

OSCE PA Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Organized Crime



Rome, 5 and 6 June 2025



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Introduction

The two-day Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Organized Crime, hosted by the Italian Parliament and organized by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Special Representative on Combating Organized Crime, Eugenio Zoffili (Italy), took place in Rome on 5 and 6 June 2025.

Bringing together approximately 80 parliamentarians from over 25 OSCE participating States, the event served as a high-level institutional momentum to foster debate and develop a shared understanding of the challenges posed by organized and serious crime—and the way forward in addressing them.

High-level speakers from Italian institutions underscored the vital role of parliamentary diplomacy in confronting the cross-border nature of organized crime, corruption, and terrorism.

Panel discussions featured contributions from representatives of the Italian Parliament, academia, law enforcement agencies, and the judiciary, as well as leading think tanks. Experts shared their insights on the interlinkages between organised crime, corruption, terrorism, and youth radicalization. The conference was structured around four thematic panel sessions, each followed by an open debate, where parliamentarians engaged with speakers and shared their national perspectives.

The conference emphasized the importance of enhanced information-sharing, co-ordinated legislative action, and strengthened international co-operation as essential tools to counter transnational threats.



OSCE PA

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY
CONFERENCE
ON THE FIGHT AGAINST
ORGANIZED CRIME
IN THE OSCE REGION



June 2025
Palazzo Montecitorio, Chamber

EUGENIO
ZOFFILI

Opening of Proceedings

MP **Eugenio Zoffili**, *Head of the Italian Delegation and OSCE PA Special Representative on Combating Organized Crime*, led the opening ceremony underscoring the urgency of the topics addressed and the need for a shared political will to combat organized and serious crime. MP Zoffili emphasized Italy's long-standing experience and determination in combating mafia-related activities. The *Resolution on Countering the Proliferation of Drugs, Particularly Fentanyl and other Synthetic Opioids, as well as Mafias and Criminal Organization Involved in Trafficking Them* – approved at the OSCE PA Annual Session in Bucharest in 2024, and the *Supplementary Item on Promoting the Recovery and Safekeeping of Assets Confiscated from Organized Crime*, presented for signatures for the upcoming Annual Session in Porto – both were mentioned as testament of Italy's commitment to fighting organized crime.

The welcome messages by **Lorenzo Fontana**, *President of the Chamber of Deputies*, and **Ignazio La Russa**, *President of the Senate*, highlighted that parliaments carry out an equally important role in fostering diplomacy, and welcomed the conference as an excellent opportunity to promote a united agenda against organized crime.

The message was echoed in the opening remarks by **Giorgio Silli**, *Undersecretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation*, who also warned of the growing complexity of criminal networks. **MP Nicola Molteni**, *Undersecretary of State of the Ministry of the Interior*, emphasised that it is crucial to prevent the infiltration of organized crime into our societies and to build a shared culture of legality. To this end, asset confiscation remains one of the most effective tools, and, next to it, the recovery of confiscated assets for the benefit of communities has the crucial function of reinforcing citizens' public trust in institutions. In this Italy stands as an exemplary model at a global level, boasting effective cooperation between justice, law enforcement and civil society.

Present at the opening remarks was also **Senator Matteo Salvini, Vice President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Infrastructure and Transport**. He highlighted Italy's confiscation of assets from the mafia and their reintegration into public communities, as the epitome of the country's long-standing fight against organized crime, an objective which he stated, unites Italian representatives regardless of their political divisions.

OSCE PA President Pia Kauma applauded the conference and its innovative approach in bringing together organized crime, corruption and terrorism - issues that have a deep interconnection as highlighted in the OSCE Mission to Washington DC, US a few weeks before. **OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella** reflected on the important role played by Italy in advancing the mission of the OSCE, beyond partisan lines. In a year that marks its 50th anniversary, the Organization stands at a crossroad whereby its future must be defined.





