



TALKING POINTS FOR SECRETARY GENERAL

Launching of #SecuriMeter Webinar

24 May 2021

Dear friends, colleagues and partners,

Dear Eric, Andrea and Constantin,

Today is a special day for us. It is a day that we are opening a new chapter in regional cooperation in the field of security by introducing to the wider public a tool which aspires to be of great usefulness and relevance for both institutions and citizens.

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) is presenting its 1st special edition of the Security Barometer Survey (#SecuriMeter) 2021, in cooperation with our partners SEESAC, MAARI, DPPI and our IISG.

The SecuriMeter is a product of hard work and coordinated efforts, reflecting the voice of the people of the region in a number of crucial matters, ranging from terrorism, organized crime and border security to disaster prevention, hybrid threats and disinformation. Our collective efforts have been further accentuated since the outbreak of the pandemic; at a time when serious deficiencies and regional security gaps came to surface. The COVID - 19 pandemic has exposed critical shortages in all aspects of our societies. This unprecedented situation has proven the importance of solidarity in times of crisis and the value of human life over politics and disputes.

SecuriMeter as I already said is the first of its kind, although RCC always kept an eye on perceptions of security at regional level, through our Balkan Barometer yearly editions. This time the current global pandemic, made it clear **that security threats are not taking any time off**. Now that many have shifted to working remotely and



organizations are distracted trying to handle the virus, security and risk management need to be more vigilant than ever.

The region finds it very important to work on addressing the security challenges in the Western Balkans, such as combating terrorism, fighting organised crime and strengthening border security, in order to ensure the internal security of the region. In this respect, the highest importance was given to addressing the challenges related to serious and organised **crime (82%), followed by work on combating terrorism (88%), migrant crisis (86%), and violent extremism and cybersecurity (84%).**

It is quite interesting that 55% of those 82% who point out the organised crime as the main security threat, say that is corruption which fuels the existence of organised crime.

Looking at the average for the Western Balkans, an overwhelming majority of the respondents (**70%**) believe that the migrants entering the respondents' respective economy increase the security risks for their economy.

Less than a third disagree with that sentiment.

It is also notable that only 2% do not have or refused to express their opinion, indicating that the question is a highly polarising one, with almost all respondents having a clear stand on the issue.

On October 2018, the European Commission and representatives of WB6 signed a Joint Action Plan on Counter-Terrorism for the Western Balkans.

Today we notice with pleasure that when asked on how law enforcement authorities are doing in fighting terrorism, 56% of WB citizens strongly support their actions, but when it comes to transnational organized crime 48% are unsatisfied.

In a study of geopolitics is like a rule that the first step is determining the space under observation, then examining the usual historic trajectory and geopolitical representatives that have a strong influence.



In our region some of the above mentioned use the historical context to justify extremist actions and the radicalization narratives.

For 70% of Western Balkans citizens, security threats have now been transferred to the digital world and they are afraid **that children or young relatives might be radicalized online**. Online extremism and radicalization presents a challenge that is more global than national, thus makes the necessity of cooperation even more pertinent.

George Orwell was certainly right to suggest that: “To see what is in front of one’s nose needs a constant struggle”

Now days wrapping a lie around the truth, or covering a lie with truth, has become a reality.

When asked about the impact of disinformation, 76% across the region consider disinformation as a new way of warfare, almost same figure with 77% who see fake news as a big problem.

There is more in our SecuriMeter Survey.

We read these challenges as a call for all of us to think upon on how to better respond to the current regional security challenges, but also to security threats foreseen in the post-COVID - 19 era. The presentation of the findings of the first-ever regional Security Public Opinion Survey, directly echo the voice of the biggest asset of the region: its own people.

Timelier than ever, the SecuriMeter, providing concrete and reliable data from the Region, aims also at contributing to the coordinated high-level efforts to identify, prevent and combat threats to regional security.

I would like to thank you all for participating in this launching event, and our guests for their contribution through open discussions on the findings of the report. Last but



not least, I would like to thank RCC and IISG staff, who have intensively worked for the SecuriMeter.

I am looking forward for the discussions and take-a-ways.