional African level (a particular region of interest for the GCTF) the terrorist threat has been very severe, with activities by organizations such as Boko Haram, the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), Al Shabaab, Al Qaida in the Maghreb (AQIM), and the Tuareg in the countries Nigeria, Mali, Kenya and Somalia.²²⁵ A characteristic that become more and more prominent, also with respect - but not limited- to these regional terrorist organizations, is the link with transnational organized crime -either at an ad hoc basis or based on an opportunistic relationship- to finance and logistically support the terrorist activities. This could take form through the trafficking of goods (cigarettes, drugs,

²²² Multiple security reports have been consulted for this summary. See for instance the reports of the Analytical Support and Sanction Monitoring Team of the UN SC since 2014, the reports of the Global Terrorism Database, and Europol.

²²³ An important report on foreign fighters was issued by the Analytical Support and Sanction Monitoring Team of the UNSC, UN Docs S/2015/358, 19 May 2015, available online < <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/084/57/PDF/N1508457.pdf?OpenElement>> (last visited 12 March 2021).

²²⁴ Report of the Analytical Support and Sanction Monitoring Team of the UNSC, UN Docs S/2016/629, 19 July 2016, available online < <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N16/204/10/PDF/N1620410.pdf?OpenElement>> (last visited 12 March 2021); R. Barrett, 'Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees', *The Soufan Center*, October 2017, p. 7, < <https://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Beyond-the-Caliphate-Foreign-Fighters-and-the-Threat-of-Returnees-TSC-Report-October-2017-v3.pdf>> (last visited 6 April 2020).

²²⁵ Currently, the threat has spread even further and now also hits Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Mozambique.

arms, timber, natural resources, cultural heritage, or wildlife), money laundering, or human trafficking and migrant smuggling. A continuously increasing trend since 2014, relates to the numbers of hostage takings for ransom.²²⁶

Amongst the deadliest terrorist organizations in the period of research, also still features the Taliban, with a particular increase in 2019, during the peace talks.²²⁷ The Taliban and Al Qaida also have had their influence on the security and threats in Central Asia.²²⁸ The number of terrorist attacks has furthermore been increasing significantly in South Asia and South East Asia, particularly in Nepal, Myanmar and the Philippines.²²⁹ Other significant rises in the number of terrorist attacks concerned the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and Yemen. Also, the United States showed an increase. The motivational factors and ideology behind the terrorist attacks in the US were quite diverse. Some of these attacks, however, show resemblance with attacks in other parts of the world such as Sri Lanka and Christchurch (New Zealand) and were driven by racially and ethnically motivated terrorism (REMT).²³⁰ Overall, however, the period of evaluation showed a global decrease in the total number of terrorist attacks since the peak in 2014.²³¹

7.3 Dutch CT and PCVE policies

To assess whether the GCTF has been focusing on topics that are relevant for the Netherlands, an overview of the CT and PCVE policies of the Netherlands is provided.

The MFA has a dedicated section within the Department on Security Affairs (DVB) on Counterterrorism and National Security (DVB-TN). DVB-TN coordinates the Dutch foreign policy on CT and P/CVE in cooperation with other departments within the MFA, such as the

²²⁶ Global Terrorism Database, Overview of Terrorism in 2014, available online < https://start.umd.edu/pubs/START_GTD_OverviewofTerrorism2014_Aug2015.pdf> (last visited 12 March 2021).

²²⁷ Global Terrorism Database, Overview of Terrorism in 2019, available online < https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_GTD_GlobalTerrorismOverview2019_July2020.pdf> (last visited 12 March 2021).

²²⁸ Report of the Analytical Support and Sanction Monitoring Team of the UNSC, UN Docs S/2015/441, 16 June 2015, available online < <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/093/25/PDF/N1509325.pdf?OpenElement>> (last visited 12 March 2021).

²²⁹ Report of the Analytical Support and Sanction Monitoring Team of the UNSC, UN Docs S/2015/441, 16 June 2015, available online < <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/093/25/PDF/N1509325.pdf?OpenElement>> (last visited 12 March 2021); Global Terrorism Database, Overview of Terrorism in 2017, available online < https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_GTD_Overview2017_July2018.pdf> (last visited 12 March 2021).

²³⁰ Report of the Analytical Support and Sanction Monitoring Team of the UNSC, UN Docs/2019/570, 15 July 2019, available online < <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N19/199/15/PDF/N1919915.pdf?OpenElement>> (last visited 12 March 2021).

