1. Background

The growing popularity of online video games and their integration1 with social media and other platforms in recent years, has produced an evolving online gaming culture with its own communication eco-systems and sub-cultures. Terrorists and violent extremists have sought to exploit this expanding online space to pursue their goals – primarily using video games and gaming-adjacent platforms such as Discord and Twitch as a means of recruitment, radicalization and for the dissemination of propaganda. Interest from the international community in the intersection of gaming and violent extremism is growing, with organizations such as the European Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) emphasizing the increasing importance of gaming in violent extremism (VE) spaces. However, it is also clear that gaming may provide benefits to players and potentially be a source of resilience in the context of counter-terrorism (CT) and preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE). According to the Extremism and Gaming Research Network, “video gaming is a source of resilience for many, reaching an all-time-high during the pandemic according to polling agency Nielsen, with 82% of global consumers playing video games and watching gaming content during lockdowns.”2

Diving into the critical role of gaming and adjacent platforms in the spread of terrorism and violent extremism cannot be fully understood without the input of relevant actors and entities within the space, including gaming companies, social media platforms, and other experts in this field. To better understand the landscape, in May 2021 UNOCT began exploring the nexus between violent extremism and video games as a pilot initiative by conducting original, ground-breaking research. It examined emerging threats and potential solutions in the gaming industry through three phases. The first phase consisted of a literature review and initial consultation with experts through focus groups. The second phase consisted of focus groups with gamers. The first and second phases then shaped

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1 Cross platform integration, in video games with online gaming functionality, cross-platform play, crossplay, or cross-play describes the ability of players using different video game hardware/software to play with each other simultaneously, while integrating other social media platform.

2 EGRN
the design and circulation of a survey among trusted networks of gamers to understand their experiences with violent extremism in gaming and gaming-adjacent platforms. The findings from all the research phases were compiled into a report the results of which will be featured in this event.

2. Content

UNOCT will launch the publication of “Raiding the Dungeon: Examining the Intersection between Gaming and Violent Extremism” with a live broadcast high-level event scheduled for Monday 3 October 2022. At the event, the full scope of the research and findings will be shared and discussed with practitioners, industry stakeholders, and gamers. This event will also highlight the importance of the nexus between online video games and violent extremism to Member States, UN entities, civil society and other relevant stakeholders, and will propose evidence-based actions and potential future areas of research.

This event will be publicly covered on UN Web TV in line with UNOCT’s commitment to a “whole-of-society” approach, allowing broad access to a range of interested stakeholders, including gamers themselves.

The launch will continue to put gamers at the centre of the conversation, just as they have been at the centre of the research, by highlighting not only the concerns and issues this nexus between gaming and violent extremism holds, but also the possible solutions. The potential benefits of gaming, both in the context of counter-terrorism and PCVE and more broadly, that were uncovered during the research, will also be presented to viewers.

3. Objectives

● Present the findings and analysis of the research
● Demonstrate the significance of the nexus between gaming and violent extremism
● Suggest evidence-based actions and potential avenues of new research

4. Attendees

In line with UNOCT’s commitment to a whole-of-society approach to terrorism, this event will include representatives from the private sector, academia, civil society, Member States, and gamers with the objective of strengthening alliances and partnerships between UNOCT programmes and all relevant actors.

5. Venue, Date and Language

The high-level event is scheduled to take place on Monday, 5 October 2022 from 10:00 am to 11:45 am Eastern Daylight Time, and will primarily focus on highlighting this original research and discussing findings.

The event will be conducted online, in English and broadcasted LIVE on UN Web TV.