



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe



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Permanent Mission  
of the Republic of Poland  
to the Organization for Security  
and Co-operation in Europe  
in Vienna



## **2021 OSCE Mediterranean Conference**

**“Road to resilience: post-pandemic recovery and security  
in the OSCE and Mediterranean regions”**

*Vienna, Austria and via Zoom  
12–13 October 2021*

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## 1. Annotated agenda

### Introduction

At the 2020 OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Vienna – the first one to take place in a virtual format due to COVID-19-related restrictions – Ministers and other high-level representatives of the OSCE participating States and the Partners for Co-operation met at a critical moment and shared their mutual concerns about the multiple challenges that the spread of the novel virus had raised for their societies, from public health through employment and education to security. With the pandemic still in full force, they concurred that overcoming the crisis would require reviewing existing models of development and governance. In a spirit of genuine partnership, they noted that a return to normalcy would not be possible without a stronger focus on sustainability and a renewed commitment to international co-operation.

Against this backdrop, Poland as the Chairmanship of the 2021 OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group fostered dialogue with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation on a range of crucial topics throughout the year, with a view to tackling ongoing challenges as well as seizing available opportunities beyond the crisis. Topics of dialogue included: post-pandemic recovery; transnational organized crime; and youth.

As a coronation of this programme, the 2021 OSCE Mediterranean Conference addressed the topic of “Road to resilience: post-pandemic recovery and security in the OSCE and Mediterranean regions”. The event shall start with a high-level political segment addressing “Security and co-operation in the Mediterranean in light of the COVID-19 pandemic”. Thematic sessions shall then tackle specific aspects, including promoting sustainable and “green” recovery, fighting pandemic-related transnational organized crime, and combating human trafficking in labour markets affected by the pandemic.

The Conference shall provide a platform for “advancing a common approach in tackling challenges ... and seizing emerging opportunities, in a spirit of genuine partnership, co-operation, and ownership”, as called for by the Milan Ministerial Council Declaration on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean (MC.DOC/4/18). Among other issues, the Conference shall enhance a discussion on how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on the security link between the OSCE and Mediterranean regions and how comprehensive security should be understood and operationalized in a post-pandemic context.

## Tuesday, 12 October 2021

12.00-12.55 – Registration of participants

12.55-13.00 – Technical introduction and welcome

### 13.00-13.30 – Opening remarks

Chair: Mr. Adam Hałaciński, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Poland to the OSCE

Speakers:

1. H.E. Mr. Zbigniew Rau, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Poland
2. H.E. Ms. Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sweden
3. H.E. Ms. Megi Fino, Deputy Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Albania
4. H.E. Ms. Helga Schmid, OSCE Secretary General

### 13.30-15.30 – High-level political segment: Security and co-operation in the Mediterranean in light of the COVID-19 pandemic

Chair: Mr. Adam Hałaciński, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Poland to the OSCE

Speakers:

*Please see the attached annex.*

*After the high-level political statements, the floor was opened for statements from other delegations*

Rapporteur for Opening Remarks and Political Segment: Ms. Katarzyna Banaszkiwicz, Permanent Representation of the Republic of Poland to the OSCE

15.30-16.00 – Coffee break

### 16.00-18.00 – Session I: Strengthening international co-operation in fighting transnational organized crime prompted by the pandemic

*During the pandemic, organized crime groups (OCG) have taken advantage of the economic recession to create new avenues of profit. The risk to exploit the socio-economic vulnerabilities of some parts of the public, directly and indirectly increased significantly. By creating dependencies among small- and medium-sized enterprises facing financial difficulties, OCG have managed to fuel money-laundering activities and increase illegal profits. Furthermore, the urgent need to*

*procure medical products and equipment prompted them to penetrate the market with counterfeit goods.*

*As large sums of public funds are allocated to mitigate the economic consequences of COVID-19, strong institutions and good governance will be more important than ever. Although checks on public tenders are designed to root out criminal enterprise, the large scale of planned investments in wake of the coronavirus pandemic, and the pressure that state institutions are under to provide ad-hoc and un-bureaucratic support to businesses, could mean that these processes are less likely to detect illegitimate businesses.*

*Safeguards need to be in place to reduce risks of corruption in the disbursement of public funds. Strengthening international co-operation in criminal matters, including cybercrime cases, through an early exchange of information among states, and continuing recovering criminals' assets, remain crucial to address organized crime activities.*

Chair: Alena Kupchyna, OSCE Co-ordinator of Activities to Address Transnational Threats

Speakers:

1. Ms. Louise Shelley, Omer L. and Nancy Hirst Endowed Chair, Director, Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center (TraCCC), University Professor, Schar School of Policy and Government, George Mason University, United States
2. Ms. Anita Ramasastry, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Corruption
3. Ms. Faouzia Mebarki, Permanent Representative of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to the International Organisations in Vienna
4. Mr. Motasem Al Qassaymeh, Public Security Directorate, Ministry of Interior, Jordan
5. Ms. Alexandra Antoniadis, Deputy Head of Unit, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission
6. Mr. Azzeddine Farhane, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the International Organizations in Vienna
7. Dr. Fabian Zhilla, senior adviser of GI-TOC and lecturer at Canadian Institute of Technology

Rapporteur: Denise Mazzolani, Deputy Head, Strategic Police Matters Unit, Transnational Threats Department, OSCE

18.30-20.00 – Reception

*Registered participants shall receive a separate invitation for this social event*

## **Wednesday, 13 October 2021**

**10.00-12.00 – Session II: Combating trafficking in human beings in labour markets affected by the pandemic**

*The pandemic has exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and created new ones – rlabour market disruptions across the OSCE have created conditions that traffickers are increasingly exploiting. The scale of trafficking and the limited resources States have available to combat it put extra pressure on law enforcement and labour inspectorates to swiftly identify signs of exploitation, as more and more people in difficult situations are likely to fall prey to recruitment into exploitation.*

*However, this environment also presents an opportunity for a strategic shift in anti-trafficking response. In the challenging post-COVID economic environment, States can take the opportunity to integrate their traditional anti-trafficking approach with measures to prevent exploitation from occurring in the first place. Even before the pandemic hit, preventing labour exploitation in supply chains had emerged among the most promising anti-trafficking strategies to address the ‘demand’ fuelling exploitation; now these approaches have gained even greater relevance.*

*The OSCE has led the global conversation on this topic and produced some of the most innovative and discussed tools, including a Model Law and guidelines for action. The 2021 Mediterranean Conference is an opportunity for States to exchange their experience and best practices on the topic, identify common solutions and adopt joint strategies to ensure that the necessary post-COVID recovery is built on solid foundations, free from exploited labour.*

Chair: Mr. Valiant Richey, OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

Speakers:

1. Mr. Dominique Potier, Member of the National Assembly, France
2. Mr. Keith Shannon, Envoy for Migration and Modern Slavery, United Kingdom
3. Ms. Diane Schmitt, EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator
4. Ms. Naela Gabr, Chairperson of The National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons, Egypt
5. Ms. Dina Dominitz, National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, Israel
6. Mr. Talal Awalmeh, Public Security Directorate, Ministry of Interior, Jordan

Rapporteur: Andrea Salvoni, Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

12.00-13.30 – Lunch

### **14.00-16.00 – Session III: Sustainable recovery as a springboard from socio-economic crisis to security**

*Starting with 2020, the struggle with COVID-19 crisis has reversed many years of development gains globally and in the OSCE and Mediterranean areas. As the COVID-19 crisis continues, it continues to amplify existing fragilities and inequalities, imperilling progress towards sustainable development. As the pandemic is unfolding, climate change is emerging as another profound global crisis posing growing risk to economies, societies, and the environment. The recent assessment from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) notes that warming across the Mediterranean will be about 20 percent higher than global averages in the decades to come. Among other pressing challenges, efficient and cooperative water management will be key to resilience.*

*All this demonstrates the urgency and necessity of a transformative approach that would turn the pandemic into an opportunity to recover and build back better.*

*A shift towards more resource-efficient and low-emissions economies is not only a prerequisite for meeting the climate commitments but can also be a driver for increased prosperity and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. Pursuing an inclusive approach in recovery and paying particular attention to women and youth as agents of change are also key to accomplish a green and prosperous transition and ensure sustainability.*