²³¹ Global Terrorism Database, Terrorism in 2018, available online < https://www.start.umd.edu/sites/default/files/publications/local_attachments/START_GTD_TerrorismIn2018_Oct2018.pdf> (last visited 12 March 2021); and Global Terrorism Database, Terrorism in 2019, available online < https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_GTD_GlobalTerrorismOverview2019_July2020.pdf> (last visited 12 March 2021).

Department on Stability and Humanitarian Aid (DSH), and the regional departments. DVB-TN, moreover, closely interacts with the Embassies and especially the regional security coordinators for the Maghreb, West Africa, East Africa, Southeast Asia and the Balkan, and with the dedicated GCTF liaison officers in New York, Washington DC, Ankara, and Rabat, who were appointed for the period of the co-chairmanship. DVB-TN, furthermore, coordinates with other Ministries and agencies in the Netherlands, such as the Ministry of Justice, especially the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV).

The Dutch foreign policy strategy on counterterrorism and countering and preventing violent extremism relevant for the period of evaluation, was based on several policy documents, namely the International Security Policy of 2013,²³² the Integrated International and Security Policy of 2018-2022,²³³ and also had links with the National Counterterrorism Strategy 2016-2020.²³⁴ Based on the notion that external and internal security are interrelated, several objectives were set in these policy documents. Among the objectives were the activities to address the conditions conducive to radicalization to violent extremism in the regions most at risk, to improve the criminal justice approach and mutual legal assistance and to ensure that national efforts and policies are in line with international policies.²³⁵

The Dutch National Counterterrorism Strategy 2016-2020 included a paragraph on threat developments.²³⁶ It identified a list of factors that could influence the threat developments in the future. Among these factors, it identified the continuing unstable situation in the Middle East and North Africa as a factor that is conducive to the proliferation of terrorist organizations in the region. It, furthermore, addressed the learning capacities of terrorist organizations regarding the lethality of the attacks and the reorientation towards soft targets. It also warned for the impact of an expected decline of the Caliphate on the potential number of returnees and the continued allegiance to the ideology resulting in new regional chapters of ISIS. In addition, it listed the increased focus on extremist narratives in the cyber domain and the use of cyber tools to hack systems, the vulnerabilities that large refugee flows present for infiltration by returnees, and the increase in threat coming from so-called lone actors.²³⁷ Also the Integrated International and Security Strategy presented in 2018, recognized the continued threat by terrorist jihadist networks, in particular ISIS, for both the national and the

²³² International Security Strategy, Kamerstuk 33694 Nr.1, 21 June 2013, available online < <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-33694-1.htm>> (last visited 5 April 2021).

²³³ Integrated International and Security Strategy 2018-2022, Kamerstuk 33694 Nr. 12, 27 March 2018, p. 19, available in Dutch at < <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2018/03/19/notitie-geintegreerde-buitenland-en-veiligheidsstrategie-gbvs>> (last visited 4 March 2021).

²³⁴ Dutch National Counterterrorism Strategy 2016-2020, available in Dutch at < <https://www.nctv.nl/documenten/publicaties/2016/07/11/nationale-contraterrorismestrategie-2016-2020>> (last visited 4 March 2021).

²³⁵ International Security Strategy, Kamerstuk 33694 Nr. 1, 21 June 2013, available online < <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-33694-1.htm>> (last visited 5 April 2021), p. 19.

²³⁶ Dutch National Counterterrorism Strategy 2016-2020, *op cit.*, pp. 26-27.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

international security and adds the risks of the emerging nexus between terrorist networks and transnational organized crime organizations.²³⁸

Internationally, the Netherlands has invested a lot in sharing practices and expertise, also as a way to acquire an international position as an acknowledged important partner in international fora such as the EU, the UN, the Global Coalition against ISIS/Daesh and the GCTF regarding the non-military approach of counterterrorism.²³⁹ Since the Netherlands would not be able to face the threats of terrorism alone, due to its trans-border character, it clearly formulated its ambition to intensify the international engagement in international governmental bodies and informal bodies such as the GCTF.²⁴⁰ In 2014, a Special Envoy on Counterterrorism was appointed to ensure coherence in the diplomatic policy discussions. The Policy Brief on International Security of November 2014, furthermore, particularly drew attention to the problem of foreign fighters and the need to further international cooperation on this topic.²⁴¹ In February 2015, the Dutch government allocated a structural extra budget for the support of the security chain.²⁴²

7.4 Future themes for the GCTF agenda

The respondents to the questionnaires and the interviewees offered a wide variety of ideas regarding the topics they felt the GCTF should focus on in the future of the GCTF. The topics below are placed in random order, and do not reflect in any way the breadth of the support for the theme identified.

