



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

### **OSCE Annual Security Review Conference**

**Vienna, 24 June 2020**

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#### **Working Session I:**

#### **EU Statement on “Transnational threats – current and future trends in the OSCE area and beyond”**

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The European Union would like to thank the Albanian Chairmanship for organising this working session and thank the speakers for their presentations. We welcome the prominence given to the issue of transnational threats this year, in line with the Chairmanship’s priorities, and the specific focus placed on transnational organised crime.

Time and again, Ministers of the participating States of the OSCE have expressed their common resolve to prevent and counter transnational threats through a comprehensive approach, to prevent and counter violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism, enhance cyber/ICT security, strengthen border security and management and combat organised crime. We regret that no consensus was found over the past three years to expand our commitments on countering transnational threats, including during the last Ministerial Council in Bratislava on important issues mentioned in UNSCR 2396, such as API/PNR. At the same time, current mandates allow both the executive structures of the OSCE and participating States to do a lot of meaningful operational work to prevent and counter transnational threats on the ground. It is in the field where the OSCE makes a concrete progress and difference.

The impact of the COVID-19 on the transnational threat landscape has re-emphasised the need to work collectively across the OSCE region to anticipate developments and formulate effective responses. Criminal groups and other malign actors have demonstrated their ability to adapt to the new circumstances and tailored their activities to the specificities of the pandemic. The COVID-19 crisis accelerated further the digitalization of our lives and economies, but it also increased online threats: participating States witnessed a steep

increase of identity theft and online fraud and scams, not to mention cyberthreats against critical infrastructure, including the healthcare sector, or intensified disinformation. This once again demonstrates the need to maintain a free, open, peaceful and secure cyberspace that will help underpin global prosperity and security. In this regard, we believe that the confidence-building measures developed by the OSCE constitute a valuable tool to reduce the risks of conflict stemming from the use of ICTs, and we support their full implementation. This crisis also confirms the relevance of the priorities identified in the Transnational Threats Department's work programme and the importance of the assistance provided by the OSCE to participating States in this field. As regards disinformation, we wish highlight the important work done by the EU vs Disinfo team and the recent Joint Communication by the European Commission and HR/VP "Tackling COVID-19 disinformation - Getting the facts right", that enlisted major disinformation trends, its sources and our collective actions to counter it.

We appreciate the specific focus placed in today's discussion on organised crime. Organised crime transcends national borders, threatening governance, peace, development and public health and has become one of the main challenges to the stability of States and regions. It represents a direct threat to the security and safety of citizens, fuels conflict and corruption and money laundering and triggers violence. In addition, organised crime often reinforces other major security threats such as the illicit financing of terrorism or the trafficking of goods and human beings.

The linkages between organised crime and terrorism are a particular concern for the EU, in particular in relation to terrorist financing. The UN Security Council has expressed concern over the connections between terrorism and transnational organised crime, such as money laundering, trafficking in persons, the illicit flows of goods, including weapons and cultural property, most recently in UNSCR 2482 (2019). Recognising this convergence, EU has developed a range of measures which aim at addressing terrorist financing in a comprehensive manner, taking into account its links with organised crime through channels such as the supply of weapons and drug smuggling. EU measures also aim at addressing money laundering and financial crime. The EU welcomes the efforts of the OSCE to support field missions as well as participating States and key partners to establish important legal frameworks such as the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime. Furthermore, we commend the joint work undertaken by the OSCE and UNODC on countering terrorist financing, which receive voluntary contribution from EU MS. Recently in May 2020, the European Commission put forward a series of measures designed to further strengthen the EU's framework to fight against money laundering and terrorist financing, including an Action

Plan for a Comprehensive EU policy on Preventing Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing, a refined and more transparent methodology to identify high-risk third countries as well as an updated list of such countries. Money laundering is a crime difficult to detect. Judicial, law enforcement and private sector international cooperation is essential to ensure the proper exchange of information in fighting money laundering and terrorist financing. The initiative to establish the Financial Intelligence Units (FIU) in several participating States serves as an important connection between the private sector, subject to AML/CFT obligations, with the structures enforcing criminal legislation.

In the EU, we strive to achieve a comprehensive, strategic approach, to tackle organised crime and terrorism, grounded in respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. In this respect, we would like to highlight the role of EUROPOL, which supports its Members States in preventing and combatting all forms of serious international and organized crime and terrorism, and the important role played by EUROJUST, which contributes to improving judicial cooperation in the fight against serious crime. Throughout our activities, we aim to have a balance between preventing and tackling the consequences of crime.

Outside the EU, we work closely with our neighbours and key partners to strengthen our global resilience in the fight against terrorism and organised crime, and contribute to a safer and more secure world for everyone. In the OSCE region, the EU has just concluded a programme co-funded together with Italy and Germany, to support investigations and prosecutions in the Western Balkans region. A second phase of the programme will start in July (with a budget of € 15,8 Mios). It will support Joint Investigation Teams to support local law enforcement authorities in serious organized crime cases. The project also aims to increase the cooperation between the Western Balkans and the EU justice and Home Affairs agencies, such as Europol and Eurojust. The EU also acknowledges the need to address global challenges affecting both the EU and Eastern partners as a whole. Strengthening resilience as an overriding policy framework will be one of the key goals for the Eastern Partnership during the next years including in the areas of society, security, organised crime and cyber, as outlined in the Council Conclusions on Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020 adopted on 11 May 2020 and the Joint Communication of 18 March 2020, endorsed by the EaP leaders last week.

Progress in core areas addressed by SDG16, such as building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions are also essential to tackle effectively organised crime. Developing effective State institutions and administration, functioning police, customs and intelligence services as well as judiciaries all operating under the rule of law and with democratic

oversight and control will lead to multiple benefits in countering organized crime, terrorism and VERLT.

To conclude, first, we cannot prevent and counter current and evolving transnational threats in isolation, nor can we do so alone. We will continue our joint and cross-dimensional efforts to prevent and counter transnational threats, including with Partners for Co-operation. Second, for our efforts to be effective and sustainable, full respect of OSCE commitments and principles is essential, in particular those in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Last but not least, giving voice to our youth and to civil society will strengthen – not threaten – our collective peace and security.

Thank you.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.