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**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

**Office of the Secretary General**  
*External Co-operation Section*



## **2021 OSCE ASIAN CONFERENCE**

**on**

**“Common responses to emerging challenges in advancing comprehensive security”**

20 and 21 September 2021

**Co-organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)**

## **Consolidated Summary**

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## **1 General information**

### **1.1 Venue**

The conference was co-hosted by the Kingdom of Thailand and the Republic of Albania, the 2021 Chair of the Asian Partners for Co-operation Group, with the support of and in close co-operation with other OSCE executive structures within their respective mandates.

Owing to the situation relating to COVID-19 and the respective restrictions, the format of the physical attendance of the conference at the Hofburg/Neuer Saal was limited to 1+1 for each of the Vienna-based OSCE delegations. Other participants were invited to join the conference via a video conferencing platform (Zoom).

### **1.2 Participation**

1.2.1 Participation was in line with the modalities contained in Permanent Council Decision No. 1405 on the agenda, timetable and organizational modalities of the 2021 OSCE Asian Conference. For further details, see the list of participants.

### **1.3 Timetable and organizational modalities**

1.3.1 The conference began with the opening session at 9.30 a.m. on 20 September 2021 and ended at noon on 21 September 2021. The main part of the conference was conducted in three thematic sessions. The opening session was chaired by Ambassador Morakot Sriswasdi, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Vienna, and Ambassador Igli Hasani, Permanent Representative of Albania to the OSCE and Chairperson of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group. During the opening session, keynote speeches were delivered by H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, H.E. Ms. Olta Xhaçka, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, H.E. Ms. Ann Linde, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, H.E. Dato Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Ambassador Luca Fratini, Director, Office of the OSCE Secretary General, Mr. Bogusław Winid, Head, Task Force of the Incoming Polish OSCE Chairmanship.

1.3.2 Each session had a moderator and a rapporteur.

1.3.3 The working language was English.

1.3.4 Arrangements were made for press coverage.

1.3.5 The rules of procedure and working methods of the OSCE were applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the conference.

## 1.4 Agenda

### Monday 20 September 2021

9:30 – 10:30 **Opening remarks** (*live-streamed*)

- **H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand
- **H.E. Ms. Olta Xhaçka**, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania
- **H.E. Ms. Ann Linde**, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden
- **H.E. Dato Lim Jock Hoi**, Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)
- **Ambassador Luca Fratini**, Director, Office of the OSCE Secretary General
- **Mr. Bogusław Winid**, Head, Task Force of the Incoming Polish OSCE Chairmanship

Co-chairs:

- **Ambassador Morakot Sriswasdi**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Vienna
- **Ambassador Igli Hasani**, Permanent Representative of Albania to the OSCE, Chairperson of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group

10:30 – 12:00

**Session 1: Strengthening the fight against transnational organized crime: Adapting to the evolving situation**

This session focused on:

- Addressing new challenges arising from the spread of COVID-19 to combating transnational organized crime;
- Building resilient communities through co-operation between stakeholders to develop comprehensive preventive measures and responses to transnational organized crime;
- Building confidence and security through promoting interregional exchange on best practices related to countering transnational organized crime in the midst of a global pandemic;
- Promoting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the efforts to counter transnational organized crime.

Moderator: **Ambassador Neil Bush**, Head of the Delegation of the United Kingdom to the OSCE, Chairperson of the Security Committee

Speakers:

- **Ambassador Alena Kupchyna**, Co-ordinator of Activities to Address Transnational Threats, Transnational Threats Department, OSCE Secretariat
- **Mr. Giovanni Russo**, Vice Chief Prosecutor, National Antimafia and Counterterrorism Directorate, Italy
- **Ms. Louise Taylor**, Asia Pacific Representative and Director of the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in Asia-Pacific
- **Dr. Amporn Marddent**, Member of the ASEAN Women for Peace Registry, Thailand

*Discussion*

Rapporteur: **Mr. Justin Addison**, Second Secretary, United Kingdom Delegation to the OSCE

12:00 – 14:00

Lunch break

14:00 – 15:30

**Session 2: The OSCE and sustainable development: Enhancing economic and environmental co-operation to promote security and stability**

This session focused on:

- Strengthening co-operation to reverse environmental degradation and the unsustainable use of natural resources;
- Raising awareness and fostering co-operation to address climate change and its impact on the economy and the environment;
- Enhancing partnerships on technology and innovation to promote economic and environmental co-operation.

Moderator: **Ambassador Sihasak Phuanketkeow**, Special Advisor at the Office of the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) of Thailand

Speakers:

- **Ambassador Hinrich Thölken**, Director for International Climate and Energy Policy and Digital Transformation, Federal Foreign Office, Germany
- **Ambassador Guy Bonvin**, Swiss Special Envoy for Water in Central Asia, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
- **Mr. Jamie Isbister**, Ambassador for the Environment, Australia

- **Mr. Marco Toscano-Rivalta**, Chief of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)
- **Prof. MATSUMOTO Yoichiro**, Science and Technology Adviser to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan

*Discussion*

Rapporteur: **Mr. Sun Thathong**, First Secretary, Royal Thai Embassy in Vienna

**Tuesday 21 September 2021**

09:30 – 11:00

**Session 3: Human rights and public health: Sharing experiences and lessons learned between Europe and Asia**

This session focused on:

- Promoting co-operation and dialogue in ensuring the promotion of human rights and the protection of public health;
- Protecting human rights of migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- The role of women in the public health sector during the pandemic.

Moderator: **Ambassador Gesa Bräutigam**, Head of Mission, Permanent Mission of Germany to the OSCE

Speakers:

- **Mr. Matteo Mecacci**, Director, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
- **Dr. Vilawan Mangklatanakul**, Director-General, Department of Treaties and Legal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand
- **Ms. Ivanka Stojanovski**, State Secretary, Ministry of Health, North Macedonia
- **Ms. Jacqueline Weekers**, Director, Migration Health Division, United Nations International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- **Mr. PARK Jang Ho**, Deputy Director-General for International Organizations Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea

*Discussion*

Rapporteur: **Ms. Victoire Bene**, Counsellor, Permanent Representation of France to the OSCE

11:00 – 12:00

**Closing remarks**

*Closing statements by delegations*

- **Ms. Megi Fino**, Deputy Minister, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania
- **Mrs. Chulamane Chartswan**, Director-General, Department of European Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand

**Moderator: Mr. Philippe Tremblay**, Head, External Co-operation Section, Office of the Secretary General, OSCE

12:00

**End of the conference**

## 2 Summary of the opening session

### *Report by Mr. Frank Ligori, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Albania to the OSCE and other International Organizations in Vienna*

The opening session of the conference was moderated by **Ambassador Morakot Sriswasdi**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Vienna, and **Ambassador Igli Hasani**, Permanent Representative of Albania to the OSCE and other International Organizations in Vienna, Chairperson of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group.

**Ambassador Sriswasdi** welcomed all present and regretted that the conference could not be held in Thailand on account of the COVID-19 travel restrictions. She continued by thanking Ambassador Hasani, Chairperson of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group, his team at the Albanian Mission, and the OSCE Secretariat, especially the External Co-operation Section, for the hard work and excellent collaboration in the preparation for the conference. In her remarks, she underscored that Thailand valued the OSCE as a unique platform promoting regional security co-operation under its overarching concept of comprehensive security. Since becoming an Asian Partner in 2000, Thailand had sought to share knowledge and experiences, including those gained in the context of ASEAN, on issues of various common interest on the basis of a similar concept of sustainable security. On this note, she underlined that the 2020 Tirana Ministerial Council Declaration on Co-operation with the OSCE Asian Partners (MC.DOC/2/20) had been a milestone in the partnership, emphasizing the need for an open exchange of information, experiences and best practices between the OSCE and its Asian Partners.