*The 2021 Mediterranean Conference provides an opportunity for States to exchange experiences and best practices on these topics, particularly on the eve of major global events, such as the COP26, and explore prospects for enhanced cooperation and partnerships around them to further advance common security in the Mediterranean.*

Chair: Mr. Andrea Dessi, Senior Fellow, Mediterranean and Middle East Programme, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Italy

Speakers:

1. Mr. Ahmed Bakr, Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Nile Water Affairs, Egypt
2. Ms. Sarah Wilner, Director, MASHAV Carmel Training Center, Israel
3. Mr. Azzeddine Farhane, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the International Organizations in Vienna
4. Mr. Mohamed Mezghani, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Tunisia to the International Organizations in Vienna
5. Mr. Samir Graiche, 1<sup>st</sup> Secretary, Permanent Representation of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to the International Organizations in Vienna

Rapporteur: Maksym Mishalov Dragunov, Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

## **16.00-16.30 – Concluding remarks**

Chair: Philippe Tremblay, Head of External Co-operation, Office of Secretary General, OSCE

Speakers:

1. Mr. Bogusław Winid, Head of the OSCE Task Force, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Poland
2. Mr. Pascal Allizard, OSCE PA Vice-President
3. Mr. Igor Djundev, Permanent Representative of the Republic of North Macedonia to the OSCE

Rapporteur: Emiliano Alessandri, External Co-operation, Office of Secretary General, OSCE





## Annex 1

### High-level political segment: *Security and co-operation in the Mediterranean in light of the COVID-19 pandemic*

#### Speakers list, Ministers and Deputy Ministers, Ambassadors of the Partner countries, representatives of international organizations:

H.E. Mr. Esawi Frej, Minister of Regional Cooperation, Israel

H.E. Ms. Bisera Turkovic, Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Vice-Chairwomen of the Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina

H.E. Mr. Nikos Christodoulides, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cyprus

H.E. Mr. Nikos Dendias, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Greece

H.E. Mr. Jean Asselborn, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs and Minister of Immigration and Asylum, Luxembourg

H.E. Mr. Djordje Radulovic, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Montenegro

H.E. Mr. Evarist Bartolo, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs, Malta

H.E. Mr. Anže Logar, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Slovenia

H.E. Mr. José Manuel Albares, Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, Spain

H.E. Ms. Serenade Gamil, Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for Political International Relations, Egypt

H.E. Mr. Yavuz Selim Kiran, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Turkey

H.E. Mr. Frano Matušić, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Croatia

H.E. Mr. Péter Sztáray, Minister of State for Security Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hungary

H.E. Mr. Benedetto Della Vedova, Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Italy

H.E. Mr. Zoran Popov, State Secretary, North Macedonia

H.E. Mr. Francisco André, Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Portugal

H.E. Ms. Faouzia Mebarki, Permanent Representative of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to the International Organisations in Vienna

H.E. Ms. Leena Al-Hadid, Permanent Representative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the International Organisations in Vienna

H.E. Mr. Azzeddine Farhane, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco

H.E. Mr. Mohamed Mezghani, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Tunisia to the International Organisations in Vienna

H.E. Mr. Nasser Kamel, Secretary General, Union for the Mediterranean

H.E. Mr. Lazăr Comănescu, Secretary General, Organization of the Black Sea Economic  
Cooperation

## 2. Reports by the session rapporteurs

### 2.1 Opening remarks and high-level political segment

*Report by Ms. Katarzyna Banaszekiewicz, Minister-Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Poland to the OSCE*

Chair: **H.E. Mr. Adam Halaciński**, Permanent Representative of Poland to the OSCE

Speakers:

**H.E. Mr. Piotr Wawrzyk**, Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Poland

**H.E. Ms. Ann Linde**, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sweden

**H.E. Ms. Helga Schmid**, OSCE Secretary General

**H.E. Ms. Megi Fino**, Deputy Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Albania

**H.E. Mr. Piotr Wawrzyk**, Secretary of State for Legal and Treaty Affairs, the United Nations, Consular and Parliamentary Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, underlined the importance of the Mediterranean region in efforts to reinforce global security and in the post-COVID-19 recovery. Further development of co-operation between the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partners required close dialogue and co-ordinated actions. Accordingly, a needs-driven approach had guided all the meetings of the Mediterranean Partnership under the Polish lead, starting with the choice of specific themes for the Mediterranean Conference. Meaningful discussions between the OSCE and partner countries should be accompanied by concrete results. In that respect, Mr. Wawrzyk mentioned the extrabudgetary project on asset recovery aimed at enhancing co-operation in the fight against transnational organized crime and the new iteration of the Young Policy Advisers Course, designed for the Mediterranean Partners, the details of which would be presented in the coming months.

**H.E. Ms. Ann Linde**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, described 2021 as a challenging year because of COVID-19, noting how the pandemic had resulted in an increase in organized crime and trafficking in human beings along with greater vulnerability and unemployment among certain population groups. It was necessary to strengthen international co-operation in order to counteract those negative trends. During the recovery process, emphasis had to be placed on advancing the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security, empowering women and listening to the concerns and ideas of young people. As climate change was becoming one of the biggest security challenges, the Swedish OSCE Chairpersonship would submit for consideration a draft Ministerial Council decision on climate and security, proposing new OSCE commitments in that field. The Organization should strive to fully harness its role as a platform for the exchange of information, good practices and ideas on security, climate change adaptation and ways to enhance resilience and democracy in all countries.

**H.E. Ms. Helga Schmid**, OSCE Secretary General, declared that an OSCE key task in the near future would be to operationalize resilience across all three of its dimensions. She referred to the implementation of the Tirana Declaration on Human Rights, Democracy and

the Fight against Corruption, the principles of which appeared more important than ever, and called on the participating States to provide extrabudgetary funds to support the new project on asset recovery and to renew their commitment to the Partnership Fund. She emphasized the need for due diligence to eliminate the exploitation of workers by dishonest employers and traffickers during the pandemic. The OSCE could bring genuine added value to the post-COVID-19 recovery in the field of climate change adaptation: it was already developing some new projects in co-operation with the Union for the Mediterranean, with an emphasis on anticipating and preventing climate risks and achieving stability in the Mediterranean region. A positive step in terms of strengthening co-operation with partner countries would be to hold the 2022 Mediterranean Conference in the region.

**H.E. Ms. Megi Fino**, Deputy Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania, observed that the decision to adopt the new name “OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group” during the Albanian Chairmanship of the Group in 2019 and the holding of a special meeting of the Permanent Council on that topic in November 2020 reflected the increasing level of co-operation between the OSCE and the region. That stronger co-operation would also be reflected in the new edition of the booklet on the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership for Co-operation, which had been made possible by the generous contributions of Albania, Poland and Italy. It was necessary to improve the living conditions of women and young people, the population groups most affected by the consequences of COVID-19 in the region. Enhancing the position of women in the labour market was an indispensable step towards economic recovery, and the Organization could serve as a platform for relevant analyses. In closing, Ms. Fino called for the OSCE to engage with all ideas and concepts aimed at strengthening global security, not least through co-operation with the Mediterranean and Asian Partners – a co-operation of which Albania was and would remain a staunch supporter.

