



Expert Workshop on Public-Private Partnerships: Engaging with the Media in Countering Terrorism

***19-20 October 2009
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WELCOME REMARKS BY MR. DIONYSSIOS KYVETOS DEPUTY HEAD OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE TO THE OSCE

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Greek OSCE Chairmanship, to warmly welcome you all to this public-private expert workshop on engaging with the media in countering terrorism.

This is the second OSCE-wide activity on counter-terrorism held in Vienna this year. The first one took place last month, in this very room, and was also organized within the concept of promoting public-private partnerships in combating terrorism as it dealt with preventing the abuse of non-profit organizations for terrorist financing.

For many organizations, the OSCE included, the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States of America were a catalyst for increased counter-terrorism engagement. As many of you know, in December 2001, OSCE participating States adopted the 'Bucharest Plan of Action for Combating Terrorism', which marked the Organization's initial entry into the area of counter-terrorism and established a framework for comprehensive OSCE measures by participating States and the Organization, as a way to effectively address the then emerging terrorist threat.

Our Organization's anti-terrorism action is preventive in nature, addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. At the same time we also focus on improving security and supporting various capacity building efforts in the OSCE area, which aim at decreasing the likelihood of terrorist attacks, in other words to increase the safety and security of the close to one billion people living in the OSCE region.

Importantly, terrorism is a common threat to all OSCE participating States. Counter-terrorism is therefore seen as a key area of increased co-operation among participating States today and in the future. The OSCE is uniquely placed to contribute to international efforts to combat terrorism in all its manifestations, due to its broad participation and its cross-dimensional approach to security.

Throughout the year, the Greek Chairmanship has promoted the implementation of existing OSCE anti-terrorism commitments and maintained relevant activities among the priorities of the Organization. In pursuing this goal, we have continued the efforts of the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship in assuring that the fight against terrorism is conducted with respect for the rule of law and human rights.

It is this Organization's firm belief and conviction that no counter-terrorism action could be successful in the long run if basic human rights, including freedom of expression and freedom of the media, are not respected.

The workshop that brings us together today focuses on exchanging relevant information, sharing lessons learned and good practices on how to engage with media in reporting on and countering terrorism. And in the spirit of the outreach towards the civil society, we are also meeting to put a special emphasis on promoting public-private dialogue and partnerships in combating terrorism, as encouraged by OSCE Ministerial Council Decisions No. 5/07 and 10/08.

The aim is furthermore to identify ways in which the OSCE, with a multidimensional approach, can support, facilitate and enhance the impact of existing efforts while respecting relevant OSCE commitments, especially in the areas of freedom of expression and information as well as freedom of the media, and without duplicating existing OSCE activities or those of other international and regional organizations.

Dear colleagues,

The media has immense potential as a counter-terrorism resource; precise and rapid dissemination of information to the public in the event of a terrorist attack can prevent panic, reduce confusion, streamline response efforts and save lives. At the same time, sensationalist reporting can play into the hands of terrorists by promoting their messages, spreading panic and jeopardizing counter-terrorism operations. Furthermore, communication between the media and counter-terrorism officials is often restricted by lack of co-operation and transparency, stemming from a number of legitimate concerns from each side as well as a mutual lack of understanding of their respective goals and responsibilities.

Terrorists are increasingly using media coverage as an amplifying tool for purposes such as incitement, recruitment, fundraising and spreading propaganda. It is therefore crucial to engage, on a voluntary basis and with respect for their working methods, with the media to reject terrorism by promoting an open and pluralistic debate of legitimate public issues. It is equally important to engage with the media and civil society in promoting non-violence and tolerance of ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural diversity.

Through outreach and partnerships, public and private stakeholders can achieve a better understanding of each others' concerns, goals and responsibilities. They can develop the trust necessary for pro-active co-operation. And by working together, without infringing in any way on media independence, they can ensure effective dissemination of accurate and timely information to the general public in a time of crisis.

On behalf of the Greek OSCE Chairmanship, I would like to commend the Russian Federation for their political initiative to convene this meeting and thank Moscow City Government for contributing financially to making the event possible. This full room confirms that your initiative is as timely as it is relevant.

Let me also thank the OSCE Action against Terrorism Unit (ATU) for their assistance in organizing this workshop, and the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) for lending their support to the ATU in doing so. This is yet another concrete demonstration of synergies effectively utilized and cross-dimensionality duly pursued by the different executive structures of our Organization.

I can unequivocally state that the Greek Chairmanship fully supports this endeavor. We look forward to the OSCE Secretariat, the Institutions and the Field Offices continuing to promote the involvement of the private sector, including the media, in their counter-terrorism activities, where relevant and appropriate.

In closing, let me reiterate that a key aim of this workshop is to explore ways on how participating States can continue promoting public-private partnerships with the media and civil society in countering terrorism at the national and sub-regional levels in the OSCE area. I encourage you all to take part as actively as you can in the discussions today and tomorrow, to share your experiences, ideas and concrete options for engaging with the media in countering terrorism through voluntary public-private partnerships, so that we can provide our Organization with clear guidance on how to best assist requesting OSCE participating States on this important issue in the future.

I furthermore call on you to use this event not only for discussion but also for networking, as an opportunity to get to know each other, so that you can remain in contact in the future. Only by working together, in partnership, towards shared goals, can we ensure that our region stays safe and secure for our generation and for generations to come. Much has already been achieved in the 8 years since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, but much still remains to be done in the area of counter-terrorism.

Dear colleagues, I thank you for your attention and wish you all a successful and productive workshop.