

Finnish Presidency of the Council of the European Union

**Reinforced Permanent Council No. 621
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EU Statement on Combating transnational organized crime and Upholding human rights and the rule of law in criminal justice systems

The European Union stresses the importance of international cooperation in criminal matters. Such cooperation is necessary to combat serious phenomena, like trafficking in human beings. International cooperation in police and criminal matters also plays an important role in the fight against organized crime and terrorism. The EU supports promotion of enhanced cooperation. The Union itself is making full use of the possibilities offered by the Treaty on EU.

The European Union welcomes the opportunity to debate the theme of transnational organized crime and rule of law. We commend the Chair's Perception Paper on combating transnational organized crime and upholding human rights and the rule of law in criminal justice systems. The Perception Paper gives us a comprehensive overview of the Ministerial Council decisions made in 2005 and indicates how the implementation of those decisions is proceeding. It serves as a good basis for our future deliberations.

Organized crime and terrorism are threats that affect all participating States. The EU underlines the importance of respecting OSCE commitments and legally binding international instruments that ensure the rule of law and due process in criminal justice. These provisions remain fully relevant in all participating States and in all circumstances. These high standards should be followed also in the fight against organized crime.

The EU fully supports the assessment that effective and impartial criminal justice systems play a crucial role in the fight against transnational organized crime. Well functioning criminal justice systems support the rule of law and the rule of law supports the criminal justice systems. It is also clear that protection of human rights should be guaranteed in all criminal proceedings.

The OSCE has gained valuable experience in advising and assisting in reforming police, judiciary, criminal defence, prosecution and penitentiary institutions in various participating States. This experience should be fully utilized in OSCE activities. Applying the principles of the Platform of Co-operative Security, it should at the same time be recognized that a number of international organisations specialise on cooperation in judicial and criminal matters.

The EU strongly supports OSCE activities which aim at institution and capacity building in developing judicial systems. We commend the efforts undertaken by a number of OSCE field

presences in this respect. We regard such activities as welcome examples of a cross dimensional approach in addressing threats and challenges to security.

The EU also strongly supports further work on the consolidation of existing OSCE commitments on upholding the rule of law.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia ¹ and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

¹ Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process