



**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION
PABSEC**

Doc. GA65/LC65/REP/25

**SIXTY-FIFTH PLENARY SESSION OF THE PABSEC GENERAL ASSEMBLY
COMMITTEE FOR LEGAL AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

REPORT*

**“International Cooperation in the Fight against Organised Crime in the BSEC
Region”**

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* *The text was considered at the Sixty-Fifth Meeting of the Committee for Legal Affairs and International Cooperation, organized in Skopje (North Macedonia) on 29 April 2025 and adopted at the Sixty-Fifth Plenary Session of the General Assembly, on 19 June 2025, in Baku.*

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Ensuring global security today is increasingly complex due to the interplay of diverse and interconnected organized threats. The proliferation of advanced technologies heightened cyber threats, aggravation of the problems associated with climate change, as well as pandemics and mass migrations are reshaping the global security landscape. Additionally, geopolitical tensions, economic downturns, and social unrest foster environments conducive to criminal activities. In times of social crisis, when traditional social and legal frameworks weaken, organized crime groups often emerge as influential forces. These challenging conditions lead to social instability, fostering feelings of frustration and desperation among populations, which further complicates efforts to maintain stability and undermines economic prosperity. The growing interdependence and interconnectedness of global economies and societies make security challenges inherently global, thus necessitating coordinated and collaborative international responses. Consequently, it is imperative to unite the efforts of national agencies, international organizations, and civil society to effectively combat organized crime, reduce crime and violence and foster a safer environment for all.

2. The strategic location of the Wider Black Sea Region, at the intersection of the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Western Asia, and the Caucasus, establishes it as a vital transit route between the West and East, as well as North and South. This unique geographic advantage also creates fertile ground for various forms of illegal activities. The multitude of sea routes and transport corridors within the region significantly heightens its appeal as a critical hub for illicit trade and smuggling. Ensuring the security of these transportation routes is essential for enhancing trade and fostering economic relationships both within the region and beyond. To this end, it is crucial to develop targeted recommendations aimed at strengthening international cooperation in combating organized crime in the region.

3. The substantial influx of refugees and internally displaced people in the Black Sea region has fostered an environment conducive to the rise of organized crime. Regrettably, a troubling number of children and young adults are being drawn into these criminal enterprises, exacerbating the situation and posing significant threats to regional security.

4. Recognizing the critical importance of addressing organized crime across all levels and the necessity of enhancing international cooperation to maintain overall stability and security, the PABSEC Committee for Legal Affairs and International Cooperation decided to focus on “International Cooperation in the Fight against Organized Crime in the BSEC Region” at its 65th Meeting in Skopje on 29 April 2025.

5. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) has consistently analysed issues related to organized crime in the Black Sea region in its previous documents, underscoring its commitment to bolstering international cooperation. The adoption of reports and recommendations¹ at various stages of the Assembly activities has significantly contributed to the formulation of effective strategies for combating organized crime. Since 2021 the PABSEC has also been proactive in enhancing cooperation

¹Report and Recommendation 180/2021 on The Role of Parliaments in Preventing Human Trafficking – Legal and Political Aspects; Report and Recommendation 147/2015 on Role of the Parliaments in providing legal Framework for Combating Corruption; Report and Recommendation 129/2012 on Role of the Parliaments in Enhancing Information (Cyber) Security in the BSEC Member States; Report and Recommendation 124/2011 on Implementation of the Agreements among the BSEC Member States on Combating Organized Crime; Report and Recommendation 102/2008 on the Role of the Parliaments of the BSEC Member States in Fighting International Terrorism; Report and Recommendation 17/1996 on Basic Principles of the Black Sea Convention on Combating Organized Crime and Terrorism; Report and Recommendation 15/1996 on Cooperation among the PABSEC Member Countries in Combating Organized Crime

with the Parliamentary Engagement Office of the United Nations Office of Counterterrorism (UNOCT) and in November 2024 a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed.

6. The present Report uses the contributions of the following national delegations: the Republic of Albania, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Hellenic Republic, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Republic of Türkiye and Ukraine. At the same time, the reference material was obtained from various online sources and official sites of international organizations.

II. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE FIGHT AGAINST ORGANISED CRIME IN THE BSEC REGION

7. The Global Organized Crime Index 2023 highlights the trend of rise in organized crime worldwide with 83% of the global population living under conditions of high criminality. However, the number of people living in conditions of low resilience to organized crime globally has significantly declined to 62% in 2023 from 79.4% in 2021. This increasing disparity between the prevalence of organized crime and the collective resilience of people underlines the profound and far-reaching impacts of organized crime on societies and economies in the world.

