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REPORT*

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENTS
AMONG THE BSEC MEMBER STATES
ON COMBATING ORGANISED CRIME**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Organised crime is one of the issues tackled by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation since its establishment. In 1996 the Assembly adopted the Report and Recommendation on “Cooperation among the PABSEC Member Countries in Combating Organised Crime”. It was noted then that human suffering and costs of societies due to the organized crime were enormous. It was also stressed that significant progress to fight organised crime could be made if the member countries cooperate more effectively at national and regional level and ensure countries’ constructive participation in this work. The Assembly recommended then to elaborate the Black Sea Convention on Combating Organised Crime with regard to the international practice in this field in order to consolidate efforts of BSEC member states in prevention and combat of organised crime¹.

In 1998, in the BSEC framework, the Agreement among the Governments of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Participating States on Cooperation in Combating Crime, in particular in its Organized Forms (Kerkyra, Greece, 2 October, 1998) was signed followed by adoption of the two additional protocols: The Additional Protocol to the Agreement among the Governments of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Participating States on Cooperation in Combating Crime, in particular in its organized forms (Kiev, 15 March, 2002) and the Additional Protocol on combating terrorism to the Agreement among the Governments of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Participating States on Cooperation in Combating Crime, in particular in its organized forms (Athens, 3 December, 2004).

In 2007, Heads of State and Government of the BSEC member states stressed in the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fifteenth Anniversary Summit of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (Istanbul, 25 June 2007) the necessity of “deepening cooperation in the priority areas of common interest such as combating terrorism and all forms of organized crime, which would yield tangible outcomes to improve the quality of the daily lives of our peoples”. At the same time, it was noted that “at a time when the nexus between terrorism and organized crime has emerged as a major threat to national and regional security and stability, we reiterate our firm resolve to fight against them....”.

Taking into account growing topicality of the issue as well as the scale and increasing complexity of phenomenon of organized crime, the Legal and Political Affairs Committee at its Thirty Seventh Meeting in Chisinau in April 2011 took the decision to discuss “Implementation of the Agreements among the BSEC Member States on Combating Organised Crime” at its Thirty Eighth Meeting of the Committee in Burgas on 14-15 September 2011 with a view to elaborate the Report and the Recommendation for further submission to the consideration of the Thirty Eighth Plenary Session of the General Assembly in Tirana in November 2011.

The threshold of the twentieth anniversary of the BSEC Organization represents a timely opportunity to assess the progress towards implementation of the existing framework for fighting organized crime. Therefore, the Report takes broader look at the issue and traces the challenges in the light of new vision of global response to organised crime and focuses on the importance of regional and international cooperation in this sphere.

¹ *Report and Recommendation 15/1996 on Cooperation among the PABSEC Member Countries in Combating Organized Crime; Report and Recommendation 17/1996 on Basic Principles of the Black Sea Convention in Organized Crime and Terrorism.*

The present report has benefited from the contribution by the national delegations of Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania and Turkey. The necessary additional reference material has been obtained by the PABSEC International Secretariat through the related internet resources.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENTS AMONG THE BSEC MEMBER STATES ON COMBATING ORGANISED CRIME