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Session I

4th Inter-Parliamentary Forum on South East Europe

Moderated by the **OSCE PA Vice-President and Special Representative on South East Europe, Kyriakos Hadjiyiannis**, this 4th Inter-Parliamentary Forum focused on organised crime in the Western Balkan region.

The Forum was addressed by **Professor Mary Bossis**, of the University of Pireus (Greece), **PhD Nikola Terzic**, security expert from Montenegro, **Major General Antonio Quintavalle Cecere, Commander of the Central Investigation Bureau on Organized Crime of the Italian Financial Police**, and **Mr Sasha Strupp, Senior Programme and Analysis Officer of the Strategic Police Matters Unit**, at the Transnational Threats Department of the OSCE Secretariat.



In the WB, in the 1990s, after decades of war and tensions over ethnic, religious, political and cultural issues, corruption and organized crime boomed, infiltrating the very foundations of the state. The symbiosis between political power and organized crime led to the creation of permanent corruption networks and criminal activity funded political parties. Organised crime today continues to have destabilizing effects, reducing citizens' trust in the economy, the state, its institutions and the rule of law, spreading violence and normalizing corruption. The interlinkage between private and public interests has led to a widespread perception of impunity and inequality and constitutes a major obstacle to the region's sought integration into the European Union (EU). Serious crime carries concerning security risks including radicalization, violent extremism, terrorism, drug trafficking, migrant smuggling, human trafficking, money laundering and financial crime. The cooperation between organized crime and violent extremist groups is systematic.

In Italy, mafia organizations have taken on an increasingly business-like dimension, operating in a wide range of economic sectors including mineral trade, waste management, construction, tourism, public procurement. They seal transversal alliances with facilitators, public officials, business actors, who are willing to engage for mutual benefit. New technologies act as a multiplier of the risks to economic security posed by criminal networks. In this context co-operation between investigative, parliamentary and judiciary bodies is essential to provide an effective response to organized crime.

In Montenegro, criminal networks perpetrate violence and law enforcement units have learned that the fight against such organized criminal groups becomes more effective when financial investigations precede criminal ones.

All experts concluded that international co-operation is a key element in the fight against organized crime. Vis-à-vis the vulnerability of WB to security threats, a greater integration with regional and international law enforcement frameworks is essential. Mutual cooperation and a swift exchange of information across borders are paramount to combating organized criminal groups. Tools such as INTERPOL's Global Focal Network on Anti-Corruption and Asset Recovery and the Silver Notice instrument, along with the I-CAN (Interpol Cooperation Against 'Ndrangheta, are among leading initiatives fostering a common and coordinated approach to combating transnational organized crime.

The OSCE also offers an excellent platform for dialogue, knowledge sharing and capacity building in the fight against organized crime. In the Western Balkans, the Organization has been present since the 1990s through several missions and programmes. The OSCE is active in all dimensions where organised crime operates on the Balkan Route, including trafficking of drugs, migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings, corruption, cybercrime, trafficking in firearms and environmental crime. The Annual Report on Police-Related Activities, a flagship publication of the OSCE, includes activities related to combating organized crime. OSCE efforts include capacity-building in border security and small arms and light weapons (SALW) control, strengthening intelligence-led policing and investigative capabilities, and promoting inter-agency and regional co-operation. The OSCE also supports legislative and institutional reforms to enhance the resilience and effectiveness of participating States in the fight against transnational criminal networks. The Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, also contribute to advancing these objectives.

At the end of the Forum, participants concluded with the adoption of a **joint declaration** (see Annex) reaffirming their commitment to enhanced regional co-operation and friendly relations.



Open Debate

At the end of the panel session, parliamentarians engaged in an open debate. The Members welcomed the themes addressed during the conference and reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing international co-operation, promoting knowledge sharing, and strengthening the collective capacity of States to meet the multifaceted challenges posed by organized crime and corruption. Delegations stressed that political will is fundamental to upholding the rule of law, and that public interest must prevail over the search for private gains. There was broad agreement that organized crime requires immediate and concrete action, with stronger cross-border co-operation, harmonization of the legislative framework, support by international organizations, and increased information sharing. Vis-à-vis the evolving and adaptive nature of organized criminal groups, which are increasingly structured and capable of exploiting technological advancement, delegates identified capacity building, technological innovation and public private partnerships as pivotal instruments to prevent and mitigate the risks of organized criminal activities. Further, there were calls for enhanced training of law enforcement agents and the creation of an agency for the social re-purposing of assets confiscated from organized criminal groups.

