

**2021 OSCE ANNUAL POLICE EXPERTS MEETING**  
**“Preventing Transnational Organized Crime”**

**7 October 2021**

***Hofburg (Ratsaal), Vienna***

**CONCEPT**

Organized crime represents one of the most serious transnational threats to security and stability in the OSCE region. Globally, the value of criminal networks keeps growing, exceeding 1.3 trillion US\$ in 2018, which is equivalent to about 1.5 percent of the global GDP. A UN study has estimated annual criminal proceeds as 3.6 percent of global GDP, with 2.7 percent or 1.6 trillion being laundered.

The global pandemic has only exacerbated this trend. While travel restrictions and transnational lockdowns have caused a decrease of certain types of criminal activities, organized criminal groups exploited the structural vulnerabilities to expand their portfolios and create new revenue streams, limiting the access of citizens to basic services, including education and health services; undermining governance; displacing legitimate economic activities; depriving governments of revenue; and finally, exacerbating environmental destruction.

Prevention has been internationally recognized as an effective approach to sustainably reduce all types of crime. Since the 1970s, the concept of crime prevention<sup>1</sup> has developed from mostly referring to the prevention of street crime and general crime to also encompassing more serious crimes, such as transnational organized crime (TOC) and terrorism. Nevertheless, the underpinning logic remains the same – to avert crime by treating the causes, not just the symptoms, of criminal activities.

The topic of the 2021 OSCE Annual Police Experts Meeting (APEM)<sup>2</sup>, which focuses on “*Preventing Transnational Organized Crime*”, stems from series of meetings and conferences organized in 2020 and 2021. More recently, the key findings and outcomes of high-level events such as the 2021 OSCE-wide Conference on Combating the Threat of Illicit Drugs and the Diversion of Chemical Precursors,

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<sup>1</sup> As defined by the United Nations (UN), crime prevention “comprises strategies and measures that seek to reduce the risk of crimes occurring, and their potential harmful effects on individuals and society, including fear of crime, by intervening to influence their multiple causes”. ECOSOC resolution 2002/13, annex.

<sup>2</sup> The Annual Police Experts Meeting is organized in accordance with article 4 of the OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 9 of 4 December 2001 MC(9).DEC/9, which calls upon the OSCE to “...convene as appropriate and preferably annually meetings of police experts from OSCE participating States, and representatives of other relevant specialized international and regional organizations”.

the 2021 OSCE Annual Security Review Conference as well as several meetings of the OSCE Security Committee stressed that one of the most effective way to address transnational organized crime is by investing resources in its prevention. Additionally, in the MC.DOC/1/20 Declaration on Strengthening Co-operation in Countering Transnational Organized Crime, adopted in Tirana in 2020, OSCE participating States “*encourage co-operation between all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, in order to help build resilient communities, and to develop comprehensive responses to, and preventive measures against, transnational organized crime which take into account the needs, concerns and interests of all groups within society, protect the victims of crime and provide them access to appropriate remedies, while promoting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the efforts to counter transnational organized crime.*” In light of the above, the 2021 APEM will aim at discussing specific aspects of prevention and its implementation at the international, national and local levels.

The Swedish Chairpersonship will organize the 2021 OSCE Annual Police Experts Meeting, with the support of the OSCE Transnational Threats Department/ Strategic Police Matters Unit (TNTD/SPMU). The conference will address joint challenges and allow for the exchange of good practices, providing an opportunity for enhancing international co-operation and revisiting the importance of a comprehensive and holistic approach in the prevention of transnational organized crime.

### ***Session I: International, Regional and National Strategies as a Tool in the Prevention of Transnational Organized Crime***

The increased international attention to the topic of prevention as well as the growing evidence of the negative impact TOC has on society and its development suggest that strategies designed to prevent TOC should be a key pillar of any approach aiming to sustainably reduce this threat. Therefore, to prevent TOC from further hindering economic and social prosperity in our societies, the international community needs to streamline its efforts around a common and shared agenda.

In December 2020, the OSCE participating States welcomed the adoption of the MC.DOC/1/20 Declaration on Strengthening Co-operation in Countering Transnational Organized Crime. The 2021 APEM will provide a platform to discuss how to translate this and other commitments into concrete action, developing further on the prevention component of the fight against TOC.

Tackling these threats in today’s world requires a comprehensive and integrated approach. The strategies designed and implemented to prevent TOC not only raise awareness on this type of criminal activity, depriving organized criminal groups of their traditional mystique, but exponentially decrease the threat organized crime poses to the safety and security of all citizens in the OSCE region and beyond.

In this session, representatives from OSCE participating States will present international, regional and national strategies on TOC and discuss on how prevention components can be included into these to successfully address transnational threats. A significant part of the work to address TOC takes place at community level and prevents criminals from exploiting any existing governance vacuum, therefore, this session will also feature relevant examples of prevention of illegal activities in local contexts.

