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From: General Secretariat of the Council

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To: Delegations

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Subject: Council Conclusions on strengthening the EU internal security's external dimension in the Western Balkans including via the Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG)
- Council conclusions (8 December 2016)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council Conclusions on strengthening the EU internal security's external dimension in the Western Balkans including via the Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG), adopted by the Council at its 3508th meeting held on 8 December 2016.

Council Conclusions on strengthening the EU internal security's external dimension in the Western Balkans including via the Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

REFERRING TO the EU's Global Strategy for European Foreign and Security Policy¹ which reassures that the European Union will promote peace and guarantee the security of its citizens and territory and notes that internal and external security are ever more intertwined, with our security at home entailing a parallel interest in peace in our neighbouring and surrounding regions;

NOTING that in security terms, terrorism, hybrid threats and serious and organised crime know no borders, and require the EU to be a responsible global stakeholder by strengthening relationships and building broad partnerships with states in surrounding regions, regional bodies, international organisations, civil society and the private sector. The Global Strategy also encourages promoting the development of human rights compliant-anti-terrorism cooperation with regions including North Africa, the Middle East, the Western Balkans and Turkey, amongst others including on issues such as the countering of violent extremism and radicalization;

RECALLING the Council conclusions of 17 October 2016² on the EUGS, which mention that the High Representative and the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, will take work forward on "optimising synergies and ensuring coherence between policy responses to challenges straddling the internal and external policies of the Union. The Council highlights in this regard the urgent need to focus on migration as well as counter-terrorism and hybrid threats and the need to support Member States in this regard";

¹ 10715/16

² 13201/16

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the Council conclusions on the development of the renewed Internal Security Strategy of 4-5 December 2014³ and the Council conclusions on the renewed European Union Internal Security Strategy 2015 – 2020⁴, which acknowledge the growing links between the European Union internal and external security and stress the importance of an integrative, complementary and coherent approach towards key third countries and partners on security aspects of mutual interest;

RECALLING the Statement of 12 February 2015⁵ by the members of the European Council, which underlined their commitment to further reinforce action against terrorist threats, in full compliance with human rights and the rule of law, and provided for a guidance to work towards ensuring the security of citizens, preventing radicalisation and safeguarding values as well as to engage more with third countries⁶ on security issues and counter-terrorism, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa and in the Sahel, but also in the Western Balkans, including through new capacity building projects with partners and better targeted EU assistance;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the Conclusions adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council on 9 February 2015 on counter-terrorism, under the leadership of High Representative/Vice President (HR/VP) Mogherini, to strengthen cooperation with the countries in North Africa, the Sahel, the Middle East, the Gulf, Turkey and the Western Balkans;

REFERRING TO the Council Conclusions on "The integrative and complementary approach to counter-terrorism and violent extremism in the Western Balkans", adopted by the JHA Council on 3-4 December 2015⁷;

³ 15670/14

⁴ 9798/15

⁵ SN 10/15

⁶ The use of the term "countries" in these conclusions does not imply recognition of statehood.

⁷ 14986/15

NOTING the Council Conclusions of 8 and 9 November 2010 on "The Creation and implementation of an EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime" in order to tackle the most important criminal threats in a coherent and methodological manner through optimum cooperation between the relevant services of the Member States, EU Institutions and EU Agencies as well as relevant third countries and organisations;⁸

REFERRING TO the support of the Ministers of the Interior of the Western Balkans, EU and other international partners to the step-by-step extension of the integrative and complementary approach used in the prevention of violent extremism and countering terrorism in Western Balkans to other areas of internal security, such as fight against serious and organised crime and border security, expressed at the JHA Forum EU – Western Balkans in December 2015 in Sarajevo;

NOTING the conclusions of the Brdo Process Ministerial Conference in April 2016, where the Ministers of the Interior of the Western Balkans, Croatia, Slovenia, as well as representatives of EU institutions and several regional and international organisations, discussed the further development of the Integrative and Complementary Approach in the Fight against Terrorism and Violent Extremism in the Western Balkans (Western Balkans Counter-Terrorism Initiative – WBCTi) into the Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG) concept. This concept would include other prominent areas of internal security cooperation, such as serious and organised crime and border security;

⁸ 15358/10

RECALLING that the EU has identified the Western Balkans as a priority region for external action on counter-terrorism, and that the EEAS and Commission services are enhancing cooperation between EU agencies and relevant Western Balkan authorities on counter-terrorism/countering violent extremism, including through the deployment of a CT/ Security Expert to the EU Delegation in Sarajevo with a regional mandate;

NOTING that the Commission services, EEAS and other stakeholders plan financial assistance to programmes and projects on counter-terrorism, organised crime and border security under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance and other relevant financial instruments.

