While we continue to face multiple transnational threats, today’s ASRC session focuses on the nexus between organised crime, terrorism and illicit trade, and we thank the speakers for their valuable contributions.

Time and again, Ministers of the participating States of the OSCE have expressed their common resolve to prevent and counter transnational threats, in particular terrorism, in line with international standards and guidelines, including respect for human rights.

This year’s annual OSCE CT Conference in May focused on the challenges relating to the possible return of FTF and their families to their countries of origin. In the Security Committee, we also had exchanges on the links between organised crime and terrorism, and on how to enhance border security and management, including when countering trafficking. Earlier this week we have devoted special attention to countering trafficking in cultural property, as an important source of financing for international terrorist networks.

Such valuable discussions and exchanges took place in the context also of evolving commitments agreed at the level of the United Nations on using API, PNR biometrics and enhancing information sharing in order to identify FTFs and to counter trafficking activities.

As organised crime networks try and profit financially from terrorist attacks - by providing material, logistical or financial support to terrorist networks - we should leave no stone unturned to prosecute the individuals behind these networks and to seize and recover their assets. To do so, requires transnational co-operation at different levels. EU Member States fully support the OSCE engagements and activities to strengthen border security
and management in this area. With barely 1% of criminal proceeds recovered world-wide, there certainly is room for improvement. The nexus between terrorism and transnational organised crime remains little understood and varies from region to region.

Investigations into repeated terrorist attacks in the EU in recent years uncovered the involvement of some of the perpetrators in different types of serious and organised crime. The EU has been taking several measures, both internally and globally. A priority is to focus on improving information exchange and collaboration between our external Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and our internal Justice and Home Affairs agencies such as Europol, Eurojust and Frontex, as well as with Member States’ agencies.

Clearly, strengthening borders and police co-operation is not enough to address the nexus between terrorism, transnational organised crime groups, international money laundering, financing of terrorism and trafficking. In doing so, we must adopt a holistic approach, ensuring the protection of human rights, the promotion of fundamental freedoms, the involvement of civil society as well as the empowerment of women and youth. Overall, we should aim at addressing the root causes of terrorism and VERLT and other transnational threats by also helping to tackle conflict, marginalisation, discrimination and human rights abuses.

The choice between a so-called “hard” or a “soft” approach to countering transnational threats is a false one. For instance, States should engage in rehabilitation and reintegration strategies and programs before, during and after imprisonment of FTFs and as part of non-custodial measures of criminal justice, where prosecution is not possible or not appropriate. A comprehensive response offers the best anti-dote against violent extremism, organised crime and trafficking.

In our collective efforts, we must avoid addressing threats in silos. Developing effective State institutions and administration, rule of law mechanisms, functioning police, customs and intelligence services as well as fair judiciaries will lead to multiple benefits in countering terrorism, organised crime, and trafficking.

Although not at the forefront of today's exchange, the risk of conflict stemming from the malicious use of information and communication technologies poses a significant transnational threat. We thus wish to stress also here that, as with the threat of terrorism,
we will not enhance cyber security without respecting international law nor without the input of civil society.

We recognize the risks associated to the misuse of the Internet as a tool - to recruit terrorists, spread terrorist and violent extremist propaganda, and in the case of trafficking such as illicit trade of cultural property. However, countering actions must not go at the expense of the right to freedom of opinion and expression. It is in all our interest to maintain a free, open, peaceful and secure cyberspace that will help underpin global prosperity and security.

The OSCE, through the various activities undertaken by the Secretariat, the autonomous institutions and the field missions, is providing valuable and even unique support to participating States in all relevant domains. We encourage States to make full use of it.

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

Thank you.

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

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.