8. According to estimates from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the profits generated by the organized crime amount to 870 billion US dollars or approximately 1.5% of the global GDP. In 2023, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) assessed the value of the global illicit economy to surpass 1.6 trillion US dollars, highlighting the vast and expanding scope of transnational organized crime. This concerning data illustrates that current collective response efforts have been insufficient to address the threats posed by the organized crime. It emphasises the urgent need for the development of enhanced holistic strategies and enhanced collaboration mechanisms to effectively combat organized crime globally.

9. Organized crime represents a significant threat that undermines societal structures, erodes economic stability, and jeopardises the rule of law. Operating through sophisticated networks, criminal organizations are involved in a wide array of illegal activities including drug trafficking, human smuggling, cybercrime, money laundering, etc. Such illegal enterprises often flourish in environments characterized by corruption, which diminishes trust in state institutions and fosters a culture of impunity. Additionally, factors like poverty, limited access to education, and a lack of job opportunities contribute to the proliferation of crime. Political instability weakens state control, further enabling criminal organizations to conduct their activities with relative impunity. To effectively combat organized crime, it is essential to adopt a comprehensive approach that addresses the underlying issues of corruption, poverty, and political instability through strengthening state institutions.

10. One of the most pressing challenges in the region is migration, which significantly complicates efforts to combat organized crime. Large-scale movements of people, particularly during times of conflict and crisis, create vulnerabilities that traffickers and smugglers are quick to exploit for their own gain. To address organized crime effectively, it is crucial to enhance cooperation between countries on migration policies. By establishing unified approaches to migration management, states can better safeguard potential victims and reduce the opportunities for organized crime to flourish. This collaboration could include sharing intelligence, coordinating border security measures, and implementing joint training programs for law enforcement agencies. Moreover, developing comprehensive support systems for migrants, including legal pathways and protection measures, can help to mitigate the factors that contribute to their exploitation.

11. Vulnerabilities within public administration and the social system critically undermine the effectiveness of state institutions. Weak institutional frameworks and a lack of civil oversight create an environment conducive to the infiltration of criminal organizations, which adeptly exploit legal gaps to serve their own interests. These vulnerabilities diminish citizens' trust in the state and amplify the influence of organized crime. To effectively address these issues, a comprehensive approach is essential, including public administration reforms aimed at enhancing efficiency, increasing transparency, combating corruption, and promoting active citizen engagement in decision-making processes.

12. Combating organized crime presents notable challenges due to the ability of criminals to rapidly adapt to social, economic and political changes. Criminal organizations swiftly modify their strategies and tactics, utilizing modern technological capabilities, including artificial intelligence. As new technologies become increasingly integrated into daily life, the lines between online and offline realities blur, creating a hybrid environment where criminal activities can unfold within virtual networks. Criminal organizations actively leverage digital platforms to enhance communication and facilitate illegal transactions, employing advanced cyber tools to shield their operations from detection. In this context, artificial intelligence emerges as a powerful asset in the prevention and combatting of contemporary organized crime, particularly in addressing high-tech offenses such as phishing, bot attacks, and drone usage. Forecasting crime, preventing it, and developing effective countermeasures using modern technologies are imperative priorities for governments. Emphasis is paid on the application of artificial intelligence and machine learning in crime prediction activities.

13. Cybercrime, especially with financial implications, has become a pressing issue in today's world. Banking fraud, identity theft, and ransomware attacks on individuals and institutions have transcend national borders. Cybercrime and fraud result in billions of dollars in losses each year, inflicting significant harm not only on individuals but also on entire economies. This issue is exacerbated by the anonymity afforded by the Internet, which complicates the ability of law enforcement agencies to efficiently track and apprehend criminals. Often, the illicit use of technology and the spread of malware operate outside the scope of existing regulations, leaving government agencies, law enforcement, and regulators grappling with formidable challenges in addressing crimes associated with new technologies. This underscores the necessity for continuous updates to their operational methods and the development of more effective tools for monitoring and analysing digital threats. Furthermore, fostering international cooperation is essential for facilitating the exchange of information and best practices in the fight against organized crime.

14. Raising public awareness is a vital component in the fight against organized crime. By increasing understanding of the risks and signs of criminal activity, individuals can respond more effectively to potential threats and report them to law enforcement agencies in a timely manner. Educational programs, information campaigns, and awareness-raising initiatives are instrumental in shifting public attitudes towards organized crime and undermining the resilience of criminal networks within society. Additionally, citizen involvement in collaborative efforts with the police and other law enforcement bodies is crucial for developing effective crime-fighting strategies. In this context, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations play a key role in fostering dialogue, building trust, and facilitating community engagement in the fight against crime.

