

Presentation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly: UK chair of the Security Committee

Thank you for that kind introduction Chair.

I am honoured to have been invited to address this Committee for the second time as Chair of the Security Committee.

I remain grateful to the Swedish Chairpersonship for putting its faith in me to continue in this role, implementing its priorities in the field of transnational threats.

It is important that OSCE priorities and commitments – in all areas – are realised and implemented in partnership with parliamentarians. In my view, parliamentarians serve three key functions: as enablers to shape national policy; as controllers providing legislative oversight; and as bridge builders bringing together diverging views at all levels, including through meetings such as this one.

I acknowledge specifically the role of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism: And I was honoured to have spoken last June at its 7th Meeting and look forward to continuing to engage with its expertise this year.

As many of you know, the Security Committee had in recent years not been able to achieve consensus on deliverables at the OSCE Ministerial Council.

Fortunately this changed last year in Tirana. I am pleased we were able to reach consensus on a Declaration on Strengthening Co-operation in Countering Transnational Organized Crime in the OSCE area.

Transnational organised crime remains a priority of the Swedish Chairpersonship. As a Committee, our meetings on this topic seek to operationalise the Tirana declaration in key strategic areas. Across all transnational threats, there is also a priority to implement existing commitments.

According to the World Bank, the value of transnational criminal networks engaged in various manifestations of organised crime is growing and exceeded \$US 1.3 trillion by 2018 – equivalent to around 1.5 percent of global GDP.

It is particularly important to break the social, situational, psychological, and economic drivers of recruitment and ensure that our institutions fighting transnational organised crime continue to be effective, accountable and free of corruption.

The COVID-19 pandemic of course affects this threat. After some initial disruption to their operations, transnational organised crime groups are benefitting from the ongoing crisis by exploiting or exacerbating long-term

or structural vulnerabilities. This makes preventing the scourge even more important.

Our work in the Committee will also include the issues of counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism. This threat has sadly not diminished. Last year saw appalling terrorist attacks and loss of life in the OSCE area, including here in Vienna. As we've seen, the pandemic has provided another febrile atmosphere for terrorists and violent extremists to thrive, including those on the far right.

Our Committee will also focus on cyber security. Malicious cyber activity causes economic loss, individual suffering and poses a national security threat to our countries. The last year has forced all of us to rely even more heavily on digital technologies for nearly all aspects of our lives – this has brought the cyber skills gap and cyber security itself into much sharper focus.

Serious organised crime, terrorism and cyberattacks pose a threat to our collective and individual security. They also undermine and pose a direct threat to democracy, democratic principles and our democratic institutions. None of our countries are immune.

In the delivery of our Security Committee programme, I aim for an inclusive, dynamic and de-politicised debate with more discussion and interaction with and between experts to explore the technical issues in detail.

I will mainstream gender considerations, as well as human rights and fundamental freedoms. Gender dynamics are part of the transnational threat ecosystem. We need to challenge our assumptions and calibrate our responses.

For example, women can be victims of terrorism and organised crime but they can also be perpetrators, facilitators and serve in the same roles as men.

We can also only effectively combat these threats in full compliance with our human rights commitments. The voices and experience of civil society add value here, including to hold governments accountable. I will ensure their voices are heard in the Committee

I will also continue to fully involve the OSCE field missions in our meetings to help bridge the gap between the work in Vienna and activity on the ground. I am hopeful we will this year meet the ambition for the Committee to visit an OSCE field mission.

To conclude, I continue to believe in the potential of the Security Committee as an effective forum for states to share best practice and work together to implement our shared commitments. And I look forward to working together with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in combatting transnational threats in the OSCE area. Thank you.