1. Organised crime is a major threat to the economies and societies throughout the world. Transnational organized crime is considered as one of the major threats to human security, impeding the social, economic, political and cultural development of societies. It is a multi-faceted phenomenon and has manifested itself in different activities, among others, drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings, trafficking in arms, smuggling of migrants, money laundering, etc. The consequences of organized crime are also multi-fold. It creates general panic and fear in the communities, generating a lack of trust in state institutions. It generates huge financial resources which constantly risk financing terrorist activities and serious crimes.
2. The ability of organised crime to quickly alter and adapt to the new social, economic and legal conditions maintaining their institutional survival determines the growth of its trans- border networks. As globalization has expanded, so the range of organized crime activities has broadened and diversified. The traditional hierarchical forms of organized crime were replaced with loose networks who work together in order to exploit new market opportunities. Organised crime networks also put into effect other trends relating to globalisation such as expanded international trade and deregulated financial flows to broaden and diversify their activities. The large capital at the disposal of organised crime allow criminal actors not only to bribe individual police, customs, border guard and army officials, but also to benefit from scientific achievements, to obtain modern communicational technologies, sophisticated customs and law enforcement databases and use advanced information technology in order to better predict and evade capture and prosecution.
3. Organised crime also finds its niche especially in the conflict situation zones. The territories loosely or not controlled by state powers provide perfect milieu for organised crime to develop and flourish. Often, conflicts are fuelled by organised crime networks because of the profits involved in an unregulated market with undeveloped system of the rule of law and civil society. Illegal traffic in arms is often supported by separatist and extremist regimes. Subsequently, modern weapons and technologies which are made for needs of self-defense become available for illegal criminal groups.
4. The new developments regarding the global involvement of organized crime groups calls for a more integrated approach to address this issue. This approach extends from prevention to law enforcement and is primarily based on effective cooperation between the national authorities, and especially the law enforcement agencies, including the exchange of information and mutual assistance. The fight against organised crime becomes global requiring close cooperation among governments, international organizations and civil society to strengthen coordination of counteraction to pervasive influence of organized crime.
5. The response in the fight against organised crime at national, regional and international levels is more and more adapted to the complexity of this phenomenon and is directed at trafficking in human beings, arms and drugs and economic and financial crime, corruption and money laundering. It also covers the new dimensions of organised crime, such as cybercrime and environmental crime.
6. The countries of the Black Sea region have stated their firm stand with regard to join complex process of elaborating appropriate national strategies for combating organised crime. Through the years they have successfully acted against organized crime, suppressing its activity and

eliminating the possible consequences, due to the serious attempts from the specialized structures, the establishment of legal instruments for combating it, and due to national and international cooperation.

7. The fight against organized crime remains one of the highest priorities in the state activity in **Albania**. The Ministry of Interior plays an important role in coordinating the implementation actions of this strategy and other sector strategies related to the fight against different forms of organized crime. The Ministry of Justice is engaged in drafting the legislation in the field of fight against organized crime and illicit trafficking and also prepares policies for combating organized crime. The activities of the State Informative Service are focused on major objectives to counteract the forms of organized crime and issues threatening the integrity of the country. The SIS has intensified its cooperation with other institutional structures in exchanging classified information and in the practical implementation of joint operations and operative undertakings. There is a considerable legislation in the field of fight against organized crime, including the Law on the State Police, the Law on Preventing and Combating Organized Crime; Law on Preventing and Combating trafficking narcotic and psychotropic substances, etc.
8. **Armenia** attaches great importance to promotion of joint efforts in combating organized crime, particularly terrorism, money laundering, illegal migration, weapons and radioactive materials illegal trafficking. With regard to the fight against organised crime, Armenia ratified the UN Convention on Transnational Organised Crime. Inter-agency work continues on developing a national strategy to combat organised crime. Armenia continues its efforts to comply with the standards for eliminating the trafficking of human beings. Legislation was enacted to increase the minimum penalty for convicted trafficking offenders, to allow the confiscation of their assets, and to exempt trafficking victims from criminal prosecution for crimes committed as a direct result of being trafficked. With regard to the fight against drugs trafficking, 2010-12 National Programme on Combating Drug Addiction and Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs was adopted.
9. Elimination of existing risks and threats against development of economic potential and national security of **Azerbaijan** is controlled by the Ministry of National Security. It takes effective measures on struggle against the illegal turnover of various goods, especially against smuggling of strategic raw materials, substances with double-character, material and cultural relicts. Also, fight against drug trafficking was intensified. Detection and prevention of the crimes connected with illegal migration and human trafficking has special importance in combating transnational organized crime. There is a threat that victims of above mentioned crimes fall under the influence of terrorists using them as tool in such kinds of activities. The Republic of Azerbaijan takes necessary measures to implement the UN Conventions and protocols in this area, to which it is a party. The European Convention against Trafficking in Human Beings was signed and entered in force in 2010. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan in cooperation with other competent authorities carries out consistent strategic, tactical and preventive measures to counteract trafficking in human beings in the framework of the provisions and standards of the “National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings in Azerbaijan for 2009-2013”.
10. In **Bulgaria**, Directorate on “Combating Organized Crime” (CDCOC) is a specialized operation and search service of the Ministry of Interior for combating criminal activity of local and transnational criminal structures. The CDCOC carries out independently or jointly with other specialized bodies activities of operation and search, informational and organizational nature to combat organized crime related to: property, customs regime, monetary, crediting, financial, tax and social insurance systems; terrorist activities; corruption; human trafficking; trafficking in plants containing narcotic substances, narcotic drugs, precursors and their