Some delegations were of the view that international co-operation in the investigation and prosecution of serious crimes should not go at the detriment of national sovereignty and interfere in national security. In this perspective, stricter border controls to prevent the free movements of criminals, hard policies, and harsher punishments were viewed as essential to fight organized criminal networks.

Delegations raised several questions for the panelists, interested to hear more about the OSCE actions to deter hybrid threats and what contributions parliament can make to such efforts; how shifting geopolitical dynamics influence the operations and alliances of organized criminal networks in the WB region; and what forms criminal networks take. Experts reiterated the need to ensure that law enforcement authorities have the capability to detect and mitigate threats. They explained that organized crime can also take the form of less organized networks with flexible membership.

Session II

The Fight Against Organized Crime and Mafias and the Social Re-use of Confiscated Assets

The panel, moderated by Eugenio Zoffili, provided an overview of the longstanding experience of Italian institutions and law enforcement agencies in countering organized criminal and mafia networks. A central focus of the discussion was the social re-use of confiscated assets, highlighted as a key instrument in restoring the rule of law and rebuilding public trust in democratic institutions.

Parliamentarians heard from Senator Vincenza Rando, *Member of the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into Mafia-related and other criminal organisations*, Prefect Renato Cortese, *Director of the Central Directorate for Traffic, Railway, Communications Police and for the Special Units of the State Police*, Prefect Maria Rosaria Lagana', *Director of the National Agency for the Administration and Destination of Assets Seized and Confiscated from Organized Crime*, and Brigadier General Antonio Montanaro, *Head of the Organized Crime, Subversion and Terrorism Unit of the General Command of the Carabinieri Corps*.

EUGENIO
ZOFFILI

VINCENZA
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Panelists offered a historical overview of the origins and evolution of mafia organisations in Italy, tracing their roots to Sicily over a century ago. In the 1980s and 1990s Italy was in the grip of *Cosa Nostra*, which was behind multiple acts of violence and assassinations of numerous public officials, journalists, priests, trade unionists. Prefect Cortese shared his first-hand experience in landmark investigations, including those following the 1992 *Capaci* bombing, in which anti-mafia magistrate Giovanni Falcone was killed. Prefect Cortese detailed the investigation that led to the arrest of Giovanni Brusca, who detonated the explosives used in the attack. Falcone's pioneering investigative approach based on the principle of "follow the money"— remains a cornerstone of Italy's strategy in combatting organised crime. He was also one of the main contributors to the creation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), known as the "Palermo Convention," from the place where it was first signed in 2000.

Italy continues to contend with several major mafia-type organisations. *Cosa Nostra* attempts to continuously restructure using both modern technologies and traditional forms of communication. The *'Ndrangheta*, is the most pervasive mafia with a global scope. *Camorra*, meanwhile, remains marked by internal rivalries, yet shows a significant capacity to form alliances with foreign criminal actors. Organized crime groups have expanded their influence into sectors such as agriculture and illegal migration, including the establishment of fictitious employment agencies to exploit migrant labour.

Mafia infiltrates businesses using companies to launder profits from illicit activities; compromising fair competition; using front companies (*imprese di copertura*) to shield criminal activities. In this context, international co-operation is essential to countering cross-border criminal networks. Experts concluded that a tacit societal consensus allows criminal structures to persist and operate in Italy despite the existence of robust legal frameworks and advanced legislation.

