

Ministerial Conference of the Salzburg Forum

First working session – “Civil protection and reaction to possible major events like CBRNe incidents”

Check speech against delivery

Bucharest, 15 November 2022

Dear Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues and Friends,

Representing an organisation dealing with migration, I want to stress at the beginning of my short intervention that questions related to Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosives (CBRNE) do not fall under my field of expertise; and I will not even pretend that I am in a position to discuss them at the level of the real experts gathered in the room.

Nevertheless, there are two areas where I see a connection with migration and migration policy, which I want to briefly touch upon. The first area is the instrumentalisation of migration for political purposes and the second is the potential link between terrorism and migration.

A bit more than a year ago, Belarus started to pull thousands of migrants from Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan to its capital, only to organise their subsequent entry to Poland and Lithuania, obviously with the intention to destabilise the Union and sow divisions among the member states. At the time it was clear that we are confronted with a new dimension of the use of migrants for political purposes. At the beginning of this year we had to come to the conclusion that this scheme was part of a bigger plan to change the geopolitical realities in Europe and beyond; a plan that included both military means and political instruments. Without a doubt, the actual use of Chemical, Biological, Radiological or Nuclear weapons in Ukraine would lead to mass casualties, to mass disruptions and to mass displacement inside the country and across borders. But a constant threat of using these weapons will also fuel fears and trigger migratory flows out of Ukraine.

A second area of concern is the link between terrorism and migration. In many ways, it was the Paris attacks of November 2015 that brought an end to the welcome culture towards the asylum seekers and migrants that had reached Europe during the so called refugee crisis. A small fraction of the Islamist terrorists had moved among the refugee flows and once they had completed their heinous attacks, many Europeans started to see refugees as a threat and became hostile towards them. Potentially, this pattern could reoccur in the course of the current crisis as well and it might involve the dangerous weapons we speak about today. The timely detection of such activities is necessary to guarantee the security of our countries but also to

ensure the acceptance of our citizens when it comes to migration policies and the support of Ukrainian refugees.

In view of these threats, it is important that we re-design our response mechanisms, that we make them fast-responding and that we work together across different sectors and areas linked to all aspects of security. Again, the Salzburg Forum provides an excellent framework for doing exactly that and I am sure that our discussions will be an important step towards our joint objectives.

Thank you.