## **2.2 High-level political segment: Security and co-operation in the Mediterranean in light of the COVID-19 pandemic**

Chair: **H.E. Mr. Adam Hałaciński**, Permanent Representative of Poland to the OSCE

Speakers:

H.E. Mr. Esawi Frej, Minister of Regional Co-operation, Israel

H.E. Mr. Nikos Christodoulides, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cyprus

H.E. Mr. Nikos Dendias, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Greece

H.E. Mr. Jean Asselborn, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Minister of Immigration and Asylum, Luxembourg

H.E. Mr. Đorđe Radulović, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Montenegro

H.E. Mr. Evarist Bartolo, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs, Malta

H.E. Mr. Anže Logar, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Slovenia

H.E. Mr. José Manuel Albares, Minister for Foreign Affairs, the European Union and Co-operation, Spain

H.E. Ms. Serenade Gamil, Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for Political International Relations, Egypt

H.E. Mr. Yavuz Selim Kiran, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Turkey

H.E. Mr. Frano Matušić, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Croatia  
H.E. Mr. Péter Sztáray, State Secretary for Security Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hungary  
H.E. Mr. Benedetto Della Vedova, Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, Italy  
H.E. Mr. Zoran Popov, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, North Macedonia  
H.E. Mr. Francisco André, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation, Portugal  
H.E. Ms. Faouzia Mebarki, Permanent Representative of Algeria to the International Organizations in Vienna  
H.E. Ms. Leena Al-Hadid, Permanent Representative of Jordan to the International Organizations in Vienna  
H.E. Mr. Azzeddine Farhane, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the International Organizations in Vienna  
H.E. Mr. Mohamed Mezghani, Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the International Organizations in Vienna  
H.E. Mr. Nasser Kamel, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean  
H.E. Mr. Lazăr Comănescu, Secretary General of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

**H.E. Mr. Esawi Frej**, Minister of Regional Co-operation of Israel, informed the audience about the peace accords signed by his country with Bahrain and Morocco in 2020, and expressed the hope that further agreements of that kind would be concluded in the region. The COVID-19 crisis had demonstrated that the contemporary world knew no borders: all regions and countries were experiencing the same challenges and the only solution lay in global co-operation. For that reason, Israel had been a front runner in vaccination and had contributed significantly to international research and development efforts. Throughout the year, Israeli experts had attended many OSCE seminars on cybersecurity, youth engagement, border security and organized crime to learn from other countries and exchange best practices. In closing, Mr. Frej welcomed all new initiatives involving the Mediterranean Partners that sought to develop that important platform further.

**H.E. Mr. Nikos Christodoulides**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cyprus, said that his country remained a staunch supporter of multilateralism, and stressed the importance of strengthening co-operation between the OSCE and its Partners, as reflected in Cyprus's contributions to various projects through the Partnership Fund. Those projects helped to build resilience and supported fundamental principles, thereby promoting peace, security and stability for all people in the region. A crucial role in that respect would be played by the newly established Cyprus Centre for Land, Open-seas and Port Security (CYCLOPS), a regional hub for training the citizens of like-minded partner countries in non-military aspects of security. Like the other speakers, Mr. Christodoulides drew attention to the need to adopt a stronger gender perspective and enhance the participation of women in decision-making processes. He stressed the importance of international co-operation in the fight against organized crime and the smuggling of cultural goods, and in the sharing of vaccines with other countries. Global threats required collective solutions and the OSCE remained a unique multilateral platform for working together to discuss and identify such solutions.

**H.E. Mr. Nikos Dendias**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, emphasized that the global crisis could only be addressed through a global, collective response and, referring to the ongoing pandemic, he noted the solidarity shown by Greece in sharing COVID-19 vaccine doses. A stable and secure environment in the broader Mediterranean region required respect for international law and good-neighbourly relations to function well. He called for greater co-operation between the participating States and partner countries in the OSCE spirit.

**H.E. Mr. Nikos Dendias**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, emphasized that the global crisis could only be addressed through a global, collective response and, referring to the ongoing pandemic, he noted the solidarity shown by Greece in sharing COVID-19 vaccine doses. A stable and secure environment in the broader Mediterranean region required respect for International Law and good-neighbourly relations to function well. He highlighted that Greece will spare no effort to continue exploring avenues of cooperation with all its neighbouring countries. At the same time, Greece will continue to protect its sovereignty and sovereign rights across its territory against any challenge and threat, in accordance with International Law and the International Law of the Sea, as reflected in the UNCLOS. He underlined the need to preserve and bolster the rules-based international system. Finally, he called for greater co-operation between the participating States and partner countries in the OSCE spirit.

**H.E. Mr. Jean Asselborn**, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Minister of Immigration and Asylum of Luxembourg, affirmed that the challenges of the post-COVID-19 recovery called for even stronger co-operation with the Partners, since the pandemic had widened so many gaps. It was necessary to promote more inclusive economies and to foster dialogue among cultures. Unfortunately, terrorism remained a scourge. The OSCE's multidimensional approach could help in the design of long-term solutions to issues related to migration, climate change and poverty. The Helsinki Final Act continued to be a strong tool in that respect, and the OSCE and its participating States should support the Mediterranean Partners in tackling the various challenges and building fairer societies.

**H.E. Mr. Đorđe Radulović**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, reminded the audience that the pandemic could not be overcome by individual States acting on their own, and that it constituted a kind of resilience test for the system of international co-operation. The OSCE could play an important role by supporting the Mediterranean as a historically important region that had had a tremendous influence on the development of civilization. The world was facing unprecedented challenges, including the human crisis due to stalled economic growth and the growth in organized crime. Mr. Radulović expressed his concern over cyberthreats, misinformation and propaganda campaigns that were used to undermine democracy, and called for greater co-operation in all fields, especially in sustainable and green technologies and effective multilateralism.

**H.E. Mr. Evarist Bartolo**, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Malta, proposed the organization of a conference on security and co-operation in the Mediterranean region aimed at reviving "the spirit of Helsinki". It was impossible to effectively tackle pandemics, climate change, energy security, organized crime, trafficking in human beings or migration without collective responses. One such response should be the promotion of inclusive growth that prevented social unrest from spreading in the region. With regard to sustainable development, a fundamental contribution for the Mediterranean region would be the "blue agenda", as all partner countries had access to the sea.. In closing, Mr. Bartolo

stressed the role of young people and the importance of education and training, arguing that new global value chains should be created after the pandemic with human capital at the center. He also mentioned “soft” security, which, unless addressed, could easily translate into “hard” security challenges.

**H.E. Mr. Anže Logar**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, representing the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2021, noted that resilience and preparedness were main priorities of the EU Presidency. Together with efforts to increase stability, these themes would guide Slovenia’s co-operation with its southern neighbours. The OSCE was a good platform from which to tackle climate change as one of the major ongoing challenges to security. Mr. Logar appealed for a new international consensus on climate change, also in the run-up to the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-26).

**H.E. Mr. José Manuel Albares**, Minister for Foreign Affairs, the European Union and Co-operation of Spain, called for the OSCE’s role as a major actor for security in the Mediterranean region to be strengthened. Referring to the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and the Madrid Concluding Document of 1983, he argued that the main priorities for action should be to combat cross-border criminality and illicit trafficking, which had both risen significantly during the COVID-19 crisis and had to be addressed through international efforts. Overcoming the negative effects of the pandemic would not be possible unless it was ensured that all States achieved an equitable and fair recovery. There was significant potential for future co-operation and the Mediterranean would remain a key region for the OSCE..

**H.E. Ms. Serenade Gamil**, Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for Political International Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, stressed the interdependency between security and stability in the region on the one hand, and the need to jointly face common challenges on the other. There had been a tendency in the past to underestimate climate issues, and it was necessary to prepare better for future crises. Nor could one ignore other problems demanding a collective response, such as organized crime, trafficking in human beings and the smuggling of cultural property. Ms. Gamil underlined the nexus between organized crime and terrorism, and suggested that the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding could become an important hub for co-operation between the OSCE and partner countries in that field. In closing, she called for greater investment in young people and the empowerment of women to ensure equal and sustainable development..

**H.E. Mr. Yavuz Selim Kıran**, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, drew attention to the role of regional co-operation in efforts to tackle COVID-19 and climate and security issues, and also to the effects of the pandemic on so many sectors. Turkey had provided other countries with medical equipment and vaccines, and was helping to ensure free access to vaccines. The problems of terrorism, organized crime and trafficking in human beings could not be resolved without international co-operation. Other challenges that needed to be addressed together with the Mediterranean Partners were social disparities, climate change and irregular migration flows. Mr. Kıran lamented the fact that intolerance, xenophobia and discrimination had reached levels higher than those seen before the pandemic, and stressed that joint efforts were required to counteract those tendencies.

**H.E. Mr. Frano Matušić**, State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia, called for greater solidarity during the pandemic, along with multilateralism and regional co-operation. The OSCE was the most suitable organization to facilitate enhanced dialogue on environment and climate change. Inaction in those fields could have a negative impact on the security situation in coming decades. The ongoing crisis should be used as an opportunity to build resilience and develop digital technologies. It was important to strike a balance between public health restrictions and the need to ensure decent employment, while upholding at the same time the rule of law and protecting young people and women in particular. The goal should be to establish a framework for co-operation that helped to increase prosperity in the region.

