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FOR EUROPE, INTEGRATION AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA, AT THE 1158th (SPECIAL) MEETING
OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

29 September 2017

Secretary General,
Dear colleagues,

First, I should like to sincerely thank you, Professor Neumann, for your commitment as Special Representative on Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism, and for the preparation of this report.

Because of your visits to a large number of participating States and the many discussions held as a result, the report reflects a wide range standpoints and approaches.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The threat to our region posed by radicalization and terrorism is demonstrated to us on an almost daily basis by the increasingly brutal and arbitrary attacks against our societies.

In 2016, more than 1,000 innocent people were killed by terrorist attacks in the OSCE area, with countless more injured. This trend has also continued this year, with more than 120 attacks in the OSCE area alone.

In addition, there are those 10,000 fighters from the OSCE area who have joined Islamic State, causing death and destruction in Syria, Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan. And of these fighters a good third return to our countries.

The last few years have thus shown:

- That no State or society is immune to radicalization and terrorism; and
- That we cannot stand alone against this threat, but can only succeed together in close co-ordination.

That is why this year we have deliberately placed an emphasis on preventing and combating radicalization.

Since the beginning of the Chairmanship, many activities have already been carried out:

- A series of workshops with young people, which developed innovative approaches;
- A major anti-terror conference in May, with over 500 experts;
- A discussion with foreign ministers and Professor Neumann during the informal ministerial meeting in Mauerbach in July.

Through all of this we know that the Internet is a powerful tool for radicalization. In addition, educational institutions (such as schools and kindergartens) and prisons can be places of radicalization.

We also know that young people are a particularly vulnerable target group for radicalization. And we know that we have to pay particular attention to foreign terrorist fighters who return to our societies. As a first step, police measures and prosecution by the judicial authorities are needed, because the terrorist fighters need to be held accountable for their crimes. As a further step, measures for deradicalization are needed.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am convinced that it is in the interest of all participating States to use the OSCE as a forum for security and to strengthen our co-operation so that we can pull together.

In my view, we need to significantly strengthen the Action against Terrorism Unit of the OSCE – this is also one of the recommendations in Professor Neumann's report.

In any event, Austria is willing to make a visible contribution to support the OSCE's work in this area.

I am also very grateful to Professor Neumann for presenting 22 best practice examples of successful work in the areas of prevention, deradicalization and reintegration from the OSCE area.

We can and should learn from each other.

We will have time to study and discuss the report in more detail in the next few weeks.

Professor Neumann,

Over the past few months I have come to know you as an expert who is not afraid to express his opinion, and who is able to present links between complicated dynamics in a comprehensible manner.

Thank you for coming today to present your report to the OSCE colleagues.

You have the floor.