15. Parliaments play an important role in strengthening the fight against organised crime by creating effective legislation and increasing the accountability of law enforcement. Legislators create and amend laws given the changing nature of organised crime, ensuring

that the legal framework is robust in combating organised crime. Through their oversight functions, legislators promote transparency and encourage effective inter-agency cooperation. Parliamentary committees also engage with civil society organisations and experts to gather information and opinions to ensure that measures to combat organised crime are well-founded and effective. Parliaments are therefore important partners in joint efforts to combat organised crime and ensure public safety. Coherence between legislative frameworks and law enforcement practices is essential to effectively combat organised crime. For more meaningful international cooperation in combating organised crime, it is important to ensure that national laws are consistent with international legal instruments.

16. The BSEC Member States actively cooperate with different international organizations such as Interpol, Europol, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). This collaboration encompasses information sharing, joint operations, and training initiatives aimed at enhancing responses to transnational threats. Countries in the region coordinate their efforts through established mechanisms and programs to devise comprehensive strategies that effectively combat criminal organizations. An essential component of this collaboration is the development of multilateral dialogues and the harmonization of standards, which foster a united front against organized crime within the region. Furthermore, crime prevention and control measures are critical not only for bolstering security but also for promoting economic development and stability. By implementing effective strategies to reduce crime, a safer environment is created, which, in turn, contributes to economic growth and enhances the quality of life for citizens.

17. Tackling the challenges posed by organized crime requires strong political will and the development of comprehensive national strategies aimed at reinforcing state institutions, enhancing governance systems, implementing robust anti-corruption reforms, and strengthening the judicial system. Prioritizing anti-corruption measures is essential to ensure that law enforcement agencies operate with integrity and efficiency. A well-functioning judicial system, combined with a commitment to good governance, will bolster national efforts against organized crime and contribute to a more effective global response to the threats posed by such criminal activities. This multifaceted approach not only addresses the immediate issues of organized crime but also fosters a stable and secure environment for all citizens.

18. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation is essential in the global fight against organized crime. Engagement in international treaties and agreements, such as the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), enhances collaborative efforts and fosters a unified approach to ensuring global security and stability. This international cooperation facilitates timely mutual assistance, enables the exchange of information and resources, and grants access to best practices and global expertise, allowing countries to respond more effectively to the challenges posed by organized crime. Such a comprehensive strategy not only disrupts the activities of criminal organizations but also cultivates a safer environment for citizens and businesses. Ultimately, this contributes to the sustainable development and prosperity.

Situation in the BSEC Member States

19. Organized crime has had a significant impact on **the Republic of Albania** over the past two decades, affecting multiple sectors of society. The growing sophistication of criminal groups has contributed to an increase in illegal activities, marked by new developments in their structure and methods. Albania began addressing organized crime with a more strategic approach in 2010 and adopted the first Intersectoral Strategy on Combating Organized Crime, Trafficking, and Terrorism in 2018, followed by the 2021–2025 Strategy

and Action Plan. These strategies are designed to disrupt organized crime group activities, enhance law enforcement cooperation, and strengthen the country's justice system.

20. The Albanian government's commitment to combatting organized crime was further reinforced through a series of legal reforms introduced in 2016. As part of its EU accession negotiations, Albania implemented judicial reforms aimed at enhancing the integrity and efficiency of its judiciary, with a particular focus on addressing corruption and organized crime influences. A central element of these reforms was the introduction of a vetting process for judges designed to improve professionalism, trustworthiness, and transparency in the justice system. In 2022, Albania signed agreements with North Macedonia to improve cooperation on drug trafficking, money laundering, and border management.

21. Albania and North Macedonia have established joint investigative units to monitor illegal activities at border points. Albania has also entered into various agreements with BSEC Member States such as Greece, North Macedonia, Romania, and Türkiye, facilitating judicial assistance, police cooperation, and the exchange of criminal data. As part of its regional and international commitments, Albania is an active member of Interpol and Europol and participates in Operation "Balkans Shield." The country also collaborates with the EU Rule of Law Mechanism, strengthening its investigative capabilities to address criminal networks.

22. **The Republic of Azerbaijan** has undertaken proactive steps to engage in international efforts against organized crime. A variety of organized crime forms confront the BSEC region, posing a threat to its stability and development. Drug trafficking is a particular concern, as the region serves as a key transit zone that contributes significantly to the rise in criminal activities. Human trafficking, particularly in the form of sexual exploitation and forced labour, remains a persistent challenge for Azerbaijan and its neighbouring states. Corruption further exacerbates these problems by undermining the efficacy of law enforcement and judicial institutions, thus enabling organized crime groups to thrive.