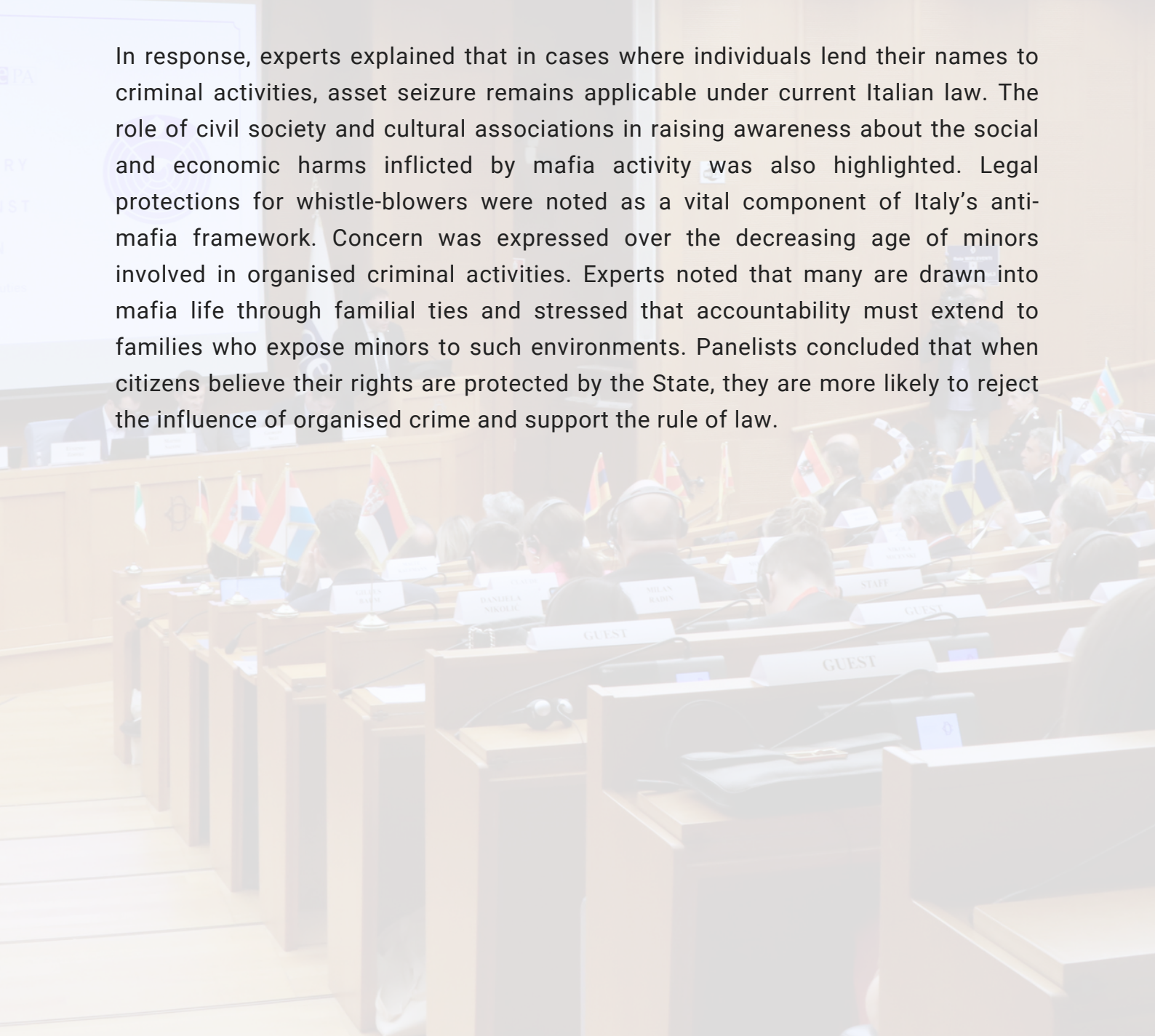
The confiscation and re-use of assets is a crucial step in reestablishing a climate of legality as it not only prevents the reinvestment of illicit proceeds but also contributes to the restoration of communities and the re-establishment of the rule of law. The Italian National Agency for the Administration and Destination of Assets Seized and Confiscated from Organized Crime leads globally as an exemplary agency restoring what has been depleted by mafia activity and reinforcing public trust in state institutions.