**H.E. Mr. Péter Sztáray**, State Secretary for Security Policy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, emphasized that the challenges in the Mediterranean region (notably terrorism and increased migratory pressure) affected the entire OSCE area, and that there should be joint efforts to tackle them in the countries of origin, in particular by enhancing regional security and improving living conditions. Hungary was actively participating in relevant aid programmes and called on other States to do the same.

**H.E. Mr. Benedetto Della Vedova**, Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation of Italy, noted how the multidimensional impact of COVID-19 on the region and the ensuing interdependency between countries had further highlighted the need for multilateral and co-operative solutions. The crisis had clearly demonstrated the close link between security in Europe and security in the Mediterranean area, as stated already in the Helsinki Final Act. The OSCE is the only forum that allows participating States and Partner countries to discuss and work together on a shared Mediterranean security agenda. Regional security concerns should be addressed through a common approach, across all three OSCE dimensions of security. The Milan Ministerial Council Declaration on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean recognised the crucial role of sustainable development, economic growth and connectivity. Other key aspects that had to be addressed were gender, health and education inequalities, climate change and other transnational threats, such as organised crime, terrorism and trafficking in human beings; at the same time, it was necessary to strengthen human rights and the rule of law. Italy remained strongly committed to strengthening cooperation with Mediterranean Partners within the OSCE, continuing to foster dialogue and fund extrabudgetary initiatives. A co-operative and comprehensive approach should be based on the principle that there is just “one shore” in the Mediterranean, and not two or more.

**H.E. Mr. Zoran Popov**, State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, observed that there was a common lesson to be drawn from the pandemic: no country could fight the virus on its own. Joint efforts and actions were required, especially in the field of security, and the OSCE was a good platform for discussing possible solutions. The COVID-19 crisis had exacerbated existing problems, including those related to organized crime, domestic violence, xenophobia and trafficking in human beings, and had brought economic recession and unemployment, especially for women and young people. Co-operation in tackling those issues was crucial and North Macedonia, as the incoming Chairmanship of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group, intended to build on the initiatives launched by the Polish Chairmanship, striving to find common solutions to shared problems.



**H.E. Mr. Francisco André**, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation of Portugal, referred to the increase of transnational organized crime and trafficking in human beings due to the pandemic, emphasizing how such criminal activities undermined the rule of law and democratic institutions. The Tirana Declaration on Human Rights, Democracy and the Fight against Corruption was a very important tool in that respect, but it had to be properly implemented. Investments in job creation and economic recovery could mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 crisis, but it was equally important to enhance the role of women and young people in the framework of the OSCE-Mediterranean Partnership.

**H.E. Ms. Faouzia Mebarki**, Permanent Representative of Algeria to the International Organizations in Vienna, elaborated on the problem of ensuring equal access to COVID-19 vaccines and announced that Algeria had recently launched a national production facility in co-operation with China. The pandemic had affected the region through economic recession and a rise in organized crime, including cyberthreats that exacerbated protracted conflicts. Ms. Mebarki noted the very positive balance of the Mediterranean Partnership to date, and assured the audience that Algeria would remain proactive in examining all proposals for enhancing the collaboration.

**H.E. Ms. Leena Al-Hadid**, Permanent Representative of Jordan to the International Organizations in Vienna, stressed that, despite the pandemic, the OSCE had maintained its important dialogue with the Mediterranean Partners. Aware of many challenges stemming from regional conflicts and new migration patterns, Jordan was focusing on young people and their role in strengthening democracy – a topic that, alongside environmental issues, was a significant focus of its co-operation with the OSCE.

**H.E. Mr. Azzedine Farhane**, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the International Organizations in Vienna, explained that the pandemic had made it necessary to make adjustments to his country's economic and health system. Morocco had recently launched a project to produce its own COVID-19 vaccine, and 70 per cent of the population had been vaccinated to date. It was necessary to continue the collaborative approach to relations between the OSCE and the Mediterranean region, and to bear in mind that resilience could only be achieved by developing new methods of education, creating new jobs and digital solutions, and establishing a sustainable economy. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was a very important yardstick for such efforts. Morocco was keen to co-operate closely with the OSCE in helping the participating States and their partners to achieve resilience and prepare better for future threats, not least through the promotion of a “green” economy.

**H.E. Mr. Mohame Mezghani**, Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the International Organizations in Vienna, stated that the joint engagement of the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partners in promoting stability and peace in the region gave hope for the future. However, there was a wide gap between political discussions and the actual results achieved. It was necessary, in particular, to find sustainable solutions for combating organized crime and trafficking in human beings from one side and addressing the rise in migratory pressure and unemployment on the other. He singled out the project on the recovery of criminal assets as particularly promising.

**H.E. Mr. Nasser Kamel**, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean, warned the participants of the risk of a “domino effect” in connection with the COVID-19 crisis and the economic problems, social inequalities and social isolation that it had brought and

exacerbated. It was essential to seize the opportunity to strengthen resilience and strive for a better future during the recovery, with an emphasis on unlocking social and economic potential and on digital and climate aspects. All such efforts should be focused on increasing gender equality and empowering young people so as to create an inclusive society while promoting local and regional economies.

**H.E. Mr. Lazăr Comănescu**, Secretary General of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, underlined the importance of co-ordinated efforts that resulted in joint projects, noting how his organization served as a forum for the exchange of information on development and the sharing of best practices. The effective framework for regional co-operation that it provided could be adapted to guide relations between the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners as well.

### Statements by delegations:

**H.E. Ms. Rasa Ostrauskaite**, Permanent Representative of the European Union to the OSCE, referred to the new challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis that threatened the sustainable development, security and stability of the OSCE and its Partners for Co-operation. The European Union's priorities for co-operation with countries in the Mediterranean region were the fight against transnational organized crime and trafficking in human beings, the full rehabilitation of labour markets and the promotion of economic recovery. The OSCE *acquis* was relevant to all those efforts. As observed by **H.E. Monsignor Janusz Urbańczyk**, Permanent Representative of the Holy See to the OSCE, the pandemic had led to an increase in poverty, especially of the most vulnerable groups, and to a deterioration in the situation of workers, revealing a number of failures to prosecute properly those guilty of exploitation. The OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners should co-operate in strengthening control and security structures and in the development of policies to protect the victims. **Ms. Courtney Austrian**, Chargé d'affaires at the United States Mission to the OSCE, referred to the broad co-operation between the US Government and the Mediterranean Partners on mitigating the effects of the pandemic and ensuring equal access to vaccines. With regard to economic recovery, she called for joint projects to address climate change, ensure equal access to education and health systems, enhance supply chains, increase financial transparency and promote gender equality. **Mr. Daniel Schlosser**, Adviser to the Interministerial Delegate to the Mediterranean appointed by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France, argued that the ongoing crisis should be used as a springboard for striving for a new dynamic resilience based on common values, a "green" economy and cultural heritage. The main pillars of the process of change should be young people and civil society. **H.E. Mr. Kairat Umarov**, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the OSCE, underlined the importance of the partnership between the OSCE and the Mediterranean region in seeking effective solutions to the crisis. He confirmed the readiness of his country to share expertise and good practices related to combating trafficking in human beings. The added value of continuing close ties and dialogue between the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partners was also stressed by **H.E. Ms. Emilia Krалеva**, Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the OSCE. The post-pandemic challenges could only be dealt with jointly, and the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership was the most suitable platform for engaging in regional dialogue on security and economic recovery.