23. Moreover, as the region becomes more digitally interconnected, cybercrime has emerged as an increasing threat, affecting both the private sector and government institutions and necessitating urgent attention and coordinated responses from the Member States. Azerbaijan has made substantial efforts to combat organized crime through active participation in international organizations and the implementation of national strategies. Azerbaijan collaborates closely with the UN bodies, Interpol, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) with the aim to enhance law enforcement cooperation and regional security.

24. Bilateral and multilateral agreements with neighbouring states have further strengthened these efforts, facilitating joint operations and the exchange of critical information. In addition, Azerbaijan has developed a national strategy to combat organized crime, focusing on strengthening legal and institutional frameworks, enhancing the capacity of law enforcement agencies, and improving interagency cooperation. Azerbaijan is also committed to sharing its expertise and experiences with other countries in the region, facilitating knowledge transfer, and promoting more effective criminal justice systems.

25. In **the Republic of Bulgaria**, the specialized structure of the General Directorate for Combating Organized Crime is responsible for countering organized crime across multiple areas, including customs regime, the monetary, tax, and social security systems; drug trafficking; human trafficking, the smuggling of individuals or groups across borders; trafficking in cultural property; corruption within public authorities; terrorism, the use of

generally dangerous means and substances; money laundering and illegal gambling; as well as the manipulation of contracts, fraudulent use of EU funds, and related illicit activities.

26. Bulgaria signed numerous multilateral and bilateral agreements aimed at facilitating international cooperation in the fight against organized crime, including the Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe, which promotes the exchange of information, joint operations, and legal assistance among Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, North Macedonia, Moldova and Serbia. At the bilateral level, Bulgaria has concluded intergovernmental agreements on readmission, with Türkiye, Georgia, Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia. Additionally, agreements with Romania and Greece have been made to enable joint border patrols, the exchange of operational information, and coordination against trafficking in human beings and drugs.

27. Bulgaria's participation in EU mechanisms, such as the European Arrest Warrant, the Schengen Information System, and the European Criminal Records Information System further facilitates information exchange and law enforcement cooperation. Agreements with countries in the Black Sea region, including Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, support data exchange, joint operations, and personnel training focused on combating organized crime and terrorism. Bulgaria has signed with Southeast European countries, the Western Balkans, and other BSEC Member States, provisions for the exchange of information, joint operations, training, and technical assistance.

28. Combating organized crime, both at a national and an international level, is a great challenge for **the Hellenic Republic**, due to its geopolitical location, situated between Europe, Asia and Africa. Criminal networks engaged in drug and human trafficking exploit Greece's unique geographical features, including its extensive land borders, a coastline spanning thousands of kilometers, numerous islands, rocky islets, and a multitude of ports and airports, serving as critical points along the EU's external borders. Combating organized crime is a key priority for the Hellenic Republic and especially the Hellenic Police, which is the main body of the National Anti-Crime Policy.

29. Combating Organized Crime and Terrorism Strategy is a major component of Operational Program of the Hellenic Police (2021-2025). This program focuses on the following actions: dismantling criminal organizations and organized criminal networks with cross-border action; identification of criminal organizations or criminal activities carried out within the framework of a criminal organization with increased harm to society; dismantling criminal organizations whose actions have direct consequences on citizens. The fight against drug trafficking is one of the main priorities of the Ministry of Citizen Protection and the Hellenic Police, implementing a Special Operational Program on Drugs.

30. The objective of the above-mentioned strategy is to contribute to the dismantling of traditional and online drug markets as well as criminal groups involved in drug production and trafficking. It also aims to the effective use of the criminal justice system, law enforcement and the reduction of the violence levels associated with the illicit drug trade. Some of the priorities of the Hellenic Police's Drug Strategy include combating production and trafficking of narcotic substances, tackling the utilization of new technologies and digital channels exploited for illicit substance distribution, enhancing cooperation and promoting coordination between law enforcement authorities at national, regional and international levels.

31. The geographical position of **the Republic of Moldova**, situated between Eastern Europe and the European Union, makes it a point of interest for international criminal networks. The common border with Ukraine and the war in Ukraine has generated the

intensification of criminal phenomenon in the region. The Republic of Moldova, being in the immediate vicinity, is facing both a refugee inflow and attempts by criminal groups to profit from the region's instability in order to extend their operations.