The Agency operates across several key phases: acquiring detailed data on confiscated properties in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice; supporting judicial authorities immediately following seizure to identify the most appropriate use of the assets; and implementing measures aimed at increasing the utility of the assets. This latter phase represents the “beating heart” of the Agency’s mission. Assets are distributed through a public platform that functions as a public tender, with participation from government bodies and public institutions. Final decisions are made by the Agency’s Steering Council. Confiscated assets may also generate profit, but these must be then redirected to civic projects. Italian legislation mandates the involvement of both public institutions and civil society in the management process, reinforcing transparency and accountability. *Libera* is one of those civil society organisations which supports the Agency by utilizing assets for the benefit of local communities and territorial entities.

Open Debate

In the open debate that followed the panel discussion, parliamentarians shared national experiences in addressing organised crime and emphasized the importance of international partnerships, institutional resilience, and sustained co-operation. Delegates raised a number of questions, including how criminal organisations engage young people, the measures in place to regulate waste management and prevent criminal infiltration in that sector, best practices for the reintegration and social reuse of confiscated assets, strategies to gain public support in the fight against organised crime, and investigative approaches for uncovering the use of false identities to conceal illicit activities.

In response, experts explained that in cases where individuals lend their names to criminal activities, asset seizure remains applicable under current Italian law. The role of civil society and cultural associations in raising awareness about the social and economic harms inflicted by mafia activity was also highlighted. Legal protections for whistle-blowers were noted as a vital component of Italy's anti-mafia framework. Concern was expressed over the decreasing age of minors involved in organised criminal activities. Experts noted that many are drawn into mafia life through familial ties and stressed that accountability must extend to families who expose minors to such environments. Panelists concluded that when citizens believe their rights are protected by the State, they are more likely to reject the influence of organised crime and support the rule of law.



Session III

The Fight Against Corruption in the OSCE Region

MP Irene Charalambides, OSCE PA Vice-President and Special Representative on Fighting Corruption, moderating the session, reflected on the pivotal role played by policymakers in taking concrete action to combat corruption, emphasizing that political will is central to taking meaningful steps. The session focused on corruption, its definition and framing, and strategies to counter it.

The panel was composed by **Luigi Birritteri, Deputy Prosecutor General of the Supreme Court of Cassation**, **MP Azay Guliyev, Chair of the OSCE PA Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment**, **Brigadier General Giovanni Salerno, Commander of the Special Anti-Corruption Unit of the Financial Police** (Guardia di Finanza), **Nate Sibley, Director of the Kleptocracy Initiative at the Hudson Institute**, and **Guglielmo Picchi, Director of International Relations at the Machiavelli Centre for Political and Strategic Studies**, and former Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy.



Panelists explained that corruption is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon, often associated with criminal conduct but encompassing, in fact, any misuse of power and any form of arbitrary management of public affairs. Public procurement is one of the most vulnerable areas in which mafia organizations have been historically very active. Combating corruption, therefore, was also framed as a means to ensure a level playing field in which economic operators that act lawfully can operate in fair and full economic competitiveness.

Fighting corruption also means protecting the fundamental principles at the heart of democratic governance—namely impartiality, transparency, and public trust. Effective anti-corruption strategies must combine both repressive and preventive measures. In this regard, Italy's Three-Year Corruption Prevention and Transparency Plan, outlines a range of corrective mechanisms to reduce corruption risks. These include the adoption of ethical codes of conduct, simplification of transparency procedures, rotation of personnel, regulation of conflicts of interest, streamlining of administrative processes, and enhanced access to public data to enable oversight of public resources. The Plan pays special attention to the public procurement sector which is highly vulnerable to corruption.