### ***Session II: The Importance of Institution-building Activities in the Fight against Transnational Organized Crime and its Prevention***

Research has shown that the primary enablers of organized crime are weak or absent governance, corruption, social exclusion, poverty and hardship. This is not surprising, given the fact that TOC systematically targets institutional and socio-economic vulnerabilities, thus weakening state institutions and undermining development. The reliance of organized criminals on our societies' vulnerabilities, including structural inequalities, became even more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this scenario, institution-building activities are crucial to better prevent these illicit activities and their consequences. Building accountable, transparent and effective institutions is the cornerstone to a successful approach that takes into consideration socio-economic drivers that effect and influence TOC.

Over the years, many international fora have recognized that these type of transnational threats cannot be confined to the criminal justice system alone. At the same time, broad international political consensus has emerged in placing emphasis on addressing illicit financial flows and on recovering criminal assets.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, promoting the social re-use of confiscated assets, by bringing back to communities what has been illegally taken away from them, sends a strong message of deterrence and proves that crime *does not pay*.

In this session, experts from law enforcement agencies, the judicial sector, financial intelligence units and agencies dealing with the management of seized assets across the OSCE region will highlight the type of skills, knowledge and approach national institutions should include in their work in order to effectively prevent TOC.

### **Session III: *The Role of Public-Private Partnerships in Preventing Transnational Organized Crime***

Best case practices from the OSCE region have highlighted that prevention efforts should involve co-operation between state institutions and other stakeholders, such as local entities, civil society organizations (CSOs), academia and the private sector.

Successful strategies and actions aimed at addressing TOC not only require a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach but also need to encompass both countering and preventive measures. A multi-disciplinary approach based on public-private partnerships is therefore crucial to identify the most impactful prevention strategies, both at the national and international levels.

This session will develop on how different stakeholders, such as local entities, civil society organizations (CSOs), academia and the private sector, can engage with state authorities, including law enforcement, to support and complement each other's work in the prevention of TOC as well as to infiltrate and impact on the economic and social stability of their countries. A special focus will be given to real cases and situations that involve a broad spectrum of actors engaged in the fight against transnational threats.

The main findings and outcomes of the meeting will be compiled in a report which will serve as a basis for further discussions on its topics at the national, regional and international levels and as guidance for

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<sup>3</sup> As reflected in a range of political declarations and international legal instruments, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 16.4), the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, the UN Convention against Corruption, and the 40+9 Recommendations of the Financial Actions Task Force (FATF).

the OSCE when developing and providing capacity-building and technical assistance to the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation.

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## **INDICATIVE AGENDA**

*(Please note that the following schedule is based on Vienna time, GMT+2)*

**08:45 - 9:00 Welcoming coffee**

**09:00 - 9:30 Opening Session**

**09:30 - 10:30 Session I: International, Regional and National Strategies as a Tool in the Prevention of Transnational Organized Crime**

Prevention has been internationally recognized as an effective approach to sustainably reduce all types of crime. Drawing from this, Session I will introduce international, regional and national strategies against transnational organized crime (TOC) and analyze what role they play in crime prevention in the OSCE area. As successful strategies against TOC need to encompass not only countering measures but also preventive ones, the discussion will focus on how to ensure prevention is an integral part of the international, regional and national strategies designed to address transnational organized crime.

**10:30 - 11:00 Coffee break**

**11:00 - 12:00 Session I (Continuation)**

**12:00 - 13:00 Lunch break**

**13:00 - 14:30 Session II: The Importance of Institution-building Activities in the Fight against Transnational Organized Crime and its Prevention**

Research has shown that the primary enablers of organized crime are weak or absent governance, corruption, social exclusion, poverty and hardship. Therefore, institution-building is crucial to better prevent transnational organized crime and its consequences. Session II will elaborate on the concept of institution-building and develop on how to strengthen prevention efforts and the co-ordination of all relevant national institutions engaged in the fight against transnational organized crime.

**14:30 - 15:00 Coffee break**

**15:00 - 16:30 Session III: The Role of Public-Private Partnerships in Preventing Transnational Organized Crime**

In the OSCE area, best case practices have highlighted that prevention efforts should involve co-operation between state institutions and other stakeholders, such as local entities, academia, civil society organizations and the private sector. Session III will explore how law enforcement and communities can work together in the prevention of transnational organized crime, placing public-private partnerships at the heart of a holistic approach in preventing TOC.

**16:30 - 17:00 Coffee break**

**17:00 - 17:30 Closing session**

The closing session will outline key findings and outcomes of the meeting, such as best practices and lessons learned. Furthermore, the discussion will highlight the role of the OSCE in contributing, along with other international and regional organizations, to a multi-disciplinary and partnership-based approach in the prevention of transnational organized crime.

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