**Ambassador Igli Hasani** thanked the co-organizers of the conference for facilitating the organization of what was an important event that marked the culmination of Albania's Chairmanship of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group in 2021. The previous year had marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the OSCE Asian Partnership for Co-operation, offering an opportunity to rethink and boost the mutual relationship and build even closer co-operation. As holder of the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office in 2020, Albania had been happy to foster consensus on the adoption of the Tirana Ministerial Council Declaration on Co-operation with the Asian Partners (MC.DOC/2/20). Albania had always been a strong advocate for an increased role of the Partners within the OSCE, and all the more so as Chair of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group 2021, a year that had contained a rich calendar of events and seen extensive discussions of topics and issues of our common interest. All of a different nature, but with the same goal: to advance joint efforts to achieve comprehensive security both within and beyond the OSCE area.

After the opening remarks by Ambassador Sriswasdi and Ambassador Hasani, the floor was opened to the high-level participants of the opening session.



**H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, started by thanking the Republic of Albania, Chair of the Asian Partners for Co-operation Group, and the OSCE Secretariat for their excellent co-ordination and dedication to co-organizing the conference in collaboration with Thailand. The theme of the 2021 Conference – “Common responses to emerging challenges in advancing comprehensive security” – reflected common concerns over new and multi-faceted security challenges that would greatly affect future generations. At present, the world’s most formidable challenge was the COVID-19 pandemic, which compounded the existing security issues such as extremism, xenophobia, irregular migration, climate change and disruptive technology. While the coronavirus had not only changed the course of global public health but had also tested the dynamics of the global geostrategic equation, he wished to offer food-for-thought on how to best craft common responses to advancing comprehensive health security and economic and social revival in these trying times. Firstly, he stated that vaccine availability should not and must not be politicized – and for Thailand, putting people front and centre was fundamental to any comprehensive security response. Secondly, he underscored the need for people-oriented approaches and for seeing local expertise as the key driver of resilient developmental security and offered Thailand’s best practices in this regard. Thirdly, in the search for effective ways to contain the pandemic as well as to shore up international and regional co-operation on bringing about the post-pandemic economic and social recovery, all possible efforts must be made, in his own words, “to share vaccines, restore disrupted supply chains, and ensure that the benefits of digital transformation and technological advancement are shared”.

On another note, Mr. Pramudwinai stated: “Our comprehensive recovery after the pandemic is contingent upon a conducive environment of peace, stability and trust.” And he continued: “As conflicts and hostility serve no one in the longer run, we need to put more effort into searching for ways and means to enhance collaboration among nations large and small. This is where the OSCE’s work becomes instrumental and valued.”

In concluding, Mr. Pramudwinai paid due attention to the OSCE’s Asian Partnership for Co-operation, which was a valuable platform for responding to evolving security challenges in the region and for managing the relationships and positions of major powers in the newly emerging security architecture and encounters. Seeing that both ASEAN and the OSCE strive to promote security across all spectrums, it was a matter of great importance to Thailand – as the only ASEAN Member State in the OSCE Partnership – to enhance linkages between the two organizations.

**H.E. Ms. Olta Xhaçka**, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania, thanked Thailand for co-hosting the conference and all the Asian Partners for Co-operation for their support given to Albania during the year. At this critical time for the global and regional security in which conflicts were on the rise and stability was being undermined, the topic of “common responses to emerging challenges” could not have been more appropriate. On this note, however, common responses meant effective multilateralism, the aim of which was to keep the dialogue open among the participating States, despite all the odds; in this connection she expressed her regret that multilateralism was under siege. She also noted that the OSCE had been created

during the Cold War as an inclusive platform for dialogue in order to reduce tensions and foster co-operation in a context of extreme polarization. Nowadays, this situation was much the same, which was why multilateral dialogue and co-operation was needed more than ever.

On another note, Minister Xhaçka highlighted the four fundamental tenets of the OSCE concept of comprehensive security, namely, that security should be comprehensive, co-operative, equal, and indivisible. In this regard, she believed the conference to be the result of a stimulating and inspiring journey upon which Albania had embarked together with the OSCE Asian Partners and the OSCE participating States, with the hope of advancing the agenda of the Asian Partnership and of the Organization as a whole. She also stressed the value of the Asian Partnership as a platform for creating synergies and forging common responses and dialogue to further reinforce shared and mutual security.

Minister Xhaçka also gave an overview of the steps taken by Albania to strengthen the Partnership. Firstly, it had initiated the change of the name Asian Contact Group to Asian Partners for Co-operation Group at the Bratislava Ministerial Council in December 2019. Secondly, as holder of the OSCE Chairmanship, it had initiated the OSCE Permanent Council's practice of dedicating an annual discussion wholly to the review of co-operation with the Partners for Co-operation. Furthermore, Minister Xhaçka noted the adoption of the Tirana Ministerial Council Declaration on Co-operation with the OSCE Asian Partners (MC.DOC/2/20) and the 2021 programme of the Asian Partners for Co-operation Group, which also reflected the key concerns of the present conference.

Minister Xhaçka also noted the topics of the meetings co-organized with the Asian Partners. Special emphasis in this regard was given to the fact that as Chair, Albania had addressed the situation in Afghanistan and its regional implications at an early stage. Once again she highlighted the comprehensive nature of security and the fact of challenges being shared challenges. In conclusion, Minister Xhaçka once again thanked all the participants and assured them that Albania would remain committed to strengthening co-operation within the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group on building a more strategic and action-oriented partnership by reinforcing closer political consultation.

**H.E. Ms. Ann Linde**, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, started by thanking the organizers for inviting her to speak at the present OSCE Asian Conference. She underlined that after a year marked by a pandemic that had greatly affected the security situation, the topic of the conference, "Common responses to emerging challenges in advancing comprehensive security" could not be more relevant. The OSCE's concept of comprehensive security, she emphasized, was unique in the way that it encompassed the three dimensions: politico-military, economic and environmental, and human. It widened the perspective on security by placing human rights, democracy and the rule of law at its core, and by including economic and environmental affairs. Minister Linde underlined that the connection made through the concept of comprehensive security was as simple as it was powerful: sustainable security could only be achieved for States through respect for the human rights of all. While highlighting the ODIHR's March 2021 report "OSCE Human Dimension

Commitments and State Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Inequality, Discrimination and Marginalization” – which highlighted restrictions imposed on democratic institutions and processes and challenges to the enjoyment of human rights in the wake of the pandemic, including discrimination and hate crimes, and to the upholding of the rule of law – Minister Linde said that it was worrying that many countries had introduced strict measures during the pandemic that had restricted human rights and fundamental freedoms taken for granted before the pandemic.

On another note, she stressed that the year’s developments had demonstrated the close links between security in Europe and in Asia. The recent developments in Afghanistan were deeply worrying and caused great concern for the security and enjoyment of human rights of the Afghan people, in particular women and girls, as well as having wide-ranging effects on the OSCE’s participating States and Asian Partners. Regarding Afghanistan, the participating States and Partners for Co-operation needed to continue to discuss what more could be done. What was certain, however, was that the comprehensive concept of security needed to be at the centre of all endeavours.