AGREES TO strengthen the EU internal security's external dimension by:

1. Prioritising activities to develop a more comprehensive mechanism to address security threats in the Western Balkan region, including integrating intelligence-led policing to set counter-terrorism and serious and organised crime priorities at a regional level, compatible with the approach taken in the EU Policy Cycle;
2. Supporting the development of the Integrative and Complementary Approach in the Fight against Terrorism and Violent Extremism in the Western Balkans (Western Balkan Counter-Terrorism Initiative – WBCTi) into an Integrative Internal Security Governance concept for the Western Balkans.

3. Encouraging the setting-up of a coordination mechanism – the Integrative Internal Security Governance Support Group (IISG SG) for the Western Balkans, which would be composed of representatives of existing relevant secretariats in the region, representatives of the EU and of other international partners. This mechanism could, in close cooperation with other international partners active in the region, propose a set of priorities, action plans, reports and reviews, conduct monitoring and evaluation as well as propose recommendations and guidelines, when necessary, in the following three areas:

- (a) prevention of violent extremism and fight against terrorism (WBCTi),
- (b) fight against serious and organised crime (WBCSCi) and
- (c) border security (WBBSi);

An existing and relevant regional high-level forum could be invited to adopt or endorse proposed actions by the IISG SG.

CALLS UPON THE COMMISSION, EEAS, EU AGENCIES AND THE EU COUNTER-TERRORISM COORDINATOR:

to further develop intelligence-led policing in the Western Balkans on Counter-Terrorism and Serious and Organised Crime policies to prioritise the EU engagement in the region as well as the future work of the IISG.

INVITES COSI TO:

1. Follow the implementation of the Integrative and Complementary Approach in the Western Balkans, and contribute to the Integrative Internal Security Governance and its action plans (PVE & CT; SOC; Border Security) in the Western Balkans notably with a view to coordinating them with the activities in the EU Policy Cycle which concerns the Western Balkans;
2. Monitor and review the implementation of the Integrative Internal Security Governance in the Western Balkans after one year, and later on when necessary, in close cooperation with the Commission, EEAS, EU CTC and relevant EU agencies, and, whenever relevant, inform the Council about the new developments and implementation results.

CALLS UPON THE MEMBER STATES TO:

1. Actively support the implementation of the Integrative and Complementary Approach, the necessary coordination between EU actors and contribute to the Integrative Internal Security Governance and its action plans (PVE & CT; SOC; Border Security) in the Western Balkans;
2. Consult, while planning their own actions, the existing action plans and matrix of planned and on-going activities in the internal security area in the Western Balkans produced through the IISG process in order to avoid duplication and overlapping;
3. Consider to share information in the framework of the IISG on their relevant planned or on-going activities;
4. Widen and strengthen the participation of Western Balkans' relevant authorities to the EU Policy Cycle.

INVITES THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE TO:

1. Strengthen the EU's operational partnership with the countries of the Western Balkan region on Counter-Terrorism, prioritising the issues of greatest concern and common threats, including, but not limited to, risks posed by returning foreign terrorist fighters, radicalisation and recruitment by terrorist groups and violent extremists, and the financing of terrorism, in coherence with the WBCTi integrated Plan of Action (iPA);
2. Strengthen the EU's operational partnership with countries' relevant authorities in the Western Balkans to address transnational organised crime and the criminal networks perpetrating this illegal activity, including, but not limited to, the trafficking of people, weapons, drugs, and other illegal commodities, as well of the smuggling and laundering of cash and criminal assets by further developing cooperation on intelligence sharing, investigations, prosecutions, judicial procedures and by tackling high-level corruption;
3. Support the implementation of the Integrative and Complementary Approach and provide the necessary coordination between EU actors and the Integrative Internal Security Governance during the drafting and implementation of its action plans (PVE & CT; SOC; Border Security);
4. Consider, while planning their own initiatives, the existing action plans and the matrix of planned and on-going activities in the internal security area in the Western Balkans produced through the IISG process, aiming to ensure operational coherence;
5. Consider to share information in the framework of the IISG on their relevant planned or on-going activities.

CALLS UPON THE EU AGENCIES AND BODIES TO

1. Support the implementation of the Integrative and Complementary Approach, the necessary coordination between EU actors and contribute to the Integrative Internal Security Governance and its action plans (PVE & CT; SOC; Border Security) in the Western Balkans;
 2. Consider, while planning their own actions, the existing action plans and matrix of planned and on-going activities in the internal security area in the Western Balkans;
 3. Consider to provide information when requested and appropriate on their relevant planned or on-going activities or available information on relevant activities of other international partners in the Western Balkans, in order to update action plans or the matrix of activities.
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