analogues; trafficking in explosives, firearms, chemical, biological or nuclear weapons or ammunitions, nuclear materials, nuclear devices or other sources of ionization, toxic and chemical substances and their precursors, good and technologies with possible dual use; computer crime; intellectual property. The CDCOC pursues active international operational police co-operation in accordance with international treaties. The CDCOC has considerable success and extensive background in combating crimes related to fiscal fraud in the customs and tax systems as well as in detecting mechanisms for obtaining illegal proceeds from crime. The CDCOC is actively involved in the detection and dismantling of organized criminal groups. The detection and prevention of cybercrimes is a new priority in the operational and search activities.

11. Organised crime in **Georgia** has been on a steady decline for the past years due to the establishment of a professional law enforcement system and enhancing respective legislation including the Criminal Code, the Law on organised Crime (2005), Law on Combating Human Trafficking (2006), Law on Combating Drug Trafficking (2007). In 2007, the Government of Georgia adopted a national Anti-Drug Strategy and increased penalties for drug offenses. Georgia is party to international conventions, and it cooperates within its capability to detect potential threats. The issue of combating human trafficking and illegal migration is priority for Georgian authorities. Amendments and changes to criminal, criminal-procedural, civil and administrative Codes and the legislation on the control of immigration, necessary for preventing and fighting human trafficking have been enacted. It is important to harmonise legislation with international standards, implement measures of rehabilitation through special centres providing assistance to victims. It is very important to intensify measures for international anti-trafficking cooperation and prevention programmes.
12. Organized crime has been receiving increasing attention in **Greece** within the framework of the EU Strategy and EU initiatives on mutual legal assistance in combating organised crime in the framework of the Law on Organized Crime (2928/2001). The Convention against Transnational Organized Crime has been ratified by the Hellenic Parliament. Greece is deeply concerned with trafficking in human beings which constitutes one of the worst human rights violations. Both the Government and the Civil Society are currently cooperating closely in the implementation of a comprehensive National Action Plan to combat trafficking. This plan addresses all levels of counter-trafficking action in cooperation with International Organizations, other governments and NGOs. Emphasis is given to legislative reforms, to the better cooperation among law enforcement, prosecution and judiciary, awareness campaigns, extensive protection to the victims and cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination. To effectively combat organized crime there is a need for more effective international cooperation and coordination in order to build strategic alliances against organized crime and to enhance international law enforcement cooperation.
13. Fight against organised crime in **Moldova** includes prevention and prediction measures in the framework of European and universal standards by law enforcement agencies. Also the parliament and government set forth proper legal mechanism and assign resources required for their implementation, including introduction of a range of measures to counter the problem; adoption of new frameworks for mutual legal assistance; efficient law enforcement cooperation; involvement of civil society; enhancement of international cooperation to counter the pervading influence of organized crime and drug trafficking. The Measures also include monitoring on new trends and developments, collecting statistical data, raising awareness campaigns and training programmes respective agencies. As a result of cooperation between Moldova, Ukraine and the EU in EUBAM framework the border control has improved. More efforts should be addressed to improve the investigation and prosecution of criminal activity. Unsolved crimes have a negative impact on the society in general.