In concluding, she stated: “There can be no security or peace without human security, which encompasses respect for human rights. And women’s and girls’ rights are human rights too.”

**H.E. Dato Lim Jock Hoi**, Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), started by thanking the Government of Thailand and Albania for co-hosting and initiating the 2021 OSCE Asian Conference. At the present time, the importance, timeliness and relevance of a conference devoted to “Common responses to emerging challenges in advancing comprehensive security” could not be underestimated, for two reasons. First, it manifested Asia’s continued importance to Europe. Second, the issues under consideration – such as transnational crime, sustainable development, human rights and public health – were no less important for the countries of Asia in general and Southeast Asia in particular than they were for Europe. ASEAN shared many similarities with the OSCE. Both pursued a comprehensive approach, with security itself being seen as multidimensional and the three dimensions being seen as interlinked.

When ASEAN was established in 1967, at a time when the key concern was the Cold War, it was already recognized that the political stability of the region and the socio-cultural well-being of its peoples was dependent upon economic prosperity. Dato Lim Jock Hoi emphasized the importance of seeing security through a comprehensive lens, a perspective that had come into sharper focus through the COVID-19 pandemic. In this connection, the ASEAN Secretary General highlighted the importance of making the vaccines available and of equitable and affordable access to vaccines. He stated that medical technologies and not just vaccines should likewise be made accessible to all.

On another note, Dato Lim Jock Hoi underscored the good side to the crisis, namely, that the pandemic had highlighted the importance of regional and global co-operation. Countries had demonstrated readiness to assist others, even when they themselves were in an equally difficult

situation. However, the pandemic also had a dark side in that criminals had not slowed down in their activities. As he put it: “With the increasing use of digital technology as people adjusted to the demands of work and transactions in the period of the pandemic, criminals have found in the cyber world a new domain in which to pursue their activities.”

Lastly, Dato Lim Jock Hoi spoke about the activities of ASEAN and more specifically the effective implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework adopted during the ASEAN Summit in November 2020. One key element was the opening of borders to enable essential travels to be undertaken once more, in connection with which ASEAN had finalized a Travel Corridor Arrangement Framework.

Dato Lim Jock Hoi concluded as follows: “In recovering from this pandemic, sustainable development should become a key component of our recovery discourse. Just as a case in point, our pandemic responses in utilizing masks and shields have actually increased our use of single-use plastics, with negative repercussions on our environment, which is the very foundation of sustainable development efforts.”

**Ambassador Luca Fratini**, Director of the Office of the OSCE Secretary General, started by conveying greetings and best wishes from Secretary General Helga Schmid, who unfortunately could not be present at the Conference. He continued by thanking Albania, as 2021 Chair of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group, and Ambassador Hasani and his team for their work in organizing the event together with Thailand and the Secretariat. The OSCE Asian Conference, he said, was an excellent follow-up to the 2020 Tirana Ministerial Council Declaration on Co-operation with the Asian Partners (MC.DOC/2/20).

Ambassador Fratini noted that the topics chosen by Thailand and Albania aligned closely with a number of areas worked on by the OSCE with great intensity over the past months. While speaking about the thematic sessions, he underlined that COVID-19 had amplified existing challenges and presented new ones, whether in the field of transnational organized crime, of sustainable development or of the human dimension.

Concretely, during the pandemic, organized crime groups had taken advantage of institutional, economic and social vulnerabilities to infiltrate the licit economy and create new avenues for profit, creating a risk of State institutions being weakened and economic development undermined. In an increasingly complex and challenging environment, the OSCE’s comprehensive and inclusive platform for dialogue and co-operation was more relevant than ever. In this sense, there was an urgent need for a broad participatory approach. In this context, the OSCE could promote a culture of lawfulness through education and by encouraging youth and civil society to work with State institutions to improve security for all.

Speaking about the OSCE’s comprehensive approach to security, Ambassador Fratini underlined that promoting sustainable development was closely tied to good governance and addressing environmental challenges, through such means as transboundary water co-operation, disaster risk reduction and hazardous waste management. He also elaborated on the

fact that the OSCE was supporting the efforts of participating States in advancing the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, for example, the Water Convention (Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes), the Aarhus Convention, or the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment – and also mentioned that the associated activities, often in close co-operation with other international actors, promoted good environmental governance in the OSCE area.

In concluding, Ambassador Fratini focused on the importance of sharing experiences from States' respective responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2020, the global public health crisis had been tackled through different degrees of restrictions to the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. These restrictions needed to be measured and made proportional to the public health threat, and repealed as soon as the situation allowed. In this context, the OSCE's Asian Partnership was not closed in on itself – on the contrary – and the Secretariat also valued this platform as a means to share experiences and lessons learned with other regional frameworks in Asia.

**Mr. Bogusław Winid**, Head of the Task Force of the incoming 2021 Polish OSCE Chairmanship, started by thanking the co-organizers of the conference. He began by underlining that humankind had never before been confronted with a health and economic emergency like the present one. With the world struggling to balance the security imperatives, economic support measures and health care were key instruments to protect the most vulnerable. Furthermore, overcoming this global challenge required co-ordinated and targeted actions, multilateral co-operation and solidarity. Only by standing united in shaping post-pandemic recovery would it be possible to ensure sustainable development and social cohesion and to make economies more resistant.

With a view to the future, Mr. Winid stated that the topic of the conference fitted into the broader vision of the incoming Polish Chairmanship, as in 2022 Poland intended to focus efforts on strengthening global security and dialogue in crisis situations, promoting post-pandemic recovery, and enhancing the potential of the OSCE. Poland's intention was to strengthen the overall security of the OSCE area by bringing a real improvement to conflict-affected populations.

On the OSCE Asian Conference, he underlined that the discussions offered a perfect opportunity to discuss four topics in particular: how to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 pandemic, combating transnational organized crime, enhancing economic and environmental co-operation, and promoting security and stability. Some of these topics would also be addressed during the Polish OSCE Chairmanship.

In conclusion, he assured his listeners that in 2022 Poland would make every effort to foster and advance dialogue between the Asian Partners and participating States in the spirit of multilateralism. The OSCE Asian Conference remained a highly functional platform for

discussion based on the mutual interests and shared concerns of the participating States and the five distinguished Asian Partners for Co-operation.

### 3 Reports by session rapporteurs

#### 3.1 Session 1: Strengthening the fight against transnational organized crime: Adapting to the evolving situation

##### *Report by Mr. Justin Addison, Second Secretary, United Kingdom Delegation to the OSCE*

As session moderator, **Ambassador Neil Bush**, Head of the Delegation of the United Kingdom to the OSCE and Chairperson of the Security Committee, said that organized crime was worth up to a quarter of global GDP. It was the driver and profiteer of many global problems, undermined rule of law, and undermined trust in government and institutions. Organized crime could also be very local and engrained. Routes had not changed over centuries – some of the current routes were once used in the illegal spice and opium trade. Organized crime groups had adapted by exploiting old and new vulnerabilities. Nor was it a phenomenon to be addressed only by law enforcement and State bodies – civil society, the private sector, and research institutions also had a role to play in a co-ordinated approach.

