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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 76th JOINT MEETING OF THE OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION AND THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

26 February 2020

On countering terrorism

The European Union and its Member States welcome the speakers at this joint meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) and the Permanent Council and thank them for their presentations. While recognizing the importance of countering terrorism, which is one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, we believe that it calls for a comprehensive and multidimensional approach.

We thank the organizers for the Concept Note put forward, which recalls the role of the OSCE in helping participating States to co-operate and counter terrorism. While the FSC had overall responsibility for this task for a time, Decision No. 1063 on the OSCE Consolidated Framework for the Fight against Terrorism adopted at the 2012 Ministerial Council meeting in Dublin recognizes only three aspects of the fight against terrorism within the FSC's competence, namely United Nations Security Council resolution 1540, combating illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, and the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, particularly the issue of non-State actors. We therefore consider that the FSC is not the main body for dealing with this issue overall within the OSCE, unlike the Permanent Council and its subsidiary bodies including the Security Committee, along with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, all of whose efforts we support and welcome. In particular, we would point out that the system of voluntary reports in the Security Committee on the implementation of the OSCE's counter-terrorism commitments remains an added value, and we urge all participating States to make full use of it to foster the exchange of information and best practices in this area.

Terrorism is a threat to our security, the values of our democratic societies and the rights and freedoms enjoyed by European citizens. Countering terrorism is an absolute and unequivocal priority for the European Union and its Member States and for its international partners, namely the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (UNCTED), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the OSCE.

The European Union is particularly committed to strengthening international co-operation, in particular with the OSCE participating States. We welcome the exchange of information and best practices between the European Union and the OSCE through the organization of high-level conferences and would like to step up the exchanges on reducing the connection between organized crime and trafficking of all kinds, particularly in small arms and light weapons, and terrorism.

The European Union is very committed to countering the terrorist threat and has undertaken several legislative projects to strengthen the security of Europe and limit terrorist movements following the increase in attacks on its territory since 2015. The first priority is thus to fully implement the European Union's counter-terrorism measures: the European Passenger Name Record, controls at the European Union's outer borders, the Entry-Exit System and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System, the counter-terrorism directive, combating radicalization, co-operation with third countries, the firearms directive, and revision of the anti-money laundering and terrorist financing directive.

The European Union and its Member States regard the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law to be essential elements in the prevention of terrorism and the violent extremism and radicalization that lead to it. We emphasize that effective measures to counter terrorism and protect human rights are objectives that go hand in hand.

We believe that punitive measures should be accompanied by attempts at reintegration, with respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law so as to provide an effective response to the challenges posed by the reinsertion or return of foreign terrorist fighters and their families in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 2396.

The European Union pursues a comprehensive approach to preventing and countering terrorism and radicalization leading to violent extremism. It also encourages co-operation between public authorities, civil society, the education and health sectors, the academic world, local communities, the media and the private sector.

The European Union is particularly committed to countering the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes, in particular combating online terrorist content. In that context, the European Union supports the Christchurch Call of May 2019 to eliminate online terrorist and violent extremist content. A draft regulation to ensure that terrorist content is withdrawn within an hour of its notification is also being discussed.

In its European Agenda on Security of April 2015 laying out the main EU activities planned for the period 2015 to 2020, the European Commission proposed more effective and comprehensive measures to combat the financing of terrorism. The fifth anti-money laundering and terrorist financing directive was published on 19 June 2018. At the same time, the European Union supports the full and comprehensive implementation of resolution 2462 on combating the financing of terrorism adopted in 2019 by the UN Security Council.

Improving the criminal justice framework in cyberspace and more efficient collection of digital evidence have become even more urgent priorities; at the same time, the majority of criminal investigations include transborder requests for electronic evidence. The European Union participates in various negotiations between Member States aimed at facilitating access to this evidence as part of the e-evidence project, but also with all States Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime, known as the Budapest Convention, who are currently negotiating a second additional protocol on electronic evidence.

Finally, the European Union recognizes the OSCE's contribution to countering terrorism, particular through its assistance in strengthening the capacities of its participating States and Partners. It is ready to support the OSCE's role, which has an undoubted added value in this domain, and works on a complementary basis and without duplication with its international partners.

Thank you.

The candidate countries North Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Serbia¹ and Albania¹, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

1 North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.