### **2.3 Session I: Strengthening international co-operation in fighting transnational organized crime prompted by the pandemic**

*Report by Ms. Denise Mazzolani, Acting Head, Strategic Police Matters Unit, Transnational Threats Department, OSCE Secretariat*

**Chair: H.E. Ms. Alena Kupchyna, OSCE Co-ordinator of Activities to Address Transnational Threats**

Speakers:

**Ms. Louise Shelley**, University Professor and Omer L. and Nancy Hirst Endowed Chair, Schar School of Policy and Government, George Mason University; and Director of the Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center

**Ms. Anita Ramasastry**, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Corruption

**H.E. Mr. Azzeddine Farhane**, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the International Organizations in Vienna

**Mr. Samir Graiche**, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Algeria to the International Organizations in Vienna

**Ms. Alexandra Antoniadis**, Deputy Head of Unit, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission

**Mr. Motasem Al Qassaymeh**, Head of Criminal Investigation Department/ Ajloun City Jordanian Public Security Directorate, Jordan

**Mr. Fabian Zhilla**, Lecturer, Canadian Institute of Technology in Tirana, Albania

**Ms. Louise Shelley**, Professor at George Mason University and Director of the Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center, emphasized that, during the pandemic, organized criminal groups had taken advantage of the economic recession to create new avenues of profit. The risk of the socio-economic vulnerabilities of some population groups being exploited, whether directly or indirectly, had therefore increased significantly. Criminals had preyed on people's isolation and their need to access personal protective equipment and safety products. At the same time, they had targeted healthcare systems and exploited the lack of guardianship of natural resources, leading to an increase in environmental crime. With the disruption of licit supply chains, many illegitimate activities had flourished during the pandemic and the same criminal networks had been found to operate in different regions of the world. When designing preventive and response measures, it was important to think not only in terms of criminals and criminal groups, but also about how those worked together with legitimate actors in the cybersphere and the transport system. We need to stop thinking entirely about criminals but legitimate companies that willingly or unwittingly help criminals. Moreover, it was necessary to adopt a whole-of-society approach and to hold technology companies to account for facilitating such crimes.

**Ms. Anita Ramasastry**, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Corruption, reiterated the key role of the OSCE and its participating States in addressing transnational organized crime prompted by the pandemic. Corruption, a key enabler of such crime, posed a significant threat to the security and stability of the OSCE area. It undermined democracy and the rule of law and hindered the full enjoyment of

human rights as well as social and economic development. In the wake of the pandemic, the risk of corruption had increased as organized criminal groups had systematically sought to weaken State institutions and their response to the emergency. That had heightened the risk of essential funds allocated for the pandemic response being diverted from their intended destination. In so complex and challenging an environment, it was essential to enhance co-operation at the multilateral level, adjust approaches in various areas falling within the OSCE's mandate and leverage partnerships with all relevant stakeholders so as to effectively counter and prevent those risks. The numerous anti-corruption and good-governance commitments that had been adopted, most recently at the 2020 Ministerial Council meeting in Tirana, provided the OSCE itself with a strong mandate to work with the participating States and Partners for Co-operation on countering and preventing transnational organized crime and corruption.

**H.E. Mr. Azzeddine Farhane**, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the International Organizations in Vienna, focused on the new trends and challenges that had arisen in relation to transnational organized crime and on how to rethink international co-operation in the light of the COVID-19 crisis. Over the past decades, organized crime had evolved and adapted constantly. However, the disruption caused by the pandemic had been exploited by some criminal groups to scale up their activities, as they had detected an unprecedented opportunity to profit from weakened economies and identify new vulnerable targets. It was crucial to strengthen international co-operation, particularly since illicit trafficking in tobacco, weapons and narcotics remained an important threat to the Mediterranean region. To close the gaps in the regional strategy against trafficking, the existing countermeasures should be reviewed and strengthened. Similarly, to devise effective solutions and achieve long-lasting results, a holistic approach needed to be adopted – one involving governments, international organizations, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and academia.

**Mr. Samir Graiche**, First Secretary at the Permanent Mission of Algeria to the International Organizations in Vienna, reiterated that transnational organized crime had witnessed an unprecedented rise during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically by infiltrating public and private cash flows that had been meant to be channelled to socio-economic recovery efforts and by prompting a wide range of counterfeit products. Several forms of such crime had been observed, including drug trafficking, illegal migration, cybercrime and trafficking in human beings. In the Sahel region, even before the pandemic, the lack of economic development had presented organized criminal groups with many opportunities for recruiting new members from local populations. However, the significant and sophisticated shift in criminal activities driven by extensive use of the Internet and digital currencies had manifested itself even more starkly during the pandemic. It was therefore important to promote an integrated approach at the regional and international level, based on upholding the principles of security and development. Accordingly, Algeria had recently upgraded its national strategy to combat transnational organized crime with new tools – for instance, by creating a national fund to collect assets recovered from corrupt individuals and an advanced national system for the detection of terrorist and organized crime threats.

**Ms. Alexandra Antoniadis**, Deputy Head of Unit at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, focused on one of the European Union's current priorities in relation to transnational organized crime – namely, on how organized criminal groups had been exploiting regulatory and enforcement gaps during the

pandemic by trying to infiltrate the licit economy and divert and misuse public funds allocated to the pandemic response, such as the recovery funds under the “Next Generation EU” instrument. The European Commission had recently published the EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime 2021–2025, which was based on four key pillars: (a) boosting law enforcement and judicial co-operation; (b) effective investigations; (c) eliminating the profits generated by organized crime and preventing infiltration into the legal economy and society; and (d) making law enforcement and the judiciary fit for the digital age. To effectively and sustainably disrupt transnational organized crime, the profits of criminal organizations needed to be eliminated, thereby ensuring that they were not able to launder and use them to scale up and expand their criminal activities. Moreover, criminal justice systems needed to tackle organized crime structures comprehensively, going beyond the prosecution of individual crimes. In line with the aforementioned EU Strategy, it was important to focus strategically on investigating and prosecuting high-value targets and high-risk criminal networks.

**Mr. Motasem Al Qassaymeh**, Head of Criminal Investigation Department/ Ajloun City Jordanian Public Security Directorate, referred to the recent increase in cyberattacks that had targeted hospitals and businesses in Jordan and elsewhere. To tackle the challenges brought and exacerbated by the pandemic, international co-operation and tailored legislation were key, since traditional measures could not keep pace with the rapid development of organized crime. Moreover, it was necessary to provide mutual legal assistance, scale up investigations and legal proceedings, and confront the danger of organized crime by, *inter alia*, combating money laundering.

**Mr. Fabian Zhilla**, Lecturer at the Canadian Institute of Technology in Tirana, Albania, focused on transnational organized crime in the Western Balkans, a region that had witnessed a rise in drug trafficking during the pandemic. While the political narrative in the region had concentrated on the spread of the virus and its consequences, organized criminal groups have been operating under the radar of public attention. Capitalizing on the often chaotic environment and enjoying access to law enforcement agencies via corrupt channels, such groups had successfully adapted their *modus operandi*. There were certain parallels with the Hobbesian theory of governance in the way that, following the COVID-19 pandemic, the power of the executive had increased in the Western Balkans countries, with stricter laws imposed on citizens and more centralized leadership. However, organized criminal groups had been able to circumvent even the strictest of government restrictions, which indicated that further action was necessary to tackle the threat that they posed.

#### **Statements by delegations:**

The representative of the **European Union** (EU) stressed that addressing organized crime and its root causes was a top priority for the EU. Travel restrictions and the ensuing reliance on computer systems had had a major impact on the *modus operandi* of organized criminal groups. The recently adopted EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime 2021–2025 outlined various tools for dismantling criminal networks both online and offline, specifically by boosting law enforcement and judicial co-operation, ensuring effective investigations through intelligence and tailor-made responses, eliminating the profits generated by organized crime, and making law enforcement and the judiciary fit for the digital age. Joint action by the EU and the Southern Neighbourhood was key. For instance, the EUROMED Police project was aimed at enhancing the capacity of the Southern Neighbourhood partner

countries to combat serious and organized crime and to strengthen strategic co-operation between national law enforcement authorities.

The representative of **Turkey** stressed that the link between organized crime and terrorism was a proven fact: transnational criminal activities had emerged as the primary source of revenue for terrorist organizations. Organized crime and terrorism were becoming more and more intertwined. Under the guise of taxation, terrorist organizations were raising money and engaging in crimes such as smuggling and drug trafficking. In such a context, the political will of the OSCE participating States was essential if an effective common response was to be mounted against transnational organized crime and the various associated threats.