The second speaker, **Ambassador Alena Kupchyna**, Co-ordinator of Activities to Address Transnational Threats, Transnational Threats Department, OSCE Secretariat, said that the transnational threats were significant and growing. The COVID-19 pandemic had caused new challenges. Organized crime groups had created new avenues for profit and had weakened State institutions. There had been a surge in counterfeit medical products and cybercrime. Procurement rules had been simplified because of the pandemic, which had generated vulnerabilities for corruption and infiltration of crime groups. This problem could not be addressed by nations alone – there was a need to co-operate at the multilateral level and with leverage partnerships. The OSCE was working with many States to help build capacity along the justice chain in organized crime cases. The OSCE was delivering training models to support investigators and was facilitating information exchange and inter-agency collaboration, especially between finance institutions and anti-corruption agencies. The OSCE also helped with the claiming and social reuse of stolen assets. But it was also necessary to prevent organized crime by investing in the culture of lawfulness and community leadership. A new OSCE project on youth crime prevention would involve the use of education. Full, equal and meaningful participation of women was also needed, because female resilience had great potential for preventing organized crime. Furthermore, women had to be financially independent to be able to break the chain of violence and links to criminal groups. There was an urgent need to invest in vocational training and financial literacy for women vulnerable to organized crime.

The third speaker, **Mr. Giovanni Russo**, Vice Chief Prosecutor, National Anti-Mafia and Counterterrorism Directorate, Italy, said that the world was now more connected than ever before. Crime groups now operated like multinational corporations. COVID-19 had caused barriers both between and within countries. There had been a surge in counterfeit medical goods. INTERPOL had warned countries about criminals exploiting COVID-19, with another global notice having been issued on 16 August. Counterfeit personal protective equipment (PPE) was being sold online and offline. Children were spending more time online and were thus increasingly vulnerable to child sexual exploitation. Ransomware, malware, and malicious targeting software had become more prevalent. Extensive use was being made of the Dark Web. There had been an increase of 24 per cent in opium production, in Afghanistan 37 per

cent. The production of synthetic drugs had fallen due to demand for it in medical sectors. Italy's SIDNA system promoted the sharing of knowledge, and had been promoted at the Conference "Implementation of Corruption Prevention Mechanisms", jointly organized by the OSCE Mission to Serbia and the Anti-Corruption Agency of the Republic of Serbia, with the support of Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation in Belgrade on 14 December 2018. The "co-working system" was effective, linking judiciary and investigators across countries.

The fourth speaker, **Ms. Louise Taylor**, Asia Pacific Representative and Director of the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in Asia-Pacific, said that GI-TOC was a group of five hundred experts monitoring illicit economic activity, evaluating its impact, and providing suggestions for responses. Its focus at the moment was on the effect of the pandemic, how States could build resilient communities, and what best practices existed. The organized crime index indicated that 80 per cent of the world's population lived in countries with high levels of organized crime – organized crime was therefore a global security threat. 80 per cent of the world's population also lived in countries with low levels of resilience, though this was not the same 80 per cent. Resilience had worsened since COVID-19. Scams, ransomware, sexual exploitation, and corruption in healthcare had all increased. Whole police stations had closed, not least when whole stations fell victim to the virus. Criminal groups had expanded. The closure of wet markets and drugs production and trade did not stop as expected. The challenge was dependency on law enforcement as the predominant or only responder to organized crime. To improve prevention and resilience it was necessary to analyse the drivers of organized crime, identify vulnerable groups, reduce protection markets, have better political leadership, and recognize gender. Sharing best practice was also about sharing what did not work (e.g., dependency on law enforcement). A very wide range of partners could contribute to responses. The local context should be understood. Practitioners should ask themselves what research existed, or could be commissioned. Inclusive dialogue developed trust and reached out further into societies and communities, an endeavour in which women had an important role to play.

The fifth speaker, **Dr. Amporn Marddent**, member of the ASEAN Women for Peace Registry, Thailand, said that UNSCR 1325 action plans need to recognize both the conflict and its prevention, including the role of women in both governance as well as in relief and recovery. Much knowledge and research is needed, not least to redefine the concept of security, which is not just a state of war or physical violence, but also in terms of security threats related to human. More women are needed to represent as peace advocates to advance WPS priorities. She then gave an example of the case of Thailand where women's groups working as mediators in the area of violent conflict in the southern part of the country had emerged from peacebuilding operation -- with UNSCR 1325 being the anchor in violent conflict resolution. Dr. Marddent also stressed that gender-responsible budgeting also needed to be included in National Action Plans.

In the discussion that followed, a representative of the **United States of America** said the United States had adopted a whole-of-government approach in dealing with organized crime. Increasing transparency, tackling the organizations, and protecting the economy were priorities. The United States had welcomed Tirana Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening Co-operation in Countering Transnational Organized Crime (MC.DOC/1/20). It was now necessary to build on the past year's work and agree on a new Ministerial Council decision with a new emphasis on multi-stakeholder participation, and to recognize the link between corruption and organized crime.



A representative from **Turkey** said that Turkey had been targeted by terrorists for decades. They had found that an effective strategy was to eradicate the terrorists' finances. The fact that groups like PKK were funded by organized crime demonstrated the size and seriousness of the threat, in which foreign terrorist fighters were also involved. Turkey hosted more refugees than any other country worldwide. Migratory flows facilitated organized crime by way of the smuggling of illegal people. Fences were not a solution. Afghanistan needed humanitarian funding.

A representative from the **European Union** delegation said that organized crime groups had infiltrated entire business sectors. The European Commission had adopted a five-year strategy for organized crime, which would: boost the capacity of law enforcement co-operation; support more effective investigations; eliminate criminal profits as a means of fighting the infiltration of the legal economy; and make law enforcement bodies and the judiciary more effective by facilitating lawful access to information.

### 3.2 Session 2: The OSCE and sustainable development: Enhancing economic and environmental co-operation to promote security and stability

#### *Report by Mr. Sun Thathong, First Secretary, Royal Thai Embassy in Vienna*

The moderator, **Ambassador Sihasak Phuanketkeow**, Special Advisor at the Office of the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) of Thailand, opened the session by underlining the importance of the topic, especially in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sustainable development was part and parcel of the OSCE's comprehensive security agenda and was an important factor in the economic, environmental and social fields. As climate change was a threat to comprehensive security, there was an urgent need to reinvigorate international co-operation and partnership on addressing climate change. In his view, the OSCE could reach out to promote sustainable development and combat climate change through international co-operation. The present session was an excellent opportunity for the OSCE, its Asian Partners, and other participants to exchange views on these important matters.

The first speaker, **Ambassador Hinrich Thölken**, Director for International Climate and Energy Policy and Digital Transformation, Federal Foreign Office, Germany, argued that foreign and security policy must take climate change into account. Referring to the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), he warned against the imminent climate crisis with its potentially devastating consequences for all regions caused by such phenomena as torrential rainfalls, floods, storms, wildfires, droughts, and rise in the sea level. Climate-related conflicts and migration would increase, with an estimate of 200 million climate migrants by 2050, which would directly affect international peace and stability. Climate change should thus be treated as a security threat, and climate policy as part of foreign and security policy.