32. Moldova is a source as well as a transit point for victims of sexual exploitation and forced labour. The growing use of the Internet and social networks by traffickers to recruit victims complicates prevention efforts and necessitates the development of strategies adapted to the criminals' methods of operation. Drug trafficking is among the most prevalent issues, with the number of drug-related crimes has increased over the last years in Moldova. Furthermore, the Moldovan authorities have identified and dismantled multiple criminal groups involved in facilitating illegal migration.

33. One of the most prevalent forms of cybercrime in Moldova is the online scams, mainly the "smishing", aiming at stealing funds from citizens' bank cards, followed by phishing attacks, which manipulate victims into revealing sensitive information through fake emails or websites. Additionally, there are instances of identity theft and hacking of social media or email accounts, which are then used to facilitate other crimes. Hybrid threats, which combine conventional and unconventional tactics contribute to destabilization and have a significant impact on the national and regional security.

34. The National Defence Strategy (2020-2024) of **Romania** includes provisions relevant to combating organized crime, particularly in the Black Sea Region. Additionally, at the national level, strategic documents have been developed, including the National Strategy against Organized Crime, the National Strategy for Integrated State Border Management, and the National Strategy for Public Order and Safety. These strategic documents consider the characteristics of organized crime as manifested within the national territory, the main identified risks, and include measures or activities targeting the Black Sea region, with the aim of maintaining this area as a space of safety and security.

35. The National Strategy Against Human Trafficking is the result of the involvement of the Interministerial Committee for Inter-Sectoral Strategic Coordination in the Fight Against Human Trafficking, national and international strategic partners, and civil society, and is based on a victim-centred approach that is effectively applied by all institutions that interact with human trafficking victims. In the field of preventing and combating drug use and trafficking, at the national level, the National Strategy on Drugs (2022-2026), along with the Action Plan on Drugs, is currently in force. These regulatory acts outline the general framework and cooperation mechanism for all social actors with relevant competencies in the field.

36. Regarding the Black Sea region, from the perspective of the Romanian Ministry of Internal Affairs, the main risks and threats stem from the military conflict near Romania's territory, the intensification of geopolitical and economic competition between state and non-state actors interested in the region's resources, as well as the disruption of transnational crime flows due to the war. This disruption creates the premise for the use of alternative routes, potentially involving the facilities of Constanța Port. Furthermore, there remains a risk of using the facilities provided by the containerized transport system for the smuggling of significant quantities of cigarettes or tobacco in violation of customs regulations.

37. As organized crime continues to rise, combating organized crime is also a priority for **the Republic of Türkiye**. The fight against organized crime in Türkiye has been carried out within the scope of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and bilateral and multilateral agreements aimed at facilitating cooperation in the fight against

organized crime at the international level. Türkiye has signed bilateral agreements and protocols with more than 70 countries, including BSEC Member States, for cooperation in the fields of combating terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime. Türkiye continues its fight against terrorism, especially in accordance with international law by balancing need for security with the preservation of individual freedoms.

38. In accordance with bilateral security cooperation agreements, law enforcement officers from Türkiye and other countries regularly collaborate and enhance bilateral cooperation channels in the field of security. To ensure the speed and confidentiality required by security operations, the General Directorate of Security assigns police liaison officers to various countries, and likewise, police officers from certain nations are accepted as liaison officers in Türkiye. Türkiye has significantly contributed to the work of organizations responsible for ensuring international cooperation in the field of drug enforcement. Close cooperation is carried out with the UNODC.

39. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime Regional Office for Southeast Europe (UNODC ROSEE), which started operating in Istanbul as of 1 March 2023, increases Türkiye's international visibility in this field and contributes to the coordination of the relevant institutions with UNODC and multilateral cooperation activities. Türkiye has signed bilateral security cooperation agreements, protocols or Memorandums of Understanding with more than 110 countries in the field of combating transnational crimes. The Turkish International Academy Against Drugs and Organized Crime (TADOC), established in 2000, with the cooperation of UNODC, serves as an important international training centre, especially for the countries in the region.

40. The Strategy for Combating Organized Crime in **Ukraine**, approved on 16 September 2020, outlines the development of the system for combating organized crime and establishes the mechanisms for implementing state policy in this area under current conditions. To further operationalize the Strategy, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved on 27 September 2022 the Action Plan for its implementation. The Strategy for Combating Organized Crime focuses on the creation of an effective and efficient system to combat organized crime. It introduces a three-stage model for the formation of state policy in this field and aims to adopt international standards and establish effective monitoring mechanisms.

