

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

MC.DEL/47/23
5 December 2023

ENGLISH only



JOINT STATEMENT ON COMBATING CORRUPTION IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE THROUGH ASSET RECOVERY AND THE USE OF DIGITALIZATION

We, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the participating States of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe from South-Eastern Europe,

Recalling relevant OSCE documents adopted in the field of preventing and countering corruption, in particular Ministerial Council Decision No. 11/04 on combating corruption; Ministerial Council Decision No. 5/14 on prevention of corruption; Ministerial Council Decision No.4/16 on strengthening good governance and promoting connectivity; Ministerial Council Decision No. 5/18 on human capital development in the digital area and Ministerial Council Decision No. 6/20 on preventing and combating corruption through digitalization and increased transparency,

Underscoring our resolute and unconditional determination to work together to prevent, suppress, investigate and prosecute corruption in South-Eastern Europe, including through the use of financial investigations, digitalization and asset recovery,

Recognizing that corruption at all levels weakens the rule of law and undermines trust in state institutions, endangers social and economic development and prosperity, undermines the stability and security of participating States, threatens the OSCE's shared values, and facilitates all types of criminal activity,

Underlining the central role played by law enforcement authorities, judicial institutions and administrative bodies in preventing and combating corruption,

Reaffirming our commitment to strengthening national and cross-border cooperation, in partnership with relevant international and regional organizations, to prevent and combat corruption in a comprehensive way, including by making use of the digital transformation, addressing the links between corruption and money laundering, and enhancing the use of asset recovery in achieving this shared goal,

Confirming the importance of international co-operation between national anti-corruption and other relevant bodies for the sharing of knowledge and exchange of best practices among anticorruption practitioners, and further development of effective anti-corruption measures,

Welcoming the fact that all the OSCE participating States in South-Eastern Europe have ratified or acceded to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and are working towards meeting their commitments under the Convention, and recognizing the support of the OSCE in assisting participating States to implement the Convention,

Noting the OSCE's support in the fight against corruption in the form of capacity-building activities and awareness-raising events, scoping and advisory missions, activities aimed at strengthening institutional and legislative frameworks, as well as the OSCE's work on strengthening the fight against transnational organized crime in South-Eastern Europe through improved regional cooperation in asset seizure, confiscation, management and reuse and other activities aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of asset recovery efforts,

Highlighting the importance of co-operation with other relevant international organizations in preventing and combating corruption,

We jointly commit:

- 1. To promote the use of digital tools for early detection, prevention of corruption and enhancement of transparency.**
- 2. To further strengthen our national efforts to combat corruption through the efficient use of asset recovery tools.** Such efforts should include advancing national legal and institutional frameworks to enable effective tracing, seizure and confiscation of the instruments and proceeds of crime.
- 3. To further develop capacities to manage the risks associated with virtual assets, including cryptocurrencies, in the context of money-laundering.**
- 4. To promote and enhance regional and international co-operation** to facilitate cross-border seizure and confiscation of criminal assets, including virtual assets.
- 5. To renew our focus on fostering the exchange of information, good practices and capacity-building initiatives** to maximize cross-border co-operation in recovering the proceeds of corruption and transnational crime.
- 6. To increase the re-use of confiscated assets for social and crime prevention purposes.** Reusing confiscated assets or funds to reinvest in communities delivers a message that corruption and crime do not pay. The legislative and policy mechanisms should facilitate such use of confiscated assets and ensure a transparent and accountable social re-use mechanism, including through improved multi-agency co-operation at the national level, as for example through the establishment of a multi-agency committee or working group to co-ordinate criminal asset re-use policy and review good practices.
- 7. To strengthen co-operation between civil society organizations and government agencies throughout the asset recovery cycle.** Recognizing the important role of civil society in combating corruption, efforts should be increased to improve government and civil society cooperation at local, national and regional levels, including through the social re-use of confiscated assets.
- 8. To support awareness-raising and other public outreach activities on the social re-use of assets.** Creating awareness of effective asset recovery mechanisms and making social re-use of confiscated assets visible contributes to deterring involvement in organized crime by sending a clear message that "crime does not pay".

9. To develop activities specifically to inform young people about the negative consequences of corruption for society and the opportunities offered by civil action, digitalization and asset recovery to prevent and combat corruption.

10. To support the participation of women in the development and implementation of anticorruption activities and to ensure that gender considerations are mainstreamed in anticorruption work, taking into account that corruption disproportionately affects women and people in vulnerable situations.

Signed in Skopje, on 30 November 2023

Albania

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Montenegro

North Macedonia

Serbia