With its comprehensive approach to security and vast geographical coverage, the OSCE was well placed to understand the complex nature of climate change. For example, the OSCE project "Climate security risks in South and Southeast Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia" conducted in collaboration with the Berlin-based think tank *adelphi* and supported by Germany was helping to analyse regional climate risks and support co-operation and capacity-building in these regions. Germany itself had also launched several climate initiatives, such as the Green Central Asia initiative, which sought to establish a region-wide political dialogue on climate, security and the environment, or the Weathering Risk initiative with its aim of improving foresight on climate-security risks at a global scale.

Ambassador Thölken noted the important role of energy policy in tackling climate change. While progress had been made, more commitment was needed if the global energy transition was to be accelerated. Enhanced partnership with the Asian Partners could play a crucial role in this regard. He suggested that the Asian Partners could contribute to the collective efforts with their respective strengths, highlighting Japan's expertise on hi-tech disaster risk management, the Republic of Korea's commitment to making this year's P4G summit a success, Thailand's progress on greening its financial streams, and Australia's great potential for renewable energy.

He put forward three suggestions: first, the adoption of a substantive decision on climate and security at the forthcoming Ministerial Council in Stockholm; second, the intensification of co-operation between governments, businesses, think tanks, practitioners from the field, and academia on issues of climate and security; and third, the holding of an OSCE conference

focusing on disaster risk management in the context of natural disasters triggered by climate change, with the aim of facilitating the exchange of experiences, technological capacities and best practices.

The next speaker, **Mr. Jamie Isbister**, Ambassador for the Environment, Australia, presented his country's plan to achieve the net zero target by 2050. One key strategy was to promote investment in new and emerging technologies to reduce emissions. Australia expected to invest over 18 billion Australian dollars in low emissions technologies over the next decade. By leveraging additional co-investment from the private sector and other levels of government, Australia could secure between 50 and 100 billion dollars in total investment in low emissions technologies over the decade. Several targets had been set, such as clean hydrogen under \$2 per kilogram and energy storage dispatched at under \$100 per MWh.

Mr. Isbister highlighted the leading role being played by the private sector in the country's journey to net zero. Fortescue Future Industries (FFI), for example, was seeking to use Australia's abundant energy resources (solar and wind) to generate electricity and to make green hydrogen and green ammonia. The FFI's ambition was to make green hydrogen commercially competitive with fossil fuels and, furthermore, the most-traded seaborne energy commodity worldwide. Sun Cable, a multinational company founded in Australia and Singapore in 2018, was building one of the world's largest renewable energy infrastructure projects, the Australia-Asia PowerLink, which would supply zero-carbon electricity from Central Australia to Singapore. The generation of zero-carbon electricity under the project could supply up to 15 per cent of Singapore's electricity needs.

Turning to the energy situation in Southeast Asia, Mr. Isbister pointed out that the region's overall energy demand is expected to double between 2010 and 2040. The region was currently heavily reliant on fossil fuel, although ASEAN had a target of achieving 23 per cent renewable energy by 2025. Australia stood ready to support ASEAN Member States in their energy transition through initiatives such as Partnerships for Infrastructure (P4I), which supported technical and regulatory reform and capacity-building, and the Australian Climate Finance Partnership, which helped to bring private finance, innovation and efficiency into low-emissions investments in Southeast Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific.

Beyond the region, Australia has also fostered bilateral technology partnerships with Germany, Japan, Korea, India, the United Kingdom and the United States. The Singapore-Australia Green Economy Agreement was under negotiation, which would facilitate trade and investment in environmental goods and services, strengthen environmental governance, and help build global capacity for addressing climate change.

Before giving the floor to the next speaker, **Ambassador Phuangketkeow** echoed Mr. Isbister's emphasis that the green energy transition required substantial investment and innovation. Thailand, he stated, had recently adopted the "BCG" economic model – B for bio economy, C for circular economy, and G for green economy – to help in its transition to green energy.

The third speaker, **Mr. Marco Toscano-Rivalta**, Chief of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), explained that the UNDRR's mission was to help UN Member States to adopt and implement development and humanitarian policies designed to proactively address disaster risks before they led to disasters. The UNDRR's work was guided by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–

2030, the objectives of which were closely linked with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement. The Sendai Framework helped protect development gains from disasters while ensuring that development activities did not create new risks. It also helped to prevent and reduce climate-related disasters through adaptation.

Disasters tended to affect least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing States disproportionately as compared with more developed countries. They would be unable to achieve the SDGs if constantly recovering from disasters. It was therefore critical that disaster risk reduction be embedded in their development plans and LDC graduation measures.

The speaker further noted that disasters had impacts that did more than just hinder development. By 2050, 200 million people every year might well be in need of international humanitarian aid as a result of climate-related disasters. A key step to addressing these challenges was to support governments in developing national disaster risk reduction strategies and adopting an all-of-government approach to reducing disaster risks. These strategies must be inclusive of all stakeholders.

Recognizing the transboundary nature of many disasters, he emphasized the need for countries to co-operate in a systemic way. This need had become more evident in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which countries had had to manage the pandemic while at the same time managing concurrent climate-related disasters. Thus, a comprehensive risk management approach was needed. The Bangkok Principles for the Implementation of the Health Aspects of the Sendai Framework provided a good example of a coherent and comprehensive risk management framework.

Mr. Toscano-Rivalta concluded by reiterating that the SDGs could not be achieved without proactive disaster risk management and that regional and international co-operation was of key importance. He argued in favour of an enhanced sharing of knowledge and experiences and of a comprehensive approach to risk management that involved all relevant actors.

The fourth speaker, **Prof. MATSUMOTO Yoichiro**, Science and Technology Adviser to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, explained the linkages between diplomacy and the field of science, technology and innovation (STI). He cited case studies demonstrating how, through Japan's technology diplomacy, STI could help achieve the SDGs. The first case was Global Satellite Mapping of Precipitation. It provided real-time rainfall data, which could be used to prevent floods. At present, 136 countries were using this data, almost 80 per cent of which were Asian countries. Another case was JJ-FAST: Forest Early Warning System, which provided early warning, analysed the damage of natural disasters, and monitored forestation. This system had helped expose illegal deforestation with the help of a deforestation-detecting algorithm.

Prof. Matsumoto also cited the Science and Technology Research Partnership for Sustainable Development (SATREPS), a joint research initiative between Japan and developing countries aimed at finding solutions in the fields of environment, energy, natural disasters and infectious diseases. It combined official development assistance with competitive research funding. Since 2008, there had been 168 projects in 53 countries. For example, Japan was working together with Zambia on the project Visualization of Impact of Chronic/Latent Chemical Hazard and Geo-Ecological Remediation, in order to clarify contamination processes and identify risks to ecosystem and human, while also assisting Zambia with capacity-building.

On Japan's efforts towards achieving the net zero target by 2050, he pointed out that Japan had adopted the Green Growth Strategy, which sought to promote the use of renewable energy, the utilization of IT and artificial intelligence to promote energy security, and the funding of green innovations. Specifically, Japan was promoting co-creation between government, industries, and academia through an open innovation platform, which envisaged a future society based on sustainable development.

Prof. Matsumoto concluded by emphasizing that STI was the key to addressing challenges to global security and that all countries should foster innovations through government-industry-academia partnerships.

Responding to Prof. Matsumoto's presentation, **Ambassador Phuanketkeow** pointed out that Japan was one of the few countries to be using science and technology diplomacy to help others address environmental problems. It was highly commendable that Japan was contributing to global comprehensive security in this way. At a recent high-level joint commission meeting between Thailand and Japan, clean energy transition and Japan's green growth strategy were among the main themes of discussion and it was hoped that Japan would continue to share its knowledge and experiences with others.