- Transitional justice
- Lessons learned from implementation of previous good practice documents
- Racially and ethnically motivated terrorism (REMT)
- Threats posed by artificial intelligence, building on work by Zurich-London
- Long term consequences of returnees; and repatriation policies (comparative study)
- More focus on life cycle of radicalization topics, rather than on hard protection themes, which can also be covered by other fora
- Financing of terrorism
- Cooperation between intelligence services

²³⁸ Integrated International and Security Strategy 2018-2022, Kamerstuk 33694 Nr. 12, 27 March 2018, p. 19, available in Dutch at < <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2018/03/19/notitie-geintegreerde-buitenland--en-veiligheidsstrategie-gbvs>> (last visited 4 March 2021).

²³⁹ Integrated International and Security Strategy 2018-2022, Kamerstuk 33694 Nr. 12, 27 March 2018, p. 34.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 40.

²⁴¹ Beleidsbrief Internationale Veiligheid, Kamerstuk 33694 Nr. 6, 24 November 2014, p. 17.

²⁴² The increased structural budget entails 128 million euro. See Kamerstuk 29754 nr. 302, 27 February 2015, available in Dutch at <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-29754-302.html> (last visited 4 March 2021).

- More involvement of civil society and private sector
- Hate speech/incitement versus freedom of speech
- Impact of CT surveillance measures on the right to privacy
- State accountability for human rights abuses while countering terrorism
- Treatment of terrorist suspects in detention
- Protection of journalists' and human rights defenders' activities and speech
- Impact of Covid-19 on terrorism and radicalization to violent extremism
- Linkages to prevention of violence and peacebuilding
- Bioterrorism
- Ecoterrorism
- Research into root causes
- Human rights assessment of all GCTF policies
- State of emergency/marshal laws and the impact on human rights

7.5 List of GCTF Framework Documents adopted between 2015-2019

1. Addendum to the Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders
2. Neuchâtel Memorandum on Good Practices for Juvenile Justice in a Counterterrorism Context
3. Addendum to The Hague-Marrakech Memorandum on Good Practices for a More Effective Response to the FTF Phenomenon with a focus on Returning FTFs
4. Recommendations on the Effective Use of Appropriate Alternative Measures for Terrorism- Related Offenses
5. Valletta Recommendations Relating to Contributions by Parliamentarians in Developing an Effective Response to Terrorism
6. Good practices for effective border security and management (BSM) in the CT context and to stem the flow of FTFs
7. Recommendations on the Role of Religious Education in Fostering Peace and Countering Violence
8. The Role of Families in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Strategic Recommendations and Programming Options
9. The Antalya Memorandum on Good Practices on the Protection of Soft Targets in a Counterterrorism Context
10. The Zurich-London Recommendations on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism Online

11. Abuja Recommendations on the Collection, Use and Sharing of Evidence for Purposes of Criminal Prosecution of Terrorist Suspects
12. Good Practices on Addressing the Challenge of Returning Families of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs)
13. Rabat – Washington Good Practices on the Prevention, Detection, Intervention, and Response to Homegrown Terrorism
14. The Hague Good Practices on the Nexus between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism
15. Glion Recommendations on the Use of Rule of Law-Based Administrative Measures in a Counterterrorism Context
16. Addendum to the Good Practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism
17. New York Memorandum on Good Practices for Interdicting Terrorist Travel
18. Berlin Memorandum on Good Practices for Countering Terrorist Use of Unmanned Aerial Systems.

7.6 References

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THE GLOCAL CONNECTION
PLATFORM FOR SHARED SECURITY

About: THE GLOCAL CONNECTION - Platform for Shared Security was established in 2019 by Dr. Bibi van Ginkel. The Glocal Connection builds on the idea that effective, legitimate and sustainable solutions for wicked security challenges are best served by solutions that have been designed and are implemented in a multi-stakeholder setting, based on the principles of rule of law and human security concepts, in order to create ownership.

The Glocal Connection thereto aims to connect the global policy thinking to the local policy implementation, as well as to share the local experiences with the global policy platforms to better inform policy design. It contributes to this goal through research, policy advise, training, moderation and monitoring & evaluation of policies.