The representative of the **United States** confirmed her country's support for the adoption of a forceful Ministerial Council decision on transnational organized crime in Stockholm in December. The fight against such crime called for an integrated approach across governments involving civil society, academia and the private sector. As a regional actor, the OSCE played an important role in helping to translate international commitments into concrete action and encouraging participating States to co-operate with the Mediterranean Partners. To successfully address the challenges associated with transnational organized crime, it was important to acknowledge its link with corruption. The United States was proud to support a number of extrabudgetary projects on combating such crime and was working with partners in the Middle East and North Africa to ensure that there was no place for organized criminal groups in any society.

The representative of the **Russian Federation** noted that the COVID-19 pandemic as a global challenge had shown that the fight against evolving threats in the OSCE area could be successful only with co-ordinated efforts by the participating States and partner countries. An increase in the use of information and communication technologies by criminals was apparent as the world economy continued to be digitalized. In that regard, a key task was to develop a comprehensive convention against cybercrime at the international level. Another criminal activity rapidly increasing in the Mediterranean region was drug trafficking. During the pandemic, drug markets had been restructured and adapted to the new environment created by the emergency, which made effective co-operation and co-ordination between all relevant parties even more important.

A representative of the **Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean** stressed that transnational organized crime was a constantly evolving threat and that the pandemic and its consequences had merely added a new turn to that evolution. On the one hand, restrictions on cross-border movement had created additional challenges for criminals; on the other, the pandemic had opened up new avenues for corruption and infiltration into the legal economy. The enactment of effective legislation and harmonized international legal frameworks was crucial to address those threats in the Mediterranean region and beyond. It was necessary to facilitate technical and practical co-operation between the judiciary and law enforcement and to systematically confiscate criminal assets across borders. Given that concepts such as the dark web, cryptocurrency and artificial intelligence had not existed when the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime was adopted in 2000, the Convention and its Protocols should be updated to take into account the most recent technological developments. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean was already working with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to identify gaps and emerging new trends.

## **2.4 Session II: Combating trafficking in human beings in labour markets affected by the pandemic**

*Report by Mr. Andrea Salvoni, Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings*

Chair: **Mr. Valiant Richey**, OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

Speakers:

**Mr. Dominique Potier**, Member of the National Assembly, France

**H.E. Mr. Keith Shannon**, Acting Envoy for Migration and Modern Slavery, United Kingdom

**Ms. Diane Schmitt**, EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator

**H.E. Ms. Naela Gabr**, Chairperson of the National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons, Egypt

**Ms. Dina Dominitz**, National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, Israel

**Mr. Talal Awalmeh**, Head, Technical Support Department (Cyber Security), Public Security Directorate, Ministry of Interior, Jordan

**Mr. Valiant Richey**, OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, opened the session by congratulating the Polish Chairmanship of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group for having selected so timely a topic. The prevention of labour exploitation in supply chains had emerged as one of the key issues on the international agenda in recent months. Countries had adopted new laws on supply chains or strengthened the implementation of existing legislation, and the Special Representative welcomed the opportunity to initiate a discussion that also included the Mediterranean Partners, since a key challenge of the years to come would inevitably be the harmonization of approaches. Before introducing the speakers, he set out the case for working on supply chains to prevent trafficking for labour exploitation: by targeting the market for the goods and services produced by victims of trafficking, governments could undermine the profits of exploitation and strike trafficking at its root.

**Mr. Dominique Potier**, member of the Economic Affairs Committee in the French National Assembly, presented the Corporate Duty of Vigilance Act from 2017, which was designed to prevent major human rights violations (including forced labour). He placed the new French law in the tradition of landmark human rights laws such as those prohibiting child labour in the nineteenth century, and argued that it was necessary to “humanize globalization” by setting limits related to human dignity and protection of the environment. The new law mandated large companies to draw up (and make public) due diligence plans that mapped risks in their supply chains and described the measures put in place to manage those risks. The law applied to large French companies, but it inevitably also involved their suppliers, including foreign suppliers. In that regard, the law was a powerful tool for preventing human rights violations also outside the jurisdiction to which it directly applied.

In closing, Mr. Potier noted how other countries, such as Norway and Germany, had taken a similar approach more recently and welcomed ongoing efforts at the EU level.

**H.E. Mr. Keith Shannon**, the UK Acting Envoy for Migration and Modern Slavery, outlined the scale of the problem of trafficking in human beings, which annually resulted in 25 million victims worldwide and profits totalling 150 billion US dollars. He expressed his country's concern about the impact of the pandemic: vulnerabilities had heightened, while the lack of social protection mechanisms had put many more people at risk of exploitation. Particularly concerning was child trafficking, which was on the rise at the global level. The issue of trafficking had been made more relevant by the supply chain disruptions that many economies were experiencing. The United Kingdom remained an advocate of action at the international level – for instance, through a number of co-ordination mechanisms (such as Alliance 8.7 and the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons) and through public-private partnerships. The United Kingdom was mindful of the role of technology in facilitating trafficking, but also of how technology could act as a positive force to combat it, and commended the Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for its work in that field, including the launching of a dedicated project. With regard to public procurement, which was crucial for the effective prevention of forced labour and modern slavery in supply chains, the United Kingdom had taken a leadership role in the international arena and remained committed to preventing government purchases that inadvertently fuelled trafficking. Turning to private businesses, Mr. Shannon described his country's transparency approach, whereby companies were obliged to publish details of their modern slavery prevention efforts on an online register. Fines were imposed on companies failing to comply with that obligation. In closing, he recalled the commitment made by the G7 leaders over the summer to take joint action against forced labour in supply chains, which was a sign that the international community was beginning to address the problem.

**Ms. Diane Schmitt, EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator**, referred to trafficking for labour exploitation as one of the main forms of trafficking. It preyed on social vulnerabilities that had merely increased during the pandemic. On the demand side, businesses and consumers benefited from trafficking, as it provided cheap goods and services to the market. She presented the new EU anti-trafficking strategy, which included a section on demand reduction, and called for increased joint inspections by law enforcement officials and labour inspectors in high-risk sectors, such as agriculture and construction. She also announced the ongoing evaluation of the EU anti-trafficking directive, which sought to make the instrument fit to deal with current challenges and, in particular, was exploring the option of instituting EU-wide minimum rules criminalizing the use of services provided by trafficking victims. Ms. Schmitt introduced the recent guidance on due diligence issued by the EU to help companies to address the risks of labour exploitation in their supply chains. Migrants were at greater risk of being exploited and so it was necessary to impose sanctions against the employers of illegally residing migrants. More effective efforts were required to disrupt the traffickers' business model, both online and offline. States needed to increase their capacity to detect signs of online exploitation and fraudulent online job advertisements. To that end, dialogue with internet and technology companies was essential. In closing, she argued that cross-border trafficking was likely to increase, as employment shortages in certain economies and supply chain disruptions had increased the demand for cheap labour. Enhanced co-operation between countries of origin, transit and destination therefore remained crucial.



**Ms. Naela Gabr**, Chairperson of Egypt's National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons, outlined her country's plans to respond to the vulnerabilities created by the pandemic, including the earmarking of over 100 million Egyptian pounds for various public interventions and economic reforms targeting rural areas in particular. Economic and social vulnerabilities were key drivers of trafficking, especially in the informal sector of the economy, where the identification of victims continued to be very challenging. During the pandemic, more than half of all Egyptian workers had suffered a change of some sort in their conditions of work; there had been a rise in unemployment and in unstable employment. To prevent and combat trafficking, Egypt was pursuing a policy of not deporting illegal migrants and was enhancing its social protection programmes so as to reach the most vulnerable. Moreover, it had strengthened helplines providing immediate assistance to victims and opened new shelters for identified victims. In closing, Ms. Gabr acknowledged the role played by different sectors of society (notably social workers, law enforcement agencies, prosecution offices, service providers and non-governmental organizations) in combating trafficking.

**Ms. Dina Dominitz**, Israel's National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, began by playing video testimonies of foreign caregivers in Israel who described how their vulnerabilities had increased during the pandemic. The health crisis had hit labour markets hard, especially among vulnerable population groups, which increased the risks of trafficking. Foreign workers, in particular, were exposed to increased abuse and violation of their rights. Meanwhile, law enforcement efforts had been diverted from their traditional areas of focus to the enforcement of pandemic-related regulations. Ms. Dominitz spoke about the efforts made to reduce the vulnerabilities of foreign workers and illegal migrants – for example, the dissemination of crucial public health information on COVID-19 and the handing out of food vouchers, but also broader economic empowerment plans. At the same time, identified victims of trafficking were granted access to medical care, legal aid and shelters, and their special stay and work visas were extended.