14. **Romania** has concluded over ninety bilateral agreements of cooperation in the field of prevention and fight against organized crime, human trafficking, illegal migration, drug-trafficking, terrorism and other non-conventional threats to security with many countries including the BSEC member states. Romania has also ratified the most important international and regional conventions and protocols related to the responsibilities of states for fighting against the asymmetric threats to security, under the aegis of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Regional Centre for Combating Trans-border Crime. Like all the countries from the European Union and, especially, from Eastern Europe, Romania is strongly committed to prevent and fight the illegal migration and human trafficking. The Romanian authorities have tackled the problem of human trafficking from a wide angle: on one hand, trying to prevent it through campaigns designed to increase public awareness and to inform the target groups, and on the other hand, carrying on an intensive fight against the phenomenon, backed by the protection of the victims. Romania has developed a national program for the coordination of victims and has maintained a database with information on victims of trafficking. This has enabled us to acquire valuable experience in the field of prevention of human trafficking. Romania is ready to provide technical assistance on this matter, as well as to contribute with its expertise in developing an international mechanism for victim. Romania is also a country-coordinator of the BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in Combating Crime, in Particular in its Organized Forms.
15. In **Russia**, the Ministry of Interior, Federal Security Service, Federal Customs Service, Federal Service for Narcotics Traffic Control and Financial Monitoring Committee serve as competent authorities involved in combating organised crime. The Russian Ministry of Interior is the principal authority responsible for overall cooperation with Europol, while specific tasks of information exchange, coordination of operational activities, organisation of joint conferences, training seminars and meetings are performed by its structural unit - Russian National Contact Point for Europol. Russia participates in Europol analytical activities, providing regular information on organised crime and international terrorism. Along with traditional forms of cooperation, new formats have recently come into practice, such as Third Parties National Contact Points Forum and Russia-EU High Level Police Chiefs Meeting. They represent efficient platforms for discussing different aspects of combating transnational crime and the ways for enhancing cooperation in this field. Cooperation in the areas of witness protection, combating terrorism, organised crime, forgery of money, intellectual property crimes and illegal drugs trafficking, cybercrime is successfully developing. Representatives of Russian law-enforcement agencies participate regularly in meetings of relevant working groups, conferences and workshops. Experts are also invited to take part in seminars and conferences held in Russia.
16. **Serbia** is committed to fighting organized crime on national, regional and international levels. Recognizing the need to consolidate and harmonize its efforts in fighting different forms of crime, the Government of Serbia adopted three very important strategies in this field: the National Strategy against Organized Crime, National Strategy against Drugs for the period 2009-2013 and the National Strategy against Illegal Migrations for the period 2009-2014. Given the cross-border nature of different forms of organized crime, combating these phenomena cannot be successful without a good regional and international cooperation. Accordingly, Serbia has developed various forms of cooperation with the countries of the region and relevant international and regional organizations, such as UNODC, SECI, OSCE, BSEC. In September 2008, Serbia signed the Strategic Cooperation Agreement with Europol, aimed at enhancing cooperation to fight various forms of international crime including drug trafficking, money laundering and illegal migrations. The joint programme in the area of human trafficking, conducted by UNODC, UNHCR, and IOM in cooperation with all relevant national stakeholders in Serbia, has been developed under the United Nations Global Initiative

to Fight Human Trafficking (UN GIFT) in line with all international legal instruments, signed and ratified by the Government of Serbia, particularly the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.

