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Working Group C- Security Risks and Challenges across the OSCE Region

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The Porto decision to develop a strategy to address threats to security and stability in the twenty first century was an important decision and a timely one, pointed out by ambassador Biering, which could entail a strengthened mandate for this organisation, a relaunch of the organisation.

Yesterday we focused on preventing and combating terrorism, looking for adequate responses to the threats and challenges to our collective security.

In these deliberations we were reminded that we should be just as concerned by undemocratic responses to the new threats we are facing in the 21st century in the form of lack of tolerance, xenophobia and curtailment of democratic and human rights. Wise words were spoken on the need to avoid encountering new threats by suppressing legitimate expressions of dissent. There is a clear balance between legitimate national security concerns and human rights. We must not let the end justify the means.

Although the titles of today's working groups are different, they are closely linked to our deliberations of yesterday and we should bear them in mind in today's discussions.

Dealing with threats to security and stability at the beginning of this century may seem as an overwhelming task. There is an abundance of possible threats to security in our vulnerable, interconnected society. And new and non-traditional or asymmetric threats will emerge as we seek to define them. Fantasy has become reality. Security related ecological threats have been added to an already long list. But also burning health issues must be considered as potential security risks. The longer term social, economic and indeed security consequences of the spread of HIV/AIDS has to be addressed in this connection. It is affecting an alarmingly large portion of the population also in the OSCE area and could have a devastating effect, eradicating prospective productive parts of the population and creating a drain on the social and economic prospect of countries in question.

This scourge is closely linked to the dangerous increase in trafficking of drugs and human beings, one of the most critical new security challenges that states, regions and indeed the global community is facing. The OSCE is actively involved in responding to trafficking and the two co-chairs of the action plan has done an admirable job in developing the draft before us. In considering this draft let us not forget that by fighting trafficking we are also responding to other ills and security risks that follow in its wake. That makes this draft the more important.

New threats arise both from new motivations for causing destabilisation and from new or more widely available means for causing it. Porto tasked us therefore also to look at the changing nature of threats and their main causes.

Yesterday, I repeated Dr. Costa`s punchline "security for prosperity". You can also turn that around and say that there can be no security without economic development, without effective agencies of law enforcement, without border security and good governance operating in a transparent manner. Lack of development and weakness of institutions provide the context in which organised crime and corruption thrive. Economic imbalances, lack of sustainable development spur frustration which can take dangerous roads. Many countries are locked in a double bind of lawlessness and poverty. This can constitute a fertile ground for new security threats.

We must therefore, as was pointed out by ambassador Aliev yesterday, create socio economic and cultural conditions which eliminate the breeding ground for extremist ideas. Regional cooperation will definitely assist in creating such conditions. The strategy on Economic and Environmental Dimension can be a useful tool in addressing these root causes.

Organised crime go hand in hand with all forms of trafficking. We will have an action plan on fighting trafficking. But we may indeed also need an action plan on fighting international organised crime in order to bring focus to bear on this threat. Organised crime – which is often directly linked to terrorism, is also a dangerously evolving security risk. It has been pointed out that often countries with high levels of organised crime have low levels of human development. Obviously organised crime and corruption is closely linked to the ability of states to enforce the rule of law and assure acceptable levels of government. Not that we favour too many documents. Paper tigers can be tame animals. But a plan for such a complex problem could turn into a forceful animal which could lend its weight also to the fight against trafficking and impact positively on the fight against terrorism.

Such a plan will have to draw on the Senior Police Advisor in his work to have participating states strengthen their ability to uphold the rule of law, and thereby prevent conflict and reducing or eliminating security risks.

Finalizing, I would like to offer our support for the Dutch-French efforts to deal with the potential that ammunition stockpiles pose.