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## United States Mission to the OSCE

### Annual Security Review Conference

#### **Working Session I: Transnational Threats: Current and Future Trends in the OSCE Area and Beyond**

Delivered by U.S. OSCE Ambassador James S. Gilmore III  
Vienna, June 24, 2020

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. Thank you, particularly, for your leadership in bringing this very important topic forward into this meeting today and to this conference for the last two days. We are very grateful for your focus on this. We are grateful for the leadership of Alena Kupchyna and the Transnational Threats Department, for her focus on this, and for her presentation today, as well as those of the panelists.

This organization, the OSCE, usually addresses this issue within the framework of human rights and the abuse of power and the malign activities of States; but this meeting today adds to the topic private power: the use of money, violence, intimidation for private gain. But of course, it was also pointed out by all of our panelists today that these two things can intersect very frequently and they often do, with respect to the potential corruption of public officials. And of course, transnational crime crosses borders by definition. So, as a result, this is exactly the right Organization to address this issue and to place this emphasis.

Transnational threats and related challenges cannot be addressed effectively by just any one participating State alone. Cooperation and collaboration are a must. The OSCE has facilitated our shared efforts to address the threats posed by organized crime, violent extremism and terrorism, and malicious cyber activities. The United States places a great emphasis on this issue. Like others who have spoken before us with respect to Ministerial Decisions, the United States was genuinely astonished that we were not able to adopt a Ministerial Decision in Bratislava. One that was offered by the United States in partnership with Belarus was on the issue of Trafficking in Persons, perhaps with the drive in this meeting today perhaps this can be reawakened for a future proposal with all 57 members of our organization.

Of course, now we are confronting a new transnational threat, which is COVID-19. Our countries have worked together to respond to the pandemic, sharing resources and supplies, as well as medical experience. While it is certain that the resources of national governments have had a huge role to play in moving supplies to where they are most needed – our military forces in particular have contributed to this – much of our successful collaboration has been made possible through the partnerships forged between the government sector and the business and civil society sectors in addressing the pandemic. All these actors –

governmental and non-governmental – working together are critical to addressing all transnational threats effectively.

Throughout the pandemic, transnational criminal organizations have taken advantage of strained law and border enforcement to exploit the crisis for personal and private financial gain. These criminals have profited from the shipping of restricted medical supplies, personal protective equipment, and suspect products that claim to ward off coronavirus when they really don't. I point to the horrific crime of victimizing vulnerable populations during the pandemic for private gain, and the complete and utter immorality of that in the international system that must be dealt with severely by the criminal law in all of our countries and transnationally.

Corruption in public institutions enables these criminal activities. We cannot use COVID-19 as an excuse to set aside existing international anti-corruption standards and obligations as our governments procure supplies to battle the pandemic. If anything, we must be more vigilant and rigorous in combating corruption, both during the pandemic and in its aftermath. When the focus turns to restarting our economies, advancing transparency and anti-corruption through the OSCE can attract investment and build resilience against economic coercion by China and other malign influencers. As our panelists all described, bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation among countries and international organizations to foster border security best practices, legal institution building, and good governance will be the key to eliminating transnational organized crime and the environment nurturing it.

We have made major progress in degrading and defeating terrorist groups, but must continue the focus on the disposition of foreign terrorist fighters, or FTFs. All countries have a responsibility to repatriate and prosecute their FTF nationals for crimes committed abroad, but we must remember that respect for human rights cannot be separated from the legal process. Those exposed to terrorist ideology – including the families of FTFs -- will need to be rehabilitated and reintegrated so they disengage from terrorism and successfully re-enter their home-country communities. And, of course, we also need to prosecute those who do not successfully reintegrate and who then proceed to break the law..

In addition to the FTF challenge, the United States places a high priority on countering racially or ethnically motivated terrorism; that is reflected in the Trump Administration's National Strategy for Counterterrorism. Racially and ethnically motivated terrorism must be condemned, confronted, and stopped, and the narrative feeding it must be countered at home and abroad through online and traditional media. This past April, the Department of State announced the designation of Russian Imperial Movement, or RIM, and members of its leadership as Specially Designated Global Terrorists. This was the first time the United States has ever designated foreign white supremacists as terrorists, and underscores how seriously the United States takes the threat. And, in fact, globally, we should be investigating terrorists of all ethnic groups.

We have seen a substantial increase in malicious cyber activity related to COVID-19, carried out by hostile states and criminals alike. In the current environment, cyber attacks that impair the ability of hospitals and healthcare systems to deliver critical services could have deadly consequences. The United States stands with countries in the OSCE region in responding to

this challenge, as we did in April when we called out an attack on the Czech Republic's health sector.

What is the OSCE's role in helping nations to confront these transnational threats effectively?

The OSCE broke new ground with the development of its cyber confidence-building measures (CBMs). Under the Informal Working Group Chair's "adopt a CBM initiative", the United States has championed CBM 13, and earlier this month, we contributed extra-budgetary funding to implement this CBM. This is in line with the United States' additional emphasis on the issue not only of cyber crime, but all transnational crime. This effort enables the OSCE Communications Network to facilitate the secure exchange of authorized and protected communications among participating States regarding cyber incidents. We are confident this type of basic information-sharing is a major step toward preventing and reducing the risks of misperceptions escalating into conflict.

Through its extra-budgetary projects, field organizations, and the Action against Terrorism Unit, the OSCE has a history of successful initiatives to counter terrorist narratives and ideologies that seek to indoctrinate vulnerable segments of society and inspire them to violence. That requires strong partnerships at the local, regional, and national levels.

Colleagues, the OSCE has a unique strength in being able to bring together government and non-governmental partners, including civil society, the private sector, and religious and community leaders. This strength is essential to effectively countering transnational threats, including COVID-19. As we confront these cross-border issues, we must remember that protecting and advancing human rights and fundamental freedoms – a guiding principle of this organization since its founding – strengthens our capacity to counter and recover from COVID-19 and increases our resilience to other complex and diffuse global threats. And this is an initiative and a mission that can bring together different groups in different countries and different organizations to fight in an international spirit together here at the OSCE.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.