17. Organized crime has become a serious concern in **Turkey**. Organized crime requires a coordinated international response and a close regional cooperation. Within this framework, there is need for: creating coordinated comprehensive national strategies, quick exchange of information and experience among the law enforcement officers and other criminal justice officers, cooperating in the area of border security, and creating public awareness on transnational crime as a national security threat in order to enlist citizens' participation in combating organized crime. Furthermore, considering the fact that transnational criminal syndicates always penetrate the weakest defenses of government institutions, counter-measures should be taken to strengthen these institutions including reforms targeting the elimination of corruption. Cooperating to put an end to various forms of organized crimes by acceding to international instruments is also an important step. Turkey has signed and ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three Protocols. Also Turkey has concluded bilateral agreements in this sphere with more than 70 countries including the BSEC member states. Turkey is also party to the regional cooperation efforts in the fight against organized crime in the Balkans and Black Sea regions, such as the Stability Pact, the South East European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). In addition, the "Agreement on Cooperation between the European Police Office (EUROPOL) and the Republic of Turkey" has entered into force as of July 2004. Furthermore, the Turkish International Academy against Drugs and Organized Crime (TADOC) was founded in Turkey in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. TADOC, with the aim of sustaining and improving the conditions of the fight against organized criminal groups in the light of scientific data has set up an appropriate basis to establish and foster regional and international cooperation by building a network in the fight against crimes by integrating trainees from different agencies of various countries.
18. **Ukraine** is actively engaged in promoting regional cooperation and good neighboring relations for implementing joint projects on issues related to the fight against organized crime, smuggling of persons, especially the trafficking in human beings, trafficking, etc. The two principal security agencies, which share responsibility for internal security are the Security Service of Ukraine, which is responsible for intelligence gathering and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The National Bureau of Investigations (NBI) of Ukraine is a special state organ with the task of detection and investigation of organised crime, corruption and other crimes, concentrating the efforts and abilities of special sub-divisions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and the Service of Security of the Ukraine (SSU). Fighting organised crime requires also proper scientific basis, for example in relation to data about the methods by which crimes are committed in the private business sector, methods of investigating economic crimes, criminological characteristics of organised criminality, characteristics of organised criminal groups which operate in the economic sphere.
19. The successful combat of organised crime at regional and international level requires vigorous bilateral cooperation based on mutual agreements envisaging mutual assistance and exchange of information. Various bilateral agreements are signed among the BSEC member states ensuring effective organizational and practical measures to strengthen efforts for combating organised crime.
20. According to the information of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of *Azerbaijan* since 1998 many joint activities have been implemented. Considerable attention is paid to the organization of different trainings, exchange of best practices, methodologies, etc. Among the BSEC member states fruitful cooperation is carried out mainly with Turkey, Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, and

Moldova. Cooperation with these states is based on solid legal framework which continues to be enhanced. Several bilateral and multilateral international legal instruments have been signed envisaging organization of joint practical action to strengthen efforts to combat crime, especially in its organised forms and transnational nature. Recently bilateral intergovernmental agreements were signed with Romania and Serbia on fight against international terrorism and organized crime, including illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and illegal migration. Currently, intensive works continue on concluding similar agreements with Greece and Bulgaria.

21. According to the information of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, Georgia have following bilateral agreements with BSEC member states:
- Treaty between Georgia and the Republic of *Armenia* on legal assistance in criminal matters. Agreement between the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia and the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Armenia in the sphere of combating crime.
 - Treaty between Georgia and the Republic of *Azerbaijan* on legal assistance and legal relations in civil, family and criminal matters. Agreement between Georgia and the Republic of Azerbaijan on cooperation in border issues. Protocol between the State Department of State Boundary Defence of Georgia and the Ministry of National Security of the Republic of Azerbaijan on cooperation in the exchange of information on situations at Georgia-Azerbaijan border. Protocol between the State Department of State Boundary Defence of Georgia and the Ministry of National Security of the Republic of Azerbaijan on cooperation in the operative-investigatory activity.
 - Treaty between the Republic of Georgia and the Republic of *Bulgaria* on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters. Agreement between the Government of Georgia and the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria on exchange and mutual protection of classified information. Agreement between the Government of Georgia and the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria on cooperation in the fight against crime. Protocol between the Department of State Boundary Defence of Georgia and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria on an exchange of Information on situations at international traffic roads and state boundaries of Georgia and Bulgaria.
 - Agreement between Georgia and the *Hellenic Republic* on legal assistance in civil and criminal matters.
 - Agreement on border cooperation between the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia and the Border Guard Service of the Republic of *Moldova*.
 - Agreement between the Government of Georgia and the Government of *Romania* on cooperation in the fight against terrorism, organized crime, illicit traffic of drugs, psychotropic substances, precursors and other serious crimes.
 - Treaty between the Republic of Georgia and the *Russian Federation* on legal assistance and legal relations in civil, family and criminal matters (signed; not in force). Agreement on cooperation between the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Georgia and the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation. Agreement between the Executive Authority of Georgia and the Government of the Russian Federation on cooperation in boundary issues. Protocol between the Department of State Boundary Defence of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia and the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation on an exchange of information. Protocol between the State Department of State Boundary Defence of Georgia and the Federal Border Service of the Russian Federation on cooperation and interaction in the operative-investigatory activity.
 - Treaty between Georgia and the Republic of *Turkey* on mutual legal assistance in civil, trade and criminal matters. Border treaty between Georgia and the Republic of Turkey. Agreement

between the Government of Georgia and the Government of the Republic of Turkey on cooperation between the competent services responsible for Black Sea maritime spaces.