**Mr. Talal Awalmeh**, Head, Technical Support (Cybersecurity), the Public Security Directorate of Jordan's Ministry of Interior presented his country's approach to combating trafficking in human beings. Trafficking was a violation of fundamental human rights that affected, in particular, women and children and exploited unemployment and other vulnerabilities. Demand played an important role in fuelling such crime. Over 95 per cent of victims reported having experienced violence in the process of being trafficked. Once identified, victims needed immediate social and legal assistance. Jordan was the third country in the region to introduce a law aimed at preventing human trafficking, and it had recently begun to establish online police operations. In closing, Mr. Awalmeh stressed that stepping up co-operation and information-sharing among different States was crucial to combat trafficking.

#### **Statements by delegations:**

**Slovenia** took the floor and then allowed the representative of the EU to continue, who described trafficking in human beings as a gross violation of human rights and a security threat. Preventative efforts had to focus on the demand fuelling such trafficking, which generated over 150 billion US dollars in annual profits for traffickers.

**Turkey** characterized trafficking in human beings as “modern slavery” and called for international co-operation and concerted action to combat it. In Turkey, over 13,000 public officials had been trained in combating such trafficking, with the support of, *inter alia*, the International Organization for Migration, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Irregular migration, particularly in the Mediterranean region, created significant challenges and vigilance needed to remain high. However, border closures and the erection of fences could not stop illegal migration or trafficking. The only sustainable solution was to eliminate the root causes. Accordingly, countries of origin needed to strengthen their infrastructure and resolve conflicts and tensions.

The **Russian Federation** also described trafficking in human beings as a human rights violation, and called for greater attention to be paid to prevention. A number of factors needed to be taken into account, including poverty, unemployment and gaps in social protection systems. The COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences had had a negative impact on the labour market, exacerbating vulnerabilities. In such a context, children required special attention. As for labour exploitation, migrants and, in particular, illegal migrants remained the worst-affected group, as they tended to be heavily dependent on their exploiters. The most effective way to tackle such trafficking was to prevent people from being exposed to situations of vulnerability, and to address the root causes, including those that forced people to leave their home countries. In that regard, the political settlement of conflicts was crucial, as were the provision of development assistance, without interfering in the internal affairs of States, and the normalization of migration flows, notably by creating channels for legal migration.

The **United States** called for a whole-of-government approach to addressing the impact of the pandemic. Traffickers were expanding their operations, including online operations, as vulnerabilities increased. Countering the demand fuelling trafficking in human beings was crucial, and the United States welcomed the opportunity to have such a discussion.

To wrap up the session, the Chair gave the floor back to the panellists for their final points. Ms. Gabr insisted on the importance of raising awareness and training, and stressed how partnerships and international co-operation were crucial for that purpose. Mr. Potier reiterated how the imposition of duty of vigilance on multinational companies was a powerful tool for countering the demand that fuelled exploitation, and welcomed the OSCE’s role in harmonizing different approaches. Ms. Dominitz referred to sexual exploitation and presented the Israeli approach to tackling demand in relation to that form of exploitation, namely, criminalization of the buying of sex. Mr. Shannon invited the audience to reflect on the purchasing power of governments and on the importance of public procurement in the fight against trafficking. Ms. Schmitt reiterated that the EU was looking into criminalization of the use of services provided by trafficking victims as one way of countering demand.

The OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings closed the discussion by noting the growing momentum for the prevention of labour exploitation in supply chains and, more broadly, for addressing the demand side of trafficking. He encouraged States to further pursue such an approach, which was the most effective in view of the scale of trafficking. He presented some of the tools that his Office had published on the topic (including model guidelines) and reiterated his and his team’s

readiness to further support States as they developed their own strategies to prevent labour exploitation in supply chains.

## **2.5 Session III: Sustainable recovery as a springboard from socio-economic crisis to security**

*Report by Mr. Maksym Mishalov Dragunov, Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities*

Chair: **Mr. Andrea Dessi**, Senior Fellow, Mediterranean, Middle East and Africa Programme, Institute of International Affairs, Italy

Speakers:

**Mr. Ahmed Bakr**, Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for Nile Water Affairs, Egypt

**Ms. Sarah Wilner**, Director, Golda Meir MASHAV-Carmel International Training Center, Israel

**Mr. Belgacem Ayed**, National Focal Point for the Sustainable Development Goals, Ministry of Economy and Planification, Tunisia

**Ms. Malika Alaoui**, Counsellor Permanent Mission of Morocco to the International Organizations in Vienna

**Mr. Samir Graiche**, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Algeria to the International Organizations in Vienna

**Mr. Andrea Dessi**, Senior Fellow within the Mediterranean, Middle East and Africa Programme of the Institute of International Affairs, Italy and Scientific Director of the New Med Research Network, opened the session by outlining the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on all three dimensions of the OSCE, focusing on the economic and environmental dimension because of its implications for economic, social and gender disparities and the digital divide, and noting how these will be further aggravated by the impacts of climate change. Building on the work conducted by the New Med during 2021 on the climate change-security nexus in the Mediterranean and the socio-economic and political dimensions of the climate emergency for state and societal resilience, he pointed to recent data outlining several setbacks in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, a plummeting of economic growth and, for the first time since its introduction, a reduction in the Human Development Index – a statistical tool designed by the United Nations Development Programme to measure and rank countries' levels of social and economic development. He stressed the importance of seizing the opportunity to strengthen multilateral co-operation in the Mediterranean region in order to overcome the pandemic and its consequences, as the region was particularly vulnerable to emerging economic and climate change-related challenges. In doing so he underscored the value of the OSCE and OCEEA in promoting climate diplomacy in the Mediterranean, also highlighting the work of other organizations such as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) as well as networks of think tanks and experts such as the New Med Research Network.

**Mr. Ahmed Bakr**, Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for Nile Water Affairs, Egypt, drew attention to the climate change-related challenges that Egypt continued to face, which

exacerbated the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Water security was the domain most significantly affected by climate change. The economy of Egypt was reliant on the agricultural sector, which used water resources intensively. Water was therefore fundamental to secure jobs and keep the economy functioning. Mr. Bakr pointed out other, no less important consequences of climate change that Egypt was facing, namely, rising sea levels and the destruction of fertile land by droughts, which forced people in rural areas to leave their homes and led to the loss of jobs; and growing pollution because of carbon emissions. Water scarcity could potentially aggravate the security situation in the region. Mr. Bakr underscored the importance of regional co-operation and “water diplomacy”, which could help to prevent conflicts and mitigate the potential negative consequences of climate change. In order to achieve regional co-operation based on good-neighbourly relations, transboundary water co-operation should be promoted.

**Ms. Sarah Wilner**, Director of the Golda Meir MASHAV-Carmel International Training Center, Israel, focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls. The pandemic had widened gender and economic inequalities, notably as a result of income loss among women, and led to a surge in domestic violence. It was important to ensure access to basic healthcare services for women and girls, who faced many barriers during the pandemic. Ms. Wilner presented data indicating the unequal impact that the pandemic had had on men and women in terms of social protection and job loss. She reiterated the importance of the issue of unpaid care and domestic work, which was shouldered mostly by women. There was evidence that school closures increased the risk of undesired pregnancy, child marriage and child labour.

**Mr Belgacem Ayed**, National focal point for the sustainable development goals, Ministry of Economy and Planification, Tunisia, discussed his country’s progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in mitigating the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Tunisia had presented its voluntary national review at the annual session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in July 2021. The country had achieved a high score on the promotion and implementation of the SDGs related to gender equality, the rights of women and efforts to tackle exclusion and economic disparities. Mr. Ayeb explained the impact of the pandemic on the Tunisian economy, which was suffering from a high unemployment rate and low growth. Those factors would have negative implications for implementation of the SDGs. COVID-19-related restrictions had severely affected the agricultural sector in Tunisia, which had lost 15 per cent of jobs and experienced a significant decline in exports of agricultural products. Tunisia was one of the countries most affected by climate change, mainly owing to rising sea levels, deterioration of the coastline and challenges related to salinization and access to drinking water. Mr. Ayeb also mentioned a number of opportunities, focusing on the digital economy, the textile sector, external trade and the use of new technologies for the recycling of water and the production of renewable energy. Further economic recovery would rely on improvements to the healthcare system and a successful vaccination campaign.