41. A key aspect of the Strategy is ensuring coordination and collaboration among the various entities. Furthermore, it aims to improve the efficiency of public authorities engaged in combatting organized crime while enhancing international cooperation. Strategy will be implemented over a five-year period, from the date of its approval, based on optimal solutions that consider best practices from EU Member States. The focus is on ensuring the sustainable functioning, coordination, and effectiveness of state bodies involved in the fight against organized crime. As part of its ongoing efforts, Ukraine plans to develop a new strategy for combating organized crime in 2025, with the participation of the National Coordinator for Combating Organized Crime.

42. In addition to the Strategy's implementation, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine has developed a draft Law "On Amendments to the Law of Ukraine on Organizational and Legal Framework for Combating Organized Crime". The draft law proposes the establishment of an Interagency Coordination Commission for Combating Organized Crime. The Ministry submitted this draft law to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on 6 August 2024, marking a step toward enhancing interagency coordination in the fight against organized crime.

III. INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND EXPERIENCE

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)

43. Strengthening the cooperation among the BSEC Member States in preventing organized crime, represents one of the major aims of the “BSEC Economic Agenda Towards a Sustainable Future of the wider Black Sea area” (GOAL 16: Combating Organized Crime, Illegal Trafficking of Drugs and Weapons, Terrorism, Corruption and Money Laundering). The main activities in this field are carried out by the BSEC Working Group on Combating Crime, in Particular, in its Organized Forms. The Ministers in charge of Interior/Public order) of the Member States, have adopted several declarations on how to strengthen the cooperation among the national authorities of the BSEC Member States, involved in preventing and fighting against transnational crimes. The Joint Declaration of the Ministers in Charge of Interior/Public Order of the BSEC Member States on Strengthening Cooperation in the Field of Fight Against Transnational Crimes, in Particular Smuggling, Trafficking in Human-Beings, Trafficking of Light Weapons, Economic, Financial Crimes And Terrorism, adopted in Istanbul on 23 November 2012 sets the basis for strengthening common actions for further concrete cooperation in the field of fight against transnational crimes, in particular, smuggling, trafficking in human-beings, trafficking of light weapons, economic and financial crimes and terrorism.

44. **The BSEC Working Group on Combating Crime, in Particular in its Organized Forms** aims to enhance the cooperation among the BSEC Member States, in combating organized crime activities, such as the trafficking of human beings, drugs, weapons and radioactive materials, corruption, smuggling of motor vehicles and cyber-crime, as well as money laundering and illicit financial activities. The Working Group meets in regular meetings, at least once a year, and its activities are based on the implementation of the Plan of Action. The basic documents elaborated by the Working Group are: “Agreement among the Governments of the BSEC Participating States on Cooperation in Combating Crime, in particular in its organized forms” (Corfu, 1998); “Additional Protocol to the Agreement among the Governments of the BSEC participating States on Cooperation in Combating Crime, in particular in its organized forms” (Kiev, 2002); “Additional Protocol on Combating Terrorism to the Agreement among the Governments of the BSEC participating States on cooperation in combating crime in particular in its organized forms” (Athens, 2004). The Kiev Additional Protocol set up a “Network of Liaison Officers on Combating Crime”.

45. The **Network of Liaison Officers on Combating Crime** plays a key role in addressing transnational crime and improving regional security through strengthening cooperation among the border law enforcement and immigration agencies of the BSEC Member States, aiming to achieve integrated border management, by establishing and maintaining direct channels of communication. It highlights the importance of information exchange, mutual assistance in criminal investigations and joint operations, further enhancement of the cooperation and coordination among law enforcement agencies across the Member States. By promoting a shared knowledge and practical skills development, this platform fosters a comprehensive and effective approach to organized crime, ensuring that law enforcement personnel are equipped to tackle the complexities of the modern criminal networks.

European Union (EU)

46. The European Union adopts policies aimed at harmonizing criminal legislation among its Member States, thereby establishing a more cohesive and unified strategy to address organized crime. Additionally, the European Security Strategy and Action Plan on Terrorism set key focus areas for addressing organized crime, such as human trafficking, drug smuggling, and terrorism. The Schengen Information System (SIS) and Europol's Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA) serve as a mechanism for the exchange of criminal intelligence, enabling Member States to enhance their capabilities in tracking and detaining criminals across borders.

47. **Eurojust and Europol** play a crucial role in enhancing cooperation in judicial and law enforcement issues at an international level. Eurojust facilitates the collaboration among national authorities to achieve efficient prosecution and resolution of cases involving transnational organized crime. Europol assists national law enforcement agencies by enhancing intelligence sharing and coordinating joint operations to address different types of organized crime. The agency manages the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS), as well as additional databases that facilitate the exchange of essential information regarding criminals and their activities among members. Europol elaborates strategic reports and analyses that provide a comprehensive understanding of emerging trends in organized crime.