The final speaker, **Ambassador Guy Bonvin**, Swiss Special Envoy for Water in Central Asia, focused his presentation on water security. He pointed out that water security was closely linked to food security and energy security, and was an integral part of social and economic development and stability. The water crisis was linked to the climate crisis, as climate change impacted on the water cycle by modifying the availability of water geographically and temporally. Given their linkages, the water crisis and the climate crisis must be addressed together through enhanced international co-operation.

Ambassador Bonvin underscored the importance of water diplomacy in this regard. Water diplomacy, he explained, was an informed preventive dialogue across various disciplines, including diplomacy, politics, development, and sciences, aimed at addressing water scarcity risk and natural hazards and strengthening co-operation in river basins and promoting sustainable use and proper management of water.

As an example of Switzerland's water diplomacy, he referred to the Blue Peace Central Asia initiative promoting water co-operation and supporting dialogue on water quality in the region. Switzerland also supported the Mekong River Commission, an intergovernmental treaty-based organization seeking to promote integrated water resource management in the Mekong River basin. Another example was the water stewardship project, in partnership with the World Wildlife Fund, aimed at reducing river pollution and improving water management.

Ambassador Bonvin underscored the need to have a clear overall picture of the different factors driving potential risks to which rivers were exposed and to involve the private sector and local government in water governance. Attention should also be given to hydropower management, which was often at the heart of water governance discussion.

One of the biggest challenges to effective water management was the lack of clear and sufficient data. Digitalization could provide a solution by helping to aggregate data from different sources, including satellite imagery, which would contribute to a better understanding of developments in river basins. Pilot projects could also be carried out in smaller river basins, where the types of irrigation in the area could be determined on the basis of earth observation

pictures. One possible area of co-operation with the OSCE was the digital river basin simulation game. The speaker considered this the best way to attract new generations and sensitize them to the issue of climate change and water security.

Ambassador Bonvin concluded by stressing that international co-operation was needed simply because pollution knew no borders. Water security was a multifaceted issue and required multi-disciplinary solutions involving not just diplomats but also engineers, chemists, economists, and financiers, working together as a team.

In the discussion that followed, a representative of the **United States of America** pointed out that early warning measures and effective dialogue and trust- and confidence-building were key elements in economic and environmental co-operation. He affirmed the United States' commitment to working with other participating States and Partners for Co-operation in advancing shared interests in areas such as energy security, combating corruption, climate change, and trafficking in wildlife. He stressed the importance of addressing the climate change and biodiversity crises while creating sustainable economic growth.

The United States representative noted that economic connectivity was often seen as a method of supporting economic prosperity and integration. The United States supported this goal, in keeping with Hamburg Ministerial Council Decision No. 4/16 on strengthening good governance and promoting connectivity. The concept of connectivity was too often embraced haphazardly and with little regard to long-term security and financial, environmental or humanitarian consequences. Connectivity investment should include rigorous anticorruption standards, be based on core democratic principles of transparency and good governance, and incorporate the voice of the populations affected by the projects.

The United States had placed climate change at the centre of its foreign policy, diplomacy and national security, and it was helping raise global climate change ambition by engaging in climate change diplomacy bilaterally and multilaterally. It would also seek to work with others towards the implementation of the Paris Agreement and towards achieving the net zero target by 2050.

A representative of **Turkey** underlined the need to integrate a sustainable development perspective into domestic environmental protection policies, taking into account the organic links among all the SDGs as well as the social and economic circumstances specific to the country in question. There was also a need for properly designed green recovery measures and investment in the green economy sector.

He noted that economic connectivity played an important role in facilitating sustainable economic development and generating economic growth and employment. In his view, connectivity was a matter of economic security, as it could help ensure sustainable transport, trade and the supply chain.

On climate change, the representative of Turkey expressed concerns over the increased incidence of extreme weather conditions, especially in the Mediterranean region, and called for urgent action based on the guiding principles of the climate regime, namely, equity and common but differentiated responsibilities. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) remained the main platform for discussion of all issues related to climate change. While duplication of efforts at the international level must be avoided, the OSCE could explore complementary roles in areas such as promotion of early warning,

climate-resilient building and preparedness, access to climate financing, technical assistance, and exchanges of best practices. Such exchanges could be extended to technology and expertise needed for green energy transition.

A representative of Slovenia, on behalf of the **European Union**, emphasized that no policies could be successful without simultaneously addressing the dimensions of development, climate and security. She noted that combating climate- and environment-related challenges was a key priority for the EU. The European Green Deal set out the vision of achieving a climate-neutral continent by 2050, a continent where economic growth is to be decoupled from resources used.

The EU welcomed and would continue to support OSCE projects such as Climate Change and Security in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Southern Caucasus, on which the EU had co-operated since 2013.

Recognizing that the climate crisis would lead to a significant rise in global average temperature and that the most vulnerable members of populations would also be the most severely affected, the EU had launched its recovery plan “NextGenerationEU”, which, the representative noted, included climate change as one of its targets, for which the EU would invest 30 per cent of the required funding. Under the plan, the EU would invest in green energy, roll out greener vehicles and public transport, and make buildings and public spaces more energy-efficient. The EU had also launched the Innovation Fund to promote innovative low-carbon technologies.

The EU representative also highlighted the need to use targeted policies and awareness-raising to advance environmentally friendly behaviour on the part of the public, to encourage the use of public transport and cycling, to support the consumption of more vegetables and less meat, and to foster the circular economy.

Finally, she pointed out that women were still underrepresented in environment-related decision-making institutions, that the specific needs of women and girls were not sufficiently taken into account in adaptation and mitigation strategies, and that women and girls were disproportionately affected by the negative impacts of climate change. A gender perspective should be pursued in all areas of environment policy.

In closing, **Mr. Isbister** pointed out that one of the biggest challenges was how to accelerate the transition to clean energy while ensuring inclusiveness. It was critical to enhance partnership bilaterally, regionally and globally to ensure that the relevant knowledge be shared, the necessary investments supported, and no-one left behind. **Ambassador Bonvin** stressed the importance of sharing data and exchanges of relevant experiences. He also reiterated the interrelationship between climate change, environmental degradation, and economic stability. Similarly, **Mr. Toscano-Rivalta** underscored the importance of collecting and sharing data, investing in adaptation, and ensuring that the disaster risk reduction community and the climate change community work together more closely. He further emphasized the need for greater inclusivity and gender-responsiveness in the planning of disaster risk strategies. **Prof. Matsumoto** underlined the desirability of government, industry and academia being harnessed for the co-creation of solutions for sustainable development, though, he stressed, citizens must also be involved in the process.

The moderator, **Ambassador Phuangketkeow**, drew four main conclusions from the discussion. First, sustainable development is a key aspect of comprehensive security, which is

at the core of the OSCE agenda, and climate change is a clear and present challenge to that security. Second, in addressing the challenge, it is imperative to promote international co-operation through the exchange of data and best practices, policy-oriented discussion, dialogue, and capacity-building. Third, multilateralism is the way forward, with an essential role to be played by regional organizations such as the OSCE and ASEAN. Fourth, international co-operation must be inclusive, embracing governments, the private sector, academia, and the general public.