- Treaty between Georgia and *Ukraine* on legal assistance and legal relations in civil and criminal matters. Agreement between the Government of Georgia and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on mutual protection of classified information. Agreement between the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Georgia and the Ministry of Interior of Ukraine on cooperation in the fight against crime. Agreement between the Government of Georgia and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on cooperation in border issues. Protocol between the State Department of State Boundary Defence of Georgia and the State Committee of State Boundary Defence Affairs of Ukraine on an exchange of information on situations at state boundaries and on cooperation in the operative-investigatory activity. Protocol between the State Department of State Boundary Defence of Georgia and the State Committee of State Boundary Defence Affairs of Ukraine on interaction in the protection of individual, state and other types of property on the Black Sea from criminal abuse and rendering assistance in this sphere.

22. At the regional level the major document is the Agreement among the Governments of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Participating States on Cooperation in Combating Crime, in particular in its Organized Forms (Kerkyra, Greece, 2 October, 1998) and the two additional protocols: The Additional Protocol to the Agreement among the Governments of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Participating States on Cooperation in Combating Crime, in particular in its organized forms (Kiev, 15 March, 2002) and the Additional Protocol on combating terrorism to the Agreement among the Governments of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Participating States on Cooperation in Combating Crime, in particular in its organized forms (Athens, 3 December, 2004) that create a regional framework for combating organised crime.
23. The Agreement provides framework of cooperation for the prevention, suppression, detection, disclosure and investigation of acts of terrorism; organized crime; illicit cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances; illicit manufacture, illicit trade and use of precursors and essential chemicals for the illegal production of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances; illegal trafficking in weapons, including biological, chemical and radiological weapons, ammunition, explosives, nuclear and radioactive materials, as well as poisonous substances; international illegal economic activities and legalization of proceeds (money laundering) deriving from criminal activities, suspicious economic and banking transactions and abuses in the investment field; smuggling; criminal activities related to migration, illegal crossing of borders and illegal trafficking in human beings; sexual exploitation of women and minors or children; counterfeiting and forgery of banknotes, credit cards, documents, securities and other values, as well as any kind of identity documents; violent crimes against human life and property; illicit trafficking in items of historic and cultural heritage, works of art, precious stones and metals, intellectual property, as well as any other valuable items; corruption; ecological crime; high-tech crime, including computer crime; kidnapping and trade of human organs; maritime crime (maritime fraud, piracy etc.); theft and illegal trafficking in vehicles; At the same time it sets mechanisms of cooperation in the fields of education, training and skill enhancement of personnel; exchange of delegations; carrying out scientific research for the purpose of combating crime and of developing information systems, communication means and special equipment; cooperation in other areas of mutual interest, with the aim of controlling criminality in general.
24. In line with the First Additional Protocol all countries are required to nominate members of the Network of Liaison Officers. It is also important to ensure that the network is launched in practice, which has not happened to date, despite templates for the exchange of information being developed. A situation emerges where countries continue to primarily rely on bilateral

agreements in the area of cooperation in practical matters and therefore the potential of the network is underutilised. Yet, another contributing reason is the fact that the exchange of sensitive and confidential information requires the use of an encrypted communication channel

