



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

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

**Vienna, 30 June 2021**

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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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[FINAL - 904 words]

1. The European Union would like to thank the Swedish Chairpersonship for organising this working session and thank the speakers for their presentations.
2. OSCE participating States have expressed their common resolve to prevent and counter transnational threats through a comprehensive approach, to prevent and counter violent extremism and radicalisation, enhance cyber/ICT security and combat organised crime. The impact of COVID-19 on the transnational threat landscape has further demonstrated the need to work collectively across the OSCE region to adapt and formulate effective responses.
3. The EU attaches great importance to the activities carried out by the OSCE in countering transnational threats, in particular through its field presences. We are convinced of the need for joint and cross-dimensional efforts to address our common security challenges, grounded in the promotion of gender equality, human rights, democracy and the rule of law.
4. We welcome the specific focus placed on the prevention of organised crime in this year’s transnational threats session. This builds on the MC Declaration on transnational organised crime adopted in Tirana last year and on our discussions at the Security Committee and in first dimension events this year. In this regard, we reiterate our commitment to continue to address organised crime and its root causes through building strong societies, effective and accountable institutions based on the rule of law, but also through a gender-sensitive and human-rights based approach.

5. Organised crime represents a direct threat to the security and safety of citizens, fuels conflict, corruption and money laundering, and triggers violence. In addition, it often reinforces other major security threats such as the illicit financing of terrorism or the trafficking of goods and human beings. Preventing opportunities that facilitate organised crime and its harmful effects on individuals and society is key in that regard.
6. On 14 April of this year, the European Commission has adopted a dedicated EU Strategy to Tackle Organised Crime (2021-2025). This Strategy reflects the new challenges identified in Europol's 2021 Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment, such as the increased cooperation among criminal groups in a networked environment, the greater risks of criminal infiltration of the economy or the increased use of new technologies by criminal groups. The Strategy identifies priority actions to tackle the modus operandi and business model of criminal networks. It aims at boosting law enforcement and judicial cooperation, disrupting organised crime structures, eliminating the profits generated by organised crime and making law enforcement and the judiciary fit for the digital age.
7. Crime prevention is an essential component of any comprehensive security policy. The European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN) brings together all 27 EU Member States, collects best practices on crime prevention and delivers targeted policy papers and toolboxes for practitioners on specific crime areas. These include organised property crime, trafficking in human beings or cybercrime. The EUCPN also contributes to the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT), which brings together EU Member States, EU Institutions and Agencies, international organisations and third countries to collectively develop operational responses to organised crime.
8. Taking away the profit generated by organised crime and preventing organised crime groups from infiltrating the legal economy are also two very effective tools to prevent organised crime and reduce its attractiveness. The Commission is currently assessing the possibility to review the EU legal framework on tracing, freezing and confiscation of criminal assets and is supporting efforts to improve the protection of the licit economy, for example by involving local authorities and other administrative bodies.
9. On firearms, the EU adopted in July 2020 a new EU Action Plan on firearms trafficking for 2020-2025. One of its stated priorities is stepping up international cooperation. In

that context, the Action Plan contains a specific section on cooperation with South East Europe and integrates the Regional Roadmap on combating illicit arms trafficking in the Western Balkans established through a consensual and participatory approach. This Roadmap will continue to be implemented in close cooperation with international partners, including the OSCE.

10. Recognising that international partnerships are essential to effectively combat organised crime networks, the EU works closely with its neighbours and key partners. In the OSCE region, one example is the project “Countering Serious Crime in the Western Balkans”, financed under the Instrument for Pre-Accession. This project is strengthening strategic coordination in the region by supporting regional threat assessments on serious organised crime and improving the level of interoperability of information systems. We will continue supporting Western Balkan partners in their efforts to build operational capacity and intra-regional cooperation against organised crime. The EU also continues to enhance operational cooperation in fighting organised crime with Eastern Partnership countries. In Central Asia, the EU is also supporting its partners to address transnational security challenges such as human trafficking, trafficking of drugs, organised crime and terrorism through the Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA). This Programme is aimed at enhancing security, fighting against illegal trafficking and facilitating trade in Central Asia and contributes to the implementation of the new EU Strategy towards the region.

11. To conclude, 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. In order for our efforts to be effective, full respect of OSCE commitments and principles is essential, in particular those in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Thank you.

The Candidate Countries TURKEY, REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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