### 3.3 **Session 3: Human rights and public health: Sharing experiences and lessons learned between Europe and Asia**

#### *Report by Ms. Victoire Bene, Counsellor, Permanent Representation of France to the OSCE*

As session moderator, **Ambassador Gesa Bräutigam**, Head of the Permanent Mission of Germany to the OSCE, emphasized that the realization of all human rights is necessary for a dignified life of every individual. This also applies to the area of health. However, scale and severity of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a serious threat to public health, forcing governments around the world to restrict certain rights, the free movement of people and public services. This stokes fears and limits quality of life. In her moderation, Ambassador Bräutigam raised a number of key questions, such as how OSCE participating States and Asian partners could re-scale rescale public health measures over the long term, in particular with a view to safeguarding human and civil rights once the immediate threat of the pandemic has passed. Other questions include what role NGOs can play in situations where migrants are reluctant to open up to government support, or what recommendations could be made for equal distribution and access to vaccines.

The first speaker, **Mr. Matteo Mecacci**, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), recalled that while governments were adopting emergency measures restricting human rights in order to fight the COVID-19 pandemic efficiently, these measures had to be taken on a legal and non-discriminatory basis. He then presented the work of the ODIHR in monitoring the effects of emergency measures on commitments to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, referring to the ODIHR report “OSCE Human Dimension Commitments and State responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic” published in July 2020. He called for a better integration of human rights into the thinking behind emergency responses and for a greater oversight role for parliaments. Mr. Mecacci added that particular attention must be paid to the protection of human rights of migrants, as they experienced specific issues during the pandemic (high rate of job loss, overcrowded migrant centres) as well as to the protection of women and girls (in the OSCE area, domestic violence had risen by 120 per cent during the pandemic). Mr. Mecacci concluded by reaffirming the ODIHR’s readiness to support participating States in designing measures to address the pandemic.

The second speaker, **Dr. Vilawan Mangklatanakul**, Director-General of the Department of Treaties and Legal Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, emphasized that it was a great honour and pleasure for her to join the conference, whose topic was close to her heart. Given the global character of the COVID-19 pandemic, States needed to share experiences and deepen co-operation in order to generate practical solutions, and the OSCE and its Asian Partnership for Co-operation is a platform perfectly adapted for this purpose. She then presented Thailand’s response to the pandemic, emphasizing the attention given by the Thai Government to respect for the Constitution, international law, and human rights in designing the emergency measures to fight the pandemic (partial lockdown, limitation of movement of persons, contacts-tracking etc.). She also highlighted Thailand’s specific focus on the most vulnerable sectors of the population during the crisis, that is to say, migrants and women. With respect to the former, Thailand had provided essential healthcare and vaccines regardless of nationality or status, and now had a network of migrant volunteers in place and a hotline to respond to migrants’ needs. Thailand owed its success story to tight co-operation between local governments, village health volunteers and the Ministry of Health. The system of village health volunteers had existed for decades in Thailand but its work had become more

evident during the COVID-19 crisis, as these volunteers played a crucial role in such tasks as implementing prevention and control measures or providing assistance in case of quarantine. There were one million village health volunteers in Thailand, 80 per cent of them are women. Recalling the disproportionate effect of COVID-19 on women, Dr. Mangklatanakul called for extra efforts to promote women's empowerment, in the health system as elsewhere. In her point of view, Thailand already had the necessary framework to support women's empowerment, as the country had legally advanced women's rights and gender equality through its ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its optional protocol in 1985 and 2000 respectively and had enshrined the recognition of gender equality in the Constitution. Now, it was the transformation of these texts into action and incentives that mattered.

The third speaker, **Ms. Ivanka Stojanovski**, State Secretary at the Ministry of Health of North Macedonia, recalled that access to public health, be it physical or mental, was a right enshrined in international law. She spoke about the serious consequences of COVID-19 on health systems, economies, trade, and social environment. The severe measures taken by most governments to prevent the spread of the pandemic and preserve the capacity of our health systems were often restrictive of human rights: quarantine, isolation, limitation of the freedom of movement, contact-tracking and the like. International co-operation was essential to combating the virus. In this regard, the guidance and technical assistance provided by the United Nations, the World Health Organization and the European Union were of utmost and enduring importance. Additionally, regional co-operation was also crucial to the sharing of best practices and to the search for regional solutions. To illustrate this idea, she took the example of the Western Balkans, the countries of which had been very active: in November 2020, North Macedonia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina had signed a memorandum of understanding which established easier border-crossing between these States.

The fourth speaker, **Ms. Jacqueline Weekers**, Director of the Migration Health Division at the United Nations International Organization for Migration (IOM), stated that while the right to health, without discrimination, was a fundamental right, there were still tremendous gaps in its implementation, especially with regard to migrants, in spite of good tools existing in the form of the Global Compact for Migration and the UN Network on Migration. Ms. Weekers also insisted on the specific vulnerability of migrants to the virus, from a sanitary point of view (migrants lack information about the disease and have little access to medical supplies or vaccines) as well as from an economic aspect (they experience a higher risk of job loss). In this regard, she welcomed the initiatives of certain States that had developed COVID-19 policies tailored for migrants, mentioning for example Bosnia and Herzegovina, which published and broadcast information about COVID-19 in the different languages spoken by migrants in the country. She also referred to other countries, such as Cambodia and Laos, which had developed specific health education sessions for migrants. She recalled that the International Organization for Migration (IOM) was making similar interventions around the world to promote access to vaccination among migrants. Finally, the migrants themselves were a critical part of the solution and should be the co-developers of public health services; among them, women migrants had a particularly special health role to play in their communities. In conclusion, the IOM had learned three lessons in particular regarding the COVID-19 crisis: 1) Inclusiveness is a precondition for genuine public health development; 2) It is necessary to fight discrimination, address migrants' fear, and foster trust amongst communities of migrants; and 3) Governments need to work with local communities to ensure recovery from the crisis.

The fifth speaker, **Mr. PARK Jang Ho**, Deputy Director-General for the International Organizations Bureau at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, stated that COVID-19 had had an impact on every aspect of our lives, showing how interconnected and vulnerable we were. At first, it had touched Korea with an unexpected surge of cases, but now the situation had been stabilized thanks to vaccination: 71 per cent of the Korean population had received at least the first round of vaccination and 43 per cent had received two doses. Mr. Park then presented the Korean strategy for fighting the virus, founded on the following principles: openness (no lockdown, borders kept open), transparency (information published and broadcast about the number of COVID-19 cases), clear communication, citizen participation, innovativeness. He also insisted on the importance given by the Korean government to the balance between public health emergency measures and human rights: for instance, contact-tracking data was transferred only to the Korean government and for health purposes only, and was deleted four weeks after collection. Special attention had been paid to the most vulnerable groups during the crisis, that is to say, migrants (who had access to the same vaccination procedures as nationals) and women, who represented 70 per cent of health workers in Korea and were at increased risk of exposure to the virus; in this connection, the Korean government had come to an agreement with the medical workers' union to establish standards for the deployment of nurses in hospitals. In conclusion, Mr. Park underlined the fact that Korea was participating in a WHO discussion group on preparations to be made for new pandemics.

A representative of the **United States of America** recalled the tight co-operation developed over 35 years between the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Ministry of Health of Thailand. He then reaffirmed his country's support for independent media and its firm stance against countries using the pandemic to crack down on opposition and disseminate destructive disinformation.

