Data Highlights Rising Geopolitical Risks in 2024 and the Need for Proactive Strategies to Address the Permacrisis

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, July 4, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- • 74% of surveyed risk management experts believe geopolitical tensions will significantly impact their organisations in 2024.
• 47% of global alerts shared by International SOS with clients throughout 2023 were connected to political violence and unrest.
• 38% of experts believe their organisations are not equipped to respond to or mitigate the effects of social or civil unrest.

In the face of an increasingly volatile global landscape, International SOS, the world's leading health and security services company, emphasises the need for organisations to address the dual challenges of rising geopolitical risks and the ensuing impact on employees' mental health and wellbeing. Insights from the International SOS Risk Outlook 2024 report reveal this pressing concern; the permacrisis environment is taking a significant toll on both organisations and individual wellbeing, with 65% of risk professionals agreeing that the world has become more dangerous throughout the last year and around three-quarters of them expecting employee mental health to have a significant impact on their organisation this year.[1]

The global spread of political polarisation has also intensified. Over half (53%) of countries analysed in the 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer report feeling more divided than ever, with distrust in government as a key driver.[2] This distrust extends beyond governments, as International SOS Risk Outlook data reveals that employees now trust their employers more than public services as information sources. Growing polarisation can impact workplace dynamics, leading to changes in employee behaviour and increased levels of personal friction. To mitigate these risks, organisations should develop programmes to safeguard their employees, including a comprehensive workplace violence prevention programme, having escalation planning in place, and implementing policies clearly stating acceptable and unacceptable behaviours within their workplace. Early intervention and clear communication can help prevent minor disagreements

from escalating.

The relentless cycle of crises creates not only operational disruptions but also a mental health risk for employees. Pre-existing demands for better mental health support have become even more pressing as employees face increased stress, anxiety and burnout from prolonged exposure to geopolitical tensions, cost of living impacts and uncertainty. Almost three-quarters of risk professionals expect employee mental health to significantly impact their organisations this year.1 Organisations must address this head-on, understanding and mitigating the often-multifaceted impact of geopolitical issues.

Commenting on these issues, Sally Llewllyn, Global Security Director at International SOS, underscores the urgency to account for risks linked to geopolitical tensions: "The current geopolitical landscape is a perfect storm of interconnected crises, with cascading effects on global security. Conflicts arise with little warnings, and political instability can rapidly escalate, creating a constantly evolving threat environment. Additionally, organisations face added challenges with the upcoming wave of global elections. As more than half of the world is set to hold national elections this year, a surge of misinformation and disinformation may arise. At International SOS, we have witnessed an increased awareness of misinformation and disinformation in recent years, even in locations where we wouldn't normally have seen previously.

Dr Rodrigo Rodriguez-Fernandez, Global Health Advisor, Wellness & Mental Health, at International SOS, comments, "Periods of geopolitical turmoil can exacerbate employee mental health challenges. Organisations have a vital role to play in mitigating this and fostering a culture of trust. Clear and reliable communication can be a critical tool for reducing employee stress and anxiety, enabling organisations to cultivate a more resilient and engaged workforce. As we go into the second half of 2024, it is vital for organisations to continuously monitor evolving risks and proactively anticipate and plan for a range of potential disruptions. Organisations require a layered security approach which prioritises their workforce's security, health and wellbeing, to better equip them to navigate these challenging times."

International SOS recommends the following strategies for organisations to navigate the rising global geopolitical risks:

1. Enhanced situational awareness for geopolitical shifts: Implement a comprehensive information gathering and analysis process specifically tailored to monitor geopolitical developments. Ensure access to real-time and accurate intelligence combined with expert insights. Partnering with organisations offering on-the-ground intelligence and access to security experts allow organisations to gain actionable insights to navigate volatile situations and predict potential outcomes.

2. Targeted crisis communication: Develop a multi-channel and integrated communication plan tailored to employee location, role and specific needs during a geopolitical crisis. This system should include SMS, push notifications and other appropriate channels to maintain consistent

contact, confirm employee safety and provide immediate assistance or evacuation as needed.

3. Scenario planning: Conduct scenario planning exercises for a variety of high-impact, high-probability geopolitical threats specific to the organisation's global footprint. Use predictive analysis to scenario plan for the most likely, least likely, and best/worst-case outcomes. This preparation enables organisations to anticipate potential impacts and develop strategies to mitigate risks effectively.

4. Crisis response training: Implement a comprehensive crisis response training programme that incorporates interactive workshops, simulations and e-learning modules to educate employees on geopolitical risks, potential impacts, and response protocols. This should include education on how employees can stay informed and identify misinformation during periods of geopolitical uncertainty.

5. Mental health support: Provide easy and confidential access to mental health resources and support programmes, including a dedicated employee assistance programme hotline and counselling services to help employees manage anxiety, stress and build resilience. Foster a culture of open communication and encourage employees to seek support if they are struggling with the emotional impact of global events.

6. Continuously adapt: Conduct a thorough review after an incident to identify what worked and what did not in the crisis management process. Establish a feedback loop to gather insights from employees at all levels after a crisis to identify areas for improvement in the response strategy, particularly regarding the effectiveness of communication and support during incidents.

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