25. The Action Plan of the Working Group on cooperation in combating crime implies implementation of the provisions of the Additional Protocol of 15 March 2002; organization of the meetings of the BSEC Network of Liaison Officers; elaboration of the Annual Assessment of the trends of transnational crime in the BSEC Region; implementation of the provisions of the Additional Protocol of 3 December 2004; development of the cooperation with the international organizations; monitoring of the implementation by the Member States of the Regional BSEC Action Plan for Strengthening the Criminal Justice Response to Trafficking in Persons in the Black Sea Region; Examination of the possibilities to obtain the assistance from the European Commission for the elaboration and implementation of projects in the BSEC Member States in the fields of organized crime and corruption; preparation and organization of the Eighth Meeting of the Ministers of Interior/Public Order of the BSEC.
26. Given the fact that three BSEC member states are at the same time members of the EU, a discussion was launched within the Working Group framework on the possibilities to implement projects supported by the European Union and international organisations with a view to enhancing practical cooperation between the competent bodies of BSEC countries. At the end of 2007 two joint projects were launched, which were implemented in 2008 in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Migration Organisation (IMO).
27. *A joint BSEC-UNODC project aiming to strengthen the criminal justice response to human trafficking in the Black Sea region.* The one-year project was implemented with the participation of the following BSEC countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Montenegro, Turkey and the Ukraine. Principal goals of the project: (1) enhance bilateral and multilateral cooperation between governments and non-governmental organisations in BSEC countries active in the investigation of cases of trafficking in human beings, the criminal prosecution and sentencing of traffickers and referral and support for the victims and witnesses of trafficking in human beings; (2) facilitate the exchange of know-how and best practices within the BSEC region with a view to enhancing the enforcement at national level of criminal justice against persons engaged in the trafficking of human beings. The following main project activities were identified: creating a network of national contact points; drafting an electronic Contacts Guide; drafting a Regional Action Plan for bilateral and multilateral cooperation; identifying (through questionnaires) of existing experience, know-how and best practices; developing a Manual on the strengthening of the criminal justice response to trafficking in human beings; and organising a high-level Regional Conference. The Regional Action Plan for the strengthening of the criminal justice response to trafficking in human beings in the Black Sea region was finalised within the framework of the main project activity – the Regional Conference of BSEC organised in Constanta in June 2008. The aim of the conference was to facilitate the exchange of know-how, conduct an analysis of the deficiencies in the current criminal justice response to trafficking in human beings and drafting recommendations for its improvement. At the end of 2008, a Manual on the strengthening of the criminal justice response to trafficking in human beings in the Black Sea region was drafted. At the meeting of the BSEC Working Group on fight against organised crime in October 2010, UNODC presented a project proposal to launch a subsequent two-year project aiming to support the efforts of BSEC to implement the Regional plan and further strengthening of the criminal justice response to trafficking in human beings in the region.

28. *BSEC-IMO Joint Project “Black Sea process of consultations on migration management”* which envisaged creating national migration profiles of BSEC countries. The project was launched at the end of 2007 and involved the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior as a project partner, which considered the compilation of migration profiles and conducting a regional analysis on the basis of these profiles would be an efficient tool for the management of migration processes in the region. By the end of 2008, the national migration profiles of the 12 BSEC countries were finalised and general Recommendations on migration policy for the Black Sea region were drafted. During the meeting of the Working Group on fight against terrorism in October 2010, the participants expressed interest in receiving the three-year analyses of IMO on migration trends in the Black Sea region and reach an agreement on a follow-up stage of the project for the updating of the national migration profiles created in 2008 to be considered by IMO.
29. The European Union’s response in the fight against organised crime is adapted to the complexity of this phenomenon and is directed at both trafficking in human beings, arms and drugs and economic and financial crime, corruption and money laundering. It also covers the new dimensions of organised crime, such as cybercrime and environmental crime. The integrated approach guiding the action of the EU extends from prevention to law enforcement. This is based essentially on effective cooperation between the authorities of the Member States, and especially the law enforcement agencies, including the exchange of information and mutual assistance in seizures and confiscations. The fight against organised crime is global, affecting many areas of the EU’s action and policies. The EU priorities for developing an area of justice, freedom and security during the period 2010-14 are set out in the Stockholm Programme. The action plan provides for measures to ensure the protection of fundamental rights. These consist of reinforcing data protection law through a new comprehensive legal framework, as well as of incorporating data protection into all EU policies, law enforcement, crime prevention and international relations. Actions are also intended to fight against all forms of discrimination, racism, and xenophobia. Particular attention is given to protecting the rights of the child and vulnerable groups, including victims of crime and terrorism.
30. Other regional institutions include the Black Sea Naval Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR created to enhance peace and stability in the BSR), and the 2004 Border Defense Initiative (BDI), known also as the “Black Sea Border Security Initiative” launched in Bucharest. BLACKSEAFOR and Project Black Sea Harmony are projects initiated by the Turkish State in 1998 and 2004, respectively. Both aim at diminishing the prevalence of illicit activity in the Black Sea region through international cooperation.
31. Cooperation among the BSEC member states also continues in the framework of other international organizations, such as the Commonwealth of Independent States, Council of Europe, OSCE, the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development-GUAM and other regional associations. Significant exchange of operational information is also carried through the national office of the International Criminal Police Organization - Interpol. As an example, the Interior Ministry of Azerbaijan periodically participate in meetings, conferences, meetings, meetings, seminars, trainings and other events organized within these frameworks. Main objectives of these activities are strengthening of the legal bases for cooperation, exchange of operational information, careful analysis, promotion of best practices, and enhancement of existing technical, financial, legal and other assistance.
32. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (entered into force on 29 September 2003) is the main international instrument to counter organized crime. The Convention is further supplemented by three Protocols, which target specific areas and manifestations of organized crime: the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children; the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by