Council of Europe (CoE)

48. The Council of Europe (CoE) plays a crucial role in addressing organized crime through various initiatives and frameworks. In 2021, the Council established conclusions that outline the EU's priorities for 2022-2025 in addressing organized crime via the European multi-disciplinary platform against criminal threats (EMPACT). Under the EMPACT framework, EU Member States, agencies, and various stakeholders collaborate effectively to tackle significant criminal threats through law enforcement training and coordinated operational actions aimed at dismantling criminal networks. The Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO), a specialized entity within the Council of Europe, systematically monitors and assesses the adherence of Member States to anti-corruption protocols, offering targeted recommendations to enhance legal and institutional frameworks. The CoE offers training programs designed for law enforcement agencies and judicial authorities, with the objective of enhancing their investigative and prosecutorial capabilities in addressing organized crime.

The United Nations (UN)

49. **The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)**, adopted in 2000, is the main international instrument in the fight against transnational 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 to tackle those problems.

50. **The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**, founded in 1997, serves as main international UN institution tackling transnational criminal activities, offering technical assistance to Member States in fields including drug trafficking, human trafficking,

corruption, and cybercrime. UNODC plays a crucial role in facilitating both regional and national programs aimed at improving law enforcement capabilities, enhancing judiciary efficiency, and strengthening institutional integrity in the fight against criminal networks.

51. **The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy**, adopted in 2006, is a unique global instrument elaborated to enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter terrorism through a common strategic and operational approach. It aims to provide the measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, to prevent and combat terrorism. The measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law serve as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism.

52. **The UN Office of Counterterrorism (UNOCT)**, established in 2017, is considered as the first major UN institution engaged with the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The Office of Counterterrorism aims to ensure the balanced implementation of the pillars of the Strategy, strengthen the delivery of counter-terrorism capacity-building assistance to Member States, improve visibility, advocacy and resource mobilization for the counter-terrorism efforts.

53. **The Parliamentary Engagement Office of the UN Office of Counterterrorism**, established in 2021, aims to strengthen the parliamentary core functions to enhance responses to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism. The office supports parliaments by providing expertise, policy guidance, and capacity-building programs tailored to legislative needs. Among its key initiatives are the Coordination Mechanisms for Parliamentary Assemblies on Counterterrorism (CT) and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE), as well as the Women Parliamentarians Initiative, the Young Parliamentarians Initiative and the Global Parliamentary Network on CT and PCVE. The Counter-Terrorism Coordination Mechanism functions as a platform for information exchange, capacity-building, coordination, and awareness-raising. It currently includes participation from 17 members worldwide.

54. In November 2024, PABSEC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the UNOCT. This agreement establishes a systematic framework for facilitating inter-parliamentary dialogue, promotes the role of parliaments in addressing terrorism and conditions conducive to it, and strengthens the parliamentary cooperation. It aims to facilitate efforts in preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, in order to promote a comprehensive and balanced implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and other relevant UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

55. The PABSEC has made significant contributions to the work of the Coordination Mechanism and actively participates in the annual Counter-Terrorism Coordination meetings. The event aims to review current trends in terrorism and extremism globally and regionally, and the consideration of relevant initiatives of parliamentary assemblies in cooperation with UNOCT. Under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), PABSEC and UNOCT plan to enhance their bilateral cooperation, including the organization of a Regional Parliamentary Conference in 2025 focused on the “Impact of Terrorism and Violent Extremism on Economic Security”. This event aims to further bolster regional and global efforts to combat terrorism and its associated threats.

International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol)

56. Interpol plays a significant role in combating organized crime in strengthening cooperation and providing mutual assistance among the criminal police authorities. By providing a secure communication network and maintaining a vast database of criminal

records, Interpol enables law enforcement agencies worldwide to share intelligence and coordinate investigations efficiently. The organization plays a key role in addressing transnational crimes through large-scale joint operations. It works closely with Eurojust, Europol, the International Organization for Migration, the International Labor Organization, and the UNODC. Interpol has developed a set of seven Global Policing Goals, addressing a range of issues related to crime and security and aligned with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

57. Organized crime poses significant challenges to both global and regional security, undermining safety and stability across international borders. As criminal networks evolve in sophistication, they increasingly leverage advanced technologies to enhance their operations, allowing them to evade law enforcement and expand their illicit activities. The use of cutting-edge tools ranging from encryption and cyber infiltration to cryptocurrencies calls for an urgent and coordinated response from governments worldwide. This situation necessitates strong international collaboration at both bilateral and multilateral levels, as nations must establish enduring partnerships to share intelligence, resources, and best practices in real time. By cultivating a unified and comprehensive approach, countries can strengthen their collective capabilities to dismantle these criminal networks and uphold the integrity of global security. Such collaborative efforts are vital for adapting to the dynamic nature of organized crime and ensuring a safer future for all nations.