The establishment of independent anti-corruption institutions, ensuring transparency and protecting whistleblowers is central to winning the fight against corruption. Panelists highlighted that the creation of a common legal framework against corruption, supported by effective institutions and a culture of transparency, is essential to ensure effective investigation and prosecution of criminal organisations and to help deter their cross-border movements. In this regards, attention was drawn to efforts within the OSCE's second dimension, including provisions in the Bucharest Declaration, aimed at enhancing due diligence mechanisms across jurisdictions. Cybercrime and internet offenses represent the new frontier in the fight against organized crime. Such wrongdoings transcend national boundaries and cannot be effectively prosecuted solely within the country where they occur. In this context, therefore, stronger transnational cooperation is also deemed essential.

Policymakers involved in drafting anti-corruption legislation, however, face numerous challenges. The first challenge identified is the lack of adequate resources for enforcement, which underpins a lack of political will. This is compounded by the absence of a consistent and harmonized legislative anti-corruption framework across countries. The United Nations Convention against Corruption is one of the few instruments providing a comprehensive global standard. A second challenge lies in managing the public perception of corruption. Public awareness of corruption has broadened, but so has also public perception, despite the increase in transparency of public institutions, and, perhaps, paradoxically, precisely because of this. The growing perception of corruption among citizens damages public trust in institutions and leads often to question the system itself. On the other hand, increased public awareness of corruption has led to bottom-up initiatives such as mass protests to demand higher accountability. A third major challenge is the escalation of strategic corruption. Russia, for example, is accused of using corruption as a tool to advance its national foreign policy objectives, subverting European political elites through bribes and donations to political parties. China is also involved in such malign activities, but uses more subtle ways to secure market access of Chinese firms and to undermine consensus on security issues.

Session IV

Terrorism Trends in the OSCE Region: Youth Radicalization to Violent Extremism

The OSCE PA's Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT), chaired by Kamil Aydın (Türkiye), held a session on "Trends in the OSCE Region: Youth Radicalization to Violent Extremism," which concluded the conference and addressed the nexus between terrorism and organized crime, with terrorism organizations often relying on criminal networks for funding, weapons, and recruitment. Illicit activities such as arms trafficking, money laundering, human trafficking, and migrant smuggling are the key operational arms that sustain terrorist groups across regions.

Parliamentarians heard from MP Emanuele Loperfido, *Vice-Chair of the CCT and Member of the Italian Delegation*, Serge Stroombants, *Director of Operations for Europe & MENA Region at the Institute for Economics and Peace*, Cecilia Polizzi, *founder and President of Next Wave, The International Centre for Children and Global Security*, and Riccardo Perisi, *Director of the Service for Countering Extremism and External Terrorism, of the Italian Prevention Police Central Directorate*.



**EMANUELE
LOPERFIDO**

The radicalization of youth to violent extremism represents a growing priority for the OSCE PA's CCT. Of particular concern is the role of social media in amplifying harmful content, including through deepfakes and online recruitment. In this context, attention was drawn to the Supplementary Item on *Preventing Youth Radicalization to Violent Extremism and Terrorism through Education and Media and Information Literacy* which emphasizes the importance of equipping youth with the right tools to face the growing risk of radicalization – through education, media literacy, and civic awareness, and through collaboration with educators and digital providers.

Panelists highlighted the continued global threat posed by terrorism, with the Sahel region—particularly Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger—emerging as one of the most heavily impacted areas. Syria and Iraq in the Middle East, and Pakistan and Afghanistan in South Asia, are also major theatres of terrorist activity. Daesh remains the deadliest terrorist organization worldwide. In Europe, while many attacks are politically-motivated violent extremism is on the rise. Experts also pointed to a notable rise in anti-Semitism following the 7 October 2023 attacks. The greatest threat in Europe, however, stems from “lone actors” – individuals inspired by extremist ideologies who operate outside formal organizational structures. The convergence of radical religious extremisms, including Islamist variants, with elements of white supremacism and extreme-right narratives—referred to as “White Jihadism”— is one of the fastest growing phenomena.

Terrorism is strongly correlated with conflicts as the latter often act as catalysts for extremism, with consequences that go beyond their borders. As conflicts have become more prolonged and difficult to resolve, they provide fertile ground for terrorist activity.