**Ms. Malika Alauoi**, Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Morocco to the International Organizations in Vienna, stated that in its COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, her country had given due consideration to a “green” agenda, together with fiscal and political reforms. An alliance between the public and private sectors, together with civil society, was fundamental to build an inclusive and sustainable economy. Since Morocco was situated in one of the most arid regions in the world, it was especially vulnerable to climate

change. Highly variable rainfall trends and recurring droughts had a devastating impact on society, the environment and the economy, particularly on energy and food prices, which entailed a slowing-down of gross domestic product growth and economic stagnation. Morocco was committed to a “green” recovery and had launched several projects with a strong green economy component, such as sustainable agriculture or ecotourism. Morocco’s new development model placed considerable emphasis on human development and gender equality, the provision of incentives for private entrepreneurship and the boosting of competitiveness. Ms. Alaoui also referred to the nexus between development and security and to the inclusion of human, economic, food, health, environmental, public and political security in Morocco’s national security considerations. In closing, she reiterated the importance of regional co-operation and, more specifically, the co-operation between the OSCE participating States and the Mediterranean Partners when it came to tackling emerging security challenges.

**Mr. Samir Graiche**, First Secretary at the Permanent Mission of Algeria to the International Organizations in Vienna, referred to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the social, economic and environmental well-being of people around the world, stressing that it had exacerbated existing global inequalities and fragilities. He also emphasized the high vulnerability of the Mediterranean region to climate change, which was manifesting itself in increasing temperatures, reduced annual precipitation, fires, droughts and floods. Algeria had undertaken efforts to achieve an energy transition based on a new energy model, renewable energy and energy efficiency. Mr. Graiche pointed to the OSCE’s work in the field of climate change and security in various subregions and noted the importance of exchanging best practices with the Southern Mediterranean countries so as to enhance their efforts towards a sustainable and resilient economy. Algeria remained willing to take part in regional and international co-operation, as already demonstrated by its engagement in the Sahel region, where it had always sought peaceful solutions to any disputes.

#### **Statements by delegations:**

The representative of the **European Union** explained that the EU had placed the post-pandemic recovery high on its agenda. In 2020, the EU had launched two packages of socio-economic measures aimed at tackling the effects of the pandemic. The economic recovery package, called “Next Generation EU” and endowed with a budget of 806 billion euros, would help to repair the immediate economic and social damage caused by the pandemic. A green and digital transition was crucial for sustainable recovery and growth. More than 20 per cent of the recovery funds would be invested in supercomputing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and the promotion of digital skills, while 30 per cent of the long-term budget allotted to the Next Generation EU instrument would be spent on tackling climate change. Furthermore, the EU and its Southern Neighbourhood partners had issued a joint communication proposing co-operation to tackle the adverse socio-economic impact of the pandemic.

The representative of the **Russian Federation** noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had affected key sectors, disrupted supply chains and led to a decline in investment rates. He reiterated the importance of lifting trade barriers in order to promote economic recovery. The pandemic had accelerated the integration of information technologies into economic co-operation, especially through the digitalization of public services and communications. He pointed to the challenges associated with “green protectionism” and the introduction of additional taxation schemes. In the view of the Russian Federation, one of the prerequisites

for a sustainable recovery was the co-ordination of macroeconomic policies at the global level on the basis of openness and reciprocity.

The representative of **Turkey** emphasized that a resilient “green recovery”, if well implemented, could promote employment and generate income. Recovery efforts should be aligned with the SDGs and seek to reduce social inequalities and mitigate the negative impacts of climate change. He reiterated that the Mediterranean region was particularly vulnerable to climate change. Turkey had recently ratified the Paris Agreement and adopted a Green Deal Action Plan with a view to achieving the transition to a more sustainable and greener economy. He underlined the importance of economic connectivity in the recovery process – particularly in terms of sustainable value chains, customs harmonization and the simplification of visa procedures – and the need for clean and renewable energy, technology transfer and improved access to climate finance. In closing, he noted that Turkey attached considerable importance to opportunities for regional and bilateral co-operation, where the OSCE could play a major role, especially in co-operation on connectivity issues.

The representative of **Malta** referred to the major economic and social disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which had coincided with severe environmental challenges and shocks. She underlined the importance of focusing on the development of recovery plans that were in line with the SDGs. Climate change was a key challenge and needed to be addressed collectively. National strategies should include goals related to a “green” and “blue” recovery, including the pursuit of carbon neutrality. Malta had adopted a low-carbon development strategy that envisaged significant investment in such sectors as renewable energy and green transport. A holistic approach and strong multilateralism were the main elements in achieving implementation of the SDGs and the decarbonization of economies around the world.

## 2.6 Concluding remarks

*Report by Mr. Emiliano Alessandri, Senior External Co-operation Officer, Office of the Secretary General, OSCE Secretariat*

Chair: **Mr. Philippe Tremblay**, Head, External Co-operation Section, Office of the Secretary General, OSCE Secretariat

Speakers:

**Mr. Bogusław Winid**, Head of the OSCE Task Force, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Poland

**Mr. Pascal Allizard**, Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

**H.E. Mr. Igor Djundev**, Permanent Representative of North Macedonia to the OSCE

**Mr. Philippe Tremblay**, Head of the External Co-operation Section in the Office of the Secretary General, OSCE Secretariat, opened the concluding remarks session by noting the rich and productive exchange that had taken place among the delegations of the participating States and the Mediterranean Partners. He commended the fact that discussions had focused on areas of co-operation to which the OSCE could bring added

value, and reiterated the OSCE Secretary General's call for political dialogue to be translated into concrete projects with the partner countries.

**Mr. Bogusław Winid**, Head of the OSCE Task Force at Poland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, noted that the Conference had taken place in a true spirit of partnership and multilateralism. He drew attention to the information and best practices that had been shared among delegations and between participants. The response to the pandemic had been accompanied by many lessons learned, and every country could learn something from the others. Turning to the future programme of work with the Mediterranean Partners, Mr. Winid mentioned the promising initiative on combating transnational organized crime, with a focus on asset recovery. The theme of resilience would remain high on Poland's agenda when it assumed the OSCE Chairmanship in 2022.

**Mr. Pascal Allizard**, Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, commended Poland for the remarkable work done in 2021 despite the still challenging COVID-19-related circumstances. He noted that the Mediterranean region remained a "meeting place" of peoples and cultures, but also acknowledged that those same connections had fostered tensions of late. The pandemic had merely exacerbated the region's economic and social crises and aggravated some of the existing security concerns. He pointed to the challenge posed by migration and the threats stemming from the evolving nature and scope of transnational organized crime. In that respect, it was important to draw on the OSCE's experience in addressing trafficking in human beings. Mr. Allizard also stressed the crucial role played by inter-parliamentary dialogue and diplomacy in reinforcing diplomatic relations between governments.

**H.E. Mr. Igor Djundev**, Permanent Representative of North Macedonia to the OSCE, reflected on his country's upcoming responsibilities in 2022, when it would assume the Chairmanship of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group. North Macedonia would do its best to advance the dialogue with the Mediterranean partners in a spirit of true partnership and by ensuring continuity with the excellent work performed by previous Chairmanships. Issues of common concern should take centre stage so as to bring about a truly multilateral dialogue with the Mediterranean Partners. The priorities for such dialogue would be chosen in close consultation with the partner countries. Challenges related to the post-pandemic recovery would remain central to the agenda of North Macedonia at the OSCE, with a particular focus on combating organized crime, addressing climate change and supporting groups particularly affected by recent disruptions, such as women and young people.

**H.E. Mr. Adam Halaciński**, Permanent Representative of Poland to the OSCE and Chairperson of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group, officially closed the 2021 OSCE Mediterranean Conference and thanked all the speakers and participants for having helped to make it such a successful event.