Land, Sea and Air; and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition. The Convention represents a major step forward in the fight against transnational organized crime and signifies the recognition by member states of the seriousness of the problems posed by it, as well as the need to foster and enhance close international cooperation in order to tackle those problems. States that ratify this instrument commit themselves to taking a series of measures against transnational organized crime, including the creation of domestic criminal offences; the adoption of new and sweeping frameworks for extradition, mutual legal assistance and law enforcement cooperation; and the promotion of training and technical assistance for building or upgrading the necessary capacity of national authorities. The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (entered into force on 25 December 2003) facilitates convergence in national approaches with regard to the establishment of domestic criminal offences that would support efficient international cooperation in investigating and prosecuting trafficking in persons cases.

III. CONCLUSIONS

33. The era of globalization has transformed the world into a new social order characterized primarily by increased mobility of people, capital and business and liberalised border controls. Globalization of society and the advancements in transportation and communication technologies provide various opportunities not only for the prosperity of the societies, but also for the criminal world. Availing itself of these opportunities, organized crime has become a major challenge for the societies. Organised criminal groups have adapted to the new international reality of globalisation, new technology, the internet and international banking practices and frequently hide behind the legitimate activities.
34. Transnational organized crime affects nearly every country but notable social, economic and cultural differences in different countries result in different approaches and priorities given to the fight against organized crime. Fragile, poor and conflict-affected states are most vulnerable to organized crime, in particular as the site for trafficking in persons, drugs, and weapons. Frozen conflicts encourage the spread of organized criminal activity while simultaneously impeding the democratic development.
35. The innovative character of criminal networks, knowing no administrative borders, require more knowledge, better measures and methods for effective, permanent and functional response. The fight against organized crime remains one of the most significant priorities on the national agenda of the states. It is important to carry out the coordination and harmonization of sector strategies, action plans and other measures, allowing their simultaneous and even implementation, thus achieving the goals of the fight against organized crime. At the same time, the policy of open but at the same time controlled and safe borders through efficient management leads to efficient accomplishments at a regional level.
36. Addressing the challenge of combating organised crime implies a comprehensive approach to strengthen the capacity of governments, businesses, and civil society institutions to resist the influence of organized criminal enterprises. This involves a multi-pronged approach to assist law enforcement, promote judicial reform, encourage transparency and oversight, combat corruption, and strengthen social dimension. To this end, national governments, international organizations and the civil society has to work closely in order to enhance measures to counter the pervading influence of organized crime.
37. More effective cooperation is necessary at regional and international levels for effective implementation of the existing instruments. A range of regional and international organizations and initiatives have been established to fulfill the goal contributing to the upgrading and streamlining of the institutional aspects of regional cooperation in combating organised crime.

Yet, the existing methods in fighting the growing threat of organized crime are not sufficient. In this context, more efficient coordination, cooperation and communication between law enforcement agencies and the judiciary in the region is needed.

38. Given the global character of organised crime, its combat represents much more than a national duty for states. Each country has a regional and international responsibility to establish necessary synergies and responses for efficient combat of organised crime. In this context, the governments and parliaments of the BSEC member states have to work individually and collectively to effectively contribute to progress combating organised crime in the region and in the world at large.