

President's Conclusions

The Fight Against Transnational Organized Crime and Corruption OSCE PA Fall Conference, 9-10 October 2010

By addressing organized crime and corruption in this high-level parliamentary forum at our Fall Meetings in Palermo, we reaffirm our commitment to squarely addressing the many challenges that this intractable problem presents. It is of critical importance that we move beyond national approaches in dealing with criminal groups and instead make our fight against crime a genuinely transnational fight in which we can all take part. The OSCE can and must step up its role in tackling crime and corruption, which pose very real threats to the security of our populations.

The fight against crime has many victims. We all took time to honour the outstanding efforts by politicians, journalists, police officers, judges and civilians – men and women – who have lost their lives while defending the law from organized crime. These individuals paid the ultimate price in pursuing what they believed in, and we continue their fight with the determination that they did not fall in vain.

In recent days, with contributions from high-level experts and thorough debate by parliamentarians from across North America, Europe and Central Asia, we have considered challenges and solutions at the pan-OSCE level. Our responses cannot be successful if only enacted on a national level; they must be broad in their scope and approach. Success in the fight against crime occurs on a daily basis in our various countries, and we must increase our joint work to ensure that these efforts are not wasted. Our meeting in Palermo has proven to be an excellent opportunity for sharing our practices with parliamentary colleagues from other countries.

Today's criminal groups have proven themselves to be flexible and adaptable. We have heard that criminal groups across the world are largely organized along similar lines. They co-ordinate their work, enter into agreements for mutual benefit, and are increasingly learning from terror groups to create compartmentalised 'cells.' Moving beyond 'traditional' criminal activities such as extortion, and trafficking in humans and drugs, we see that organized crime is now involved in smuggling natural resources, in piracy, and in counterfeit medicines. These fields present new challenges, and we must be proactive in adapting and blocking their growth.

Ten years after the adoption of the Palermo Convention in this city, we took the opportunity to examine its progress and relevance. This treaty has proven to be groundbreaking in many ways, and has helped to harmonize approaches internationally. After all, criminal groups do not respect our borders, so we cannot allow borders to define our fight against crime. A truly international approach, as taken by the Palermo Convention, is necessary if we are to make further progress.

Criminal activity is undertaken for profit, and so tackling profit can be one of our most effective tools in this fight. Seizing and confiscating assets of criminals can be effective. However, today's globalised world, in which vast sums can be transferred across the globe in mere seconds presents opportunities for criminal groups. Money laundering is a serious challenge to our efforts to stop crime, and so we must all redouble our efforts to ensure effective and compatible banking regulations. Increased pressure in this regard should be exerted on those countries which are lagging in transparent banking systems. Money laundering not only permits criminals to hide their profits, but is increasingly being used to finance terror groups around the world.

By examining trafficking in human beings in detail, we were reminded of the very real human consequences of crime. In fighting this modern-day form of slavery, we must keep the rights and interests of the victims foremost in our minds. While working to protect these victims, we must however be vigilant in pursuing the ruthless individuals who exploit them.

Progress must be on the basis of the rule of law. Corruption undermines all of our efforts to combat crime, improve the lives of our citizens, and hampers democratic development. Efforts to fight corruption are needed in both the private and public spheres; public officials, police, doctors, bureaucrats, politicians and businessmen must all know that they are subject to the rule of law. A broad coalition against crime is needed. In this conference we have demonstrated our political will to continue partnering internationally to combat crime, but this will needs to be translated in to effective implementation. In each of our own countries, we would do well to partner with banks, businesses, and civil society to ensure that crime has no place to hide from the law.

There is absolutely no justification for criminal activity. Crime is exploitative in nature and devastating in its consequences. However, if we are to make real progress in combating crime, we must recognise and address some of the social and economic problems that exist in our countries and that enable criminal groups to plant their seeds.