A representative of **Turkey** highlighted his country's achievements during the COVID-19 crisis with respect to the following: humanitarian assistance (Turkey provided aid to 160 States, in the form of mentoring programmes, equipment, or support for building health infrastructure), vaccines (Turkey provided vaccines to several States), the essential role of women, specific attention paid to migrants (Turkey provided health services to migrants, including Syrians, who are able to be vaccinated through the classic vaccination system, using their ID card), and human rights.

A representative of the **Holy See** noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had reminded us of the frailty of human life and highlighted our interdependence. Therefore, the crisis was also an opportunity to build a more fraternal and compassionate society. He emphasized that the pandemic had contributed to increasing inequality in terms of income or access to information, greatly to the detriment of vulnerable groups, and called for increased support for working women, especially those employed in the public health sector.

As the moderator wrapped up the session, **Mr. Park** suggested that States should work together to create a new international treaty on preparedness for new pandemics. He added that the OSCE could provide a valuable platform for sharing experiences and practices and furthermore engage in valuable synergies, notably regarding new security threats and human dimension security in general. **Ms. Weekers** stated that the biggest challenges now faced were still vaccination, equitable distribution of vaccines throughout the world, and the inclusion of migrants in the vaccination processes: indeed, 73 per cent of the people now vaccinated lived in a mere ten countries and a poll conducted by the IOM in 160 countries showed that in 50 of these, migrants were not included in the actual rollout of vaccination programmes, so that

migrants in irregular situations were at a doubly disproportionate risk. In this regard, encouragement should be given to relevant initiatives on the part of NGOs and civil society. She concluded by stating that it was definitely a multisector issue that required a whole-of-government response, and the multidimensional platform required to address the challenge could be provided by the OSCE. **Dr. Mangklatanakul**, for her part, insisted on the need to reflect upon how to empower women to help eradicate the pandemic. If more women worked at decision-making levels, they would probably develop more policies specifically dedicated to women. Recalling that the rule of law was a red line when it came to the adoption of emergency measures, she concluded by stating that regional co-operation was the only way to fight COVID-19 effectively, and that this should be reflected in the forthcoming ASEAN Summit in October 2021. Finally, **Mr. Mecacci** declared that States should be careful not to let their citizens lose faith in their democratic institutions, which implied a balance between a practical approach and human rights as well as a thorough review by national parliaments of measures implemented, and the involvement of civil society in the process.

## 4 Summary of the closing session

*Report by Marietta S. König, Senior External Co-operation Officer, and Liliya Buhela, External Co-operation Section, OSCE Secretariat*

Session moderator **Mr. Philippe Tremblay**, Head of the External Co-operation Section at the Office of the Secretary General, OSCE, started the closing session by opening the floor for interventions from delegations.

The Permanent Representative of **Afghanistan** to the OSCE noted that the security challenges in Afghanistan were global in their nature, and the progress of the past twenty years must be acknowledged and upheld. The global community should support the establishment of the inclusive and participatory governing body and not forget that the fact of the Taliban being a terrorist group funded by illicit drugs and money-laundering. Thus, concrete parameters must be met before the group could be accorded recognition; the Taliban must comply with international and humanitarian law, uphold the Afghan constitution, and respect women's rights. The Permanent Representative called for funding for the UN Flash Appeal for Afghanistan and noted that urgent action was needed to save lives and livelihoods amongst the Afghan people.

The delegation of the **United States of America** asserted that the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation must uphold their common values and stand up together against the grey-zone security challenges. The OSCE Asian Conference served as a useful platform to share collective insights and expertise, advance shared goals and meet common challenges.

The delegation of **Turkey** expressed its gratitude to the organizers and participants.

The delegation of the **Russian Federation** commended the 2020 Ministerial Declaration on Co-operation with the OSCE Asian Partners (MC.DOC/2/20), which had served as a confirmation of the strong interlinkage with the security of Asian region. Broad co-operation was essential in order to rise to the common challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic and minimize the losses. On the subject of transnational organized crime, the key task would be to develop a convention to combat the phenomenon under the existing United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime; it would be important to work together and develop a single document. On the situation in Afghanistan, the delegation stated that Russia was inclined not to over-dramatize it, calling for Afghan officials who had emigrated to return to their home country.

The delegation of the **European Union** noted that the security situation in Afghanistan was one of the utmost concern. The EU would continue to support the Afghan people, and to regard the protection of human rights and in particular the rights of women and girls as issues of essential importance. The global community must do everything to avert humanitarian disaster; the EU was to increase its humanitarian aid to Afghanistan to one billion euros.

The delegation of the **United Kingdom** noted that the OSCE Asian Partnership was based on a wealth of shared values. Deepening of co-operation in the Indo-Pacific was essential. The obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty were ones that the United Kingdom and the United States of America took very seriously.

**Ms. Megi Fino**, Deputy Minister, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, joined her voice to others in stating that security in the OSCE area was inherently linked to that of Asia and the Pacific. She also called for an increased role for the Partners in OSCE meetings and events. The OSCE's relationship with its Asian Partners had two

underlying principles: to share experiences and learn from one another. The OSCE had recently strengthened its role as a forum for the discussion of key security issues, which was essential, as no nation could address security challenges on its own. One of the takeaways from the conference related to co-operation between stakeholders on building resilient communities. The three thematic sessions had been very relevant, as they covered the three dimensions of comprehensive security. Ms. Fino concluded by highlighting the protection of human rights of migrants as the main area of concern and noting that active participation of women in security was essential, as it led to more sustainable solutions.

**Mrs. Chulamane Chartswan**, Director-General, Department of European Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, highlighted the key takeaways: multilateralism is the way forward and what we need is more multilateralism, not less. Regional organizations like the OSCE and ASEAN are the anchors of and play an essential role in advancing multilateralism and creating an environment favourable to co-operation, by facilitating dialogue and enhancing experience- and information-sharing. An inclusive approach involving all stakeholders is necessary in order to address the most pressing challenges. In combating transnational organized crime, an inclusive whole-of-society approach must be taken, with empowering youth and mainstreaming gender being key factors. Mrs. Chartswan recognized the virtue of international exchanges of experience as an indispensable means of confidence-building. If the planet was to be sustainable and balanced, there must be conditions conducive to peace, stability and trust. She called for a scaling up of efforts to forge partnerships for the green transition and to enhance capacity-building for science, technology and innovation (STI). Public health measures in the pandemic are needed to address and respond to the widening human rights deficit. Restrictions required an epidemiological and legal basis, and must be proportionate and temporary.

## 5 List of participants

The list of participants contains entries generated by the online registration.

Affiliation	Title	First Name	Last Name	Position
<b>OSCE Participating States</b>				
ALBANIA	Ms	Olta	XHACKA	Minister for Europe And Foreign Affairs
ALBANIA	Ms	Inid	MILO	Head, OSCE Chairmanship Task Force
ALBANIA	Ms	Megi	FINO	Deputy Minister
ALBANIA	Mr	Igli	HASANI	Ambassador, Permanent Representative
ALBANIA	Ms	Blerta	DERHEMI	Head of Unit
ALBANIA	Ms	Erida	DOBRUSHI	Deputy Permanent Representative
ALBANIA	Ms	Xhuljeta	KEKO	Coordination Expert
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CZECH REPUBLIC	Mr	Michal	ŠVÉDA	Deputy Head of Mission
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Affiliation	Title	First Name	Last Name	Position
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