

**11th session of the Conference of Parties to the UNTOC
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**Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,**

Transnational organized crime remains among the major challenges to security and development of countries and the international community.

As the security environment becomes more and more complex, States continue to be affected by a growing number of transnational threats and challenges, stemming from terrorism, violent extremism, radicalization and separatism, cybercrime, organized crime, trafficking in human beings and illicit trafficking in goods.

In United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, members states recognized that transnational organized criminal activities are closely linked to other threats, such as terrorism, illicit financial networks, corruption, money laundering, illicit trafficking in weapons, cultural property and other goods, illegal exploitation and trafficking of natural resources.

As it is well known, Azerbaijan restored its previously infringed sovereign and territorial integrity as a result of the 44-day Patriotic War in the autumn of 2020. Liberation of occupied territories allowed to shed light on the full picture of the atrocities, war crimes, crimes against humanity and other illegal activities committed in these territories during almost three decades of occupation. Such crimes included recruitment of foreign terrorist fighter and mercenaries, massive destruction and appropriation of civilian property, forced displacement, massive and indiscriminate deployment of mines, changing the charter of the occupied territories, illegal resettlement and exploitation of natural resources, destruction, pillage and removal of cultural heritage – all these and many other heinous acts have been ruthlessly committed by one particular UN member State against another one since the early 1990s and until the end of the conflict in 2020. The policy of occupation created a conducive environment for transnational organized criminal groups in the region which engaged and played a decisive role in funding enabling and facilitating aforementioned occupation and crimes.

Azerbaijan recognizes all too well that the nature of transnational threats is interwoven and they could enable and benefit from each other. Only a comprehensive approach in addressing these threats could yield a successful outcome. The activities of the States in combating transnational organized crime should be guided by the normative framework developed by the United Nations, in particular the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols, as well as relevant resolutions of the UNSC.

Mr. President,

Azerbaijan is deeply concerned that loss, destruction, removal, theft, pillage, illicit movement or misappropriation of and any acts of vandalism or damage directed against cultural property continues to occur. In this regard, all Member States need to enhance cooperation in preventing and combating criminal offences against cultural property, especially in returning such proceeds of crime or property

to their legitimate owners in line with their obligations under international law, in particular Article 14 of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

Financing of transnational organized crimes and criminal groups is also a matter of grave concern that must be fought with firm determination. In this regard, it is of utmost importance to prevent and suppress the financing of organized crimes and to criminalize the willful provision or collection, by any means, including through non-profit organizations, funds by their nationals or in their territories.

Mr. President,

Comprehensive solutions should be elaborated and reached by Member States in order to address complex and entangled security challenges, such as transnational organized criminal activities. Thus, we must continue to foster discussions on effective holistic approaches in addressing transnational organized crime and its linkage to other transnational threats.

Azerbaijan is fully committed to the fight against transnational organized crimes and to international cooperation to this end continues to take all necessary measures for effective implementation of UNTOC and its Protocols.

Thank you.