

## Opening Remarks

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**Mediterranean Regional Counterterrorism Expert Workshop**

**TERRORIST KIDNAPPING AND HOSTAGE-TAKING**

**Valletta, Malta 16-17 September 2014**

Your Excellencies,

Dear Experts,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to extend a warm welcome to you all, as we open the Mediterranean Regional Counterterrorism Expert Workshop on “*Terrorist Kidnapping and Hostage-Taking*”. This workshop, following the successful experience of last year in Malaga (Spain), is jointly organized by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

This workshop is also a follow up, at the expert level, of a Conference organized earlier this year by the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship that included Terrorist Kidnapping among its topics, and it was discussed at the political level in Interlaken.

Today, the OSCE participating States are unanimous that terrorism is one of the most significant threats to peace and security, as well as to human rights, social and economic development in the OSCE area, and beyond. Terrorism seeks to undermine the very values that unite OSCE participating States. That is why, the OSCE, in co-operation with other international and regional organizations, is determined to continue its contribution to the global fight against terrorism.

OSCE participating States adopted in 2012 the “OSCE Consolidated Framework for the Fight against Terrorism”. It provides a new blueprint for the OSCE's contribution to global efforts against this scourge. This Consolidated Framework was adopted together with other decisions, all aiming at further strengthening the OSCE’s efforts to address transnational threats.

In this regard, those decisions encourage OSCE executive structures to engage in action-oriented co-operation with the OSCE Partners for Co-operation, by providing expert advice and exchange of information on best practices and experiences. Those decisions also invited the OSCE Partners for Co-operation to voluntarily implement the OSCE commitments with regard to the international legal framework against terrorism and co-operation in criminal matters related to terrorism.

One important commitment that OSCE participating States adopted is to become parties and to implement the Universal Antiterrorism Instruments (UATI). These instruments define the actions that should be criminalized by the State parties. UN Security Council Resolution 1373 mandates UN member States to become parties to these instruments and to fully implement them, providing also for international cooperation and mutual assistance.

The OSCE, in close co-operation with the UNODC Terrorism Prevention Branch, raises awareness of the need to fully implement the provisions contained in the UATI, and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, and assists our participating States in this endeavour. This includes also facilitating co-operation in criminal matters related to terrorism in line with international human rights standards.

The OSCE also helps its participating States with activities that build national capacities to investigate terrorism; it also contributes to preventing terrorist crimes by facilitating co-operation and exchange of experiences and information among justice and law enforcement practitioners.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This experts' workshop is an actual example of how the OSCE implements provisions mandated by its participating States: three Universal Antiterrorism Instruments, relevant to terrorist kidnapping and hostage-taking, discussed by experts from OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation, and in co-operation with UNODC and other international and regional organizations.

It goes without saying that you, the practitioners, the experts who deal with these issues in your day-to-day professional life, are constantly reminded of the fact that we need each other. Hence, prevention, investigation and prosecution of a terrorist offence requires co-operation across borders using tools such as effective exchange of information, extradition and mutual legal assistance on the basis of international and regional agreements and commitments. I am confident that this regional workshop will offer you the time to share experiences, challenges, good practices, and lessons learned from your experience in preventing and investigating terrorist kidnapping and hostage-taking.

The OSCE will continue reinforcing its co-operation with other international and regional entities active in the Mediterranean countries, including supporting initiatives taken by the United Nations, like the recent UN Security Resolution 2133, that encourages to further unite our efforts to combat kidnapping for ransom and political concessions; in this regard, we will continue striving to work with UN entities –like the UNODC, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) and other partners such as the Global Counter-terrorism Forum (GCTF), whose initiatives we acknowledge here as part of our discussion. For example the recommendations contained in the Algiers Memorandum on Good Practices on Preventing and Denying the Benefits of Kidnapping for Ransom by Terrorists.

The OSCE is well located to bring together experiences of anti-terrorist studies and practices around the Mediterranean area. The OSCE will continue striving to co-operate more closely with its Mediterranean partners, supporting law enforcement and

judicial networks and developing and facilitating guidelines and platforms for enhancing information exchange, in partnerships with other organizations.

I hope that the presentations and discussions in this workshop will contribute to the current debate in the OSCE for the adoption of reasoned deliverables during the OSCE Ministerial Conference in Basel, at the end of Swiss OSCE Chairmanship. I appreciate Switzerland bringing this initiative forward among its priorities.

I would like to extend my gratitude to our distinguished keynote speakers, moderators and all expert participants for their time and the contributions that they have prepared and will be presenting. I am sure the upcoming four sessions will produce lively and insightful discussions and exchanges between experts.

I have to also specially mention our UNODC colleagues from the Terrorism Prevention Branch. Once again their support and collaboration has made possible that the OSCE and UNODC jointly organize this workshop.

Finally, I thank Liechtenstein, Spain and Switzerland for their financial support, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malta for their co-operation in the organization of this activity.

I wish you all a productive debate.

Thank you.