58. Geopolitical tensions, economic downturns, and social unrest create a fertile ground for organized criminal activities, as they intensify instability and diminish trust in governmental institutions. During periods of political strife or conflict, the ensuing chaos often weakens law enforcement and governance structures, allowing criminal organizations to exploit these vulnerabilities and expand their operations. Economic downturns exacerbate this situation by increasing unemployment and poverty, pushing individuals toward illicit activities as a means of survival. These interconnected challenges not only facilitate the growth of organized crime but also obstruct efforts to establish security and stability, perpetuating a cycle of crime and disorder that is difficult to break. Tackling these complex issues is crucial for building resilient societies and reducing the allure of organized crime. By addressing the root causes of instability, nations can create an environment where trust in institutions is restored, making it harder for criminals to thrive.

59. Effectively combatting organized crime necessitates a comprehensive and coordinated strategy. Enhancing border security and implementing coordinated customs oversight, are critical in preventing smuggling and illegal trade. Moreover, bolstering cybersecurity and enhancing financial transparency are key to disrupting the financial flows that support criminal enterprises. Comprehensive judicial reforms, robust anti-corruption measures and increased prosecutorial oversight are essential for reinforcing the institutional resilience against organized crime. International collaboration is a fundamental pillar in addressing and combating organized crime. Bilateral and multilateral agreements facilitate intelligence sharing, joint law enforcement operations, and enhanced border security management. Establishing specialized task forces and investigative units strengthens the efforts to combat drug trafficking, money laundering, and illegal migration, allowing law enforcement agencies to operate in a more coordinated, proactive, and timely manner. Joint preventive measures and initiatives of the governments, civil societies, NGOs and specialized agencies can enhance the policymaking and improve the effectiveness of their strategies. To be effective, the measures aimed at combating organised crime must adopt a multidisciplinary approach that integrates insights and resources from diverse sectors.

60. The BSEC Member States have reinforced their commitment to combating organized crime by implementing comprehensive national strategies and legislative reforms designed to enhance the efficiency of law enforcement and strengthen international cooperation. Furthermore, national governments develop targeted action plans and initiatives aimed at addressing diverse forms of organised crime fostering more effective collaboration in crime prevention, detection and prosecution. These coordinated actions reflect a proactive approach to tackling the multifaceted challenges posed by organized crime, ensuring a united front in safeguarding regional security.

61. The parliaments of the BSEC Member States play a crucial role in establishing a robust legislative framework that supports effective law enforcement, promotes judicial improvements, encourages transparency and oversight, and enhances public awareness. They are responsible for ensuring that national legislation aligns with international legal instruments aimed at preventing organized crime and its various manifestations, which is essential for effective crime prevention. By harmonizing national frameworks with international standards, parliaments facilitate stronger international cooperation and enable unified response to the global challenges posed by organized crime. This alignment is vital for creating a comprehensive, coordinated effort that can effectively address the evolving nature of criminal activities.

62. A strong international commitment to combating organized crime is essential, as it represents a shared threat that necessitates collective action for an effective response. To address this phenomenon, the BSEC Member States must further expand international cooperation mechanisms by strengthening collaboration among law enforcement, financial intelligence units and specialized anti-crime agencies. Systematizing cooperation, fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships, and enhancing bilateral and multilateral dialogue are crucial in ensuring a more unified and effective approach. This collaborative framework will provide a solid foundation for sustained progress in combating organized crime. Moreover, strengthening international collaboration and maintaining joint commitment to security and good governance are crucial for dismantling organized crime networks, and ensuring stability.

63. Joining forces to combat organized crime is not only imperative for the safety and stability of societies today, but it is equally crucial for safeguarding the future of generations to come. As organized crime continues to evolve and exploit vulnerabilities, a united global effort becomes essential in diminishing its reach and impact. Fostering collaboration among nations, enhancing law enforcement capabilities, and promoting transparent governance, lay the groundwork for a more secure world. This collective commitment to eradicating organized crime will forge a future where generations to come inherit communities defined by steadfast safety, abundant opportunity, and unwavering respect for the rule of law.