One of the most alarming developments is the rise of violent nihilist extremism, which lacks a coherent ideology and instead thrives on alienation, anger, and the rejection of social norms—where violence becomes an end in itself. Children and adolescents are major targets of such movements. Radicalization, particularly among youth, is growing and it is no longer solely ideologically-driven. Online platforms offer a wide array of ideological motivations to justify violence. This lack of ideological underpinnings for many terrorist attacks has raised critical questions regarding the definition of terrorism and whether the term remains applicable in such cases.

Extremist actors are increasingly targeting minors to increase their immediate operational capabilities, ensure their survival as a movement, and the preservation of their ideological paradigm over time. Technological innovation amplified this issue and extremist ideologies seek to recruit children and young people where they are most actively engaged, that is on the internet and social media. An element of concern is that youth radicalization affects increasingly younger individuals. Furthermore, the time span from first exposure to full radicalization has drastically decreased—from an average of 16 months to just a few weeks in some cases. In this process, online platforms, especially gaming, are found to be the main channels to disseminate violent propaganda.

Experts recommended strengthened regulation of the digital space, greater involvement of schools, parents, and communities, and the integration of media education, digital citizenship, as key elements to protect the next generation from violent extremism and radicalization. They all emphasized the importance of international co-operation through mechanisms such as INTERPOL and EUROPOL, intelligence sharing, alongside enhanced monitoring of virtual environments, the imposition of travel bans, and targeted expulsions as vital instruments in combating terrorist networks and radicalization.

Open Debate

In the panel debate that followed, parliamentarians welcomed the work of the CCT and stressed the importance of mutual learning and cross border co-operation. They raised questions on how to best ensure the safety of children, recommending the implementation of digital literacy agendas and early prevention programmes to foster awareness and digital thinking. The engagement of schools, families, and youth leaders was underlined as essential to safeguarding minors from violent extremism and radicalization, and to enhancing their resilience.

Members also stressed the importance of including non-punitive actions to mitigate terrorism threats, including legal and policy frameworks, institutions and social integration programmes. They expressed support for inter religious dialogue against using religious ideologies as grounds for terrorist actions.

Some delegates linked the emergence of violent right-wing and jihadist extremism to social and economic crises, including the war in Ukraine, the rising cost of living, migration pressures, and growing polarization around LGBTQ+ rights. Other interventions reflected on the geopolitical context surrounding radicalization, including the potential impact of the Israel–Palestine conflict on the terrorist threat in Europe. Parliamentarians also drew attention to acts of terror perpetrated by so-called “state actors”, questioning the absence of such actors from global terrorism indices.

Panelists responded by emphasizing the need for comprehensive policies that extend beyond security measures alone. They noted that while there have been no direct terrorist attacks linked to the Gaza conflict in Italy, incidents of anti-Semitic violence have increased globally. The importance of systemic education and awareness campaigns was stressed, along with tools to inform and protect minors from online radicalization. It was also noted that young people are often used as proxies for extremist propaganda, underscoring the need for legislative safeguards, increased awareness, and cross-sectoral policies to reduce vulnerabilities.

Concluding Remarks

In the concluding remarks, moderators expressed a shared determination to confront the challenges posed by organized crime, terrorism and corruption through strengthened legislative frameworks, improved cross-border co-operation, and enhanced public education. As emerged from the discussions during the conference, corruption, organised crime, terrorism are interlinked threats that transcend borders and pose a concrete threat to our democracies, the rule of law and security. Delegates reaffirmed that integrity, cooperation and political will are essential to fighting organized crime. In this regard, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly was recognized as a vital platform for fostering dialogue and driving collective action among participating States.

In concluding the proceedings, MP Zoffili proposed the establishment of a *Forum on Legality*, open to all interested OSCE PA delegations, to provide continuity to the Assembly's work against all forms of serious crime and as a new tool to boost the rule of law across the OSCE space.



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