



# Global Cyber Policy Dialogues: Western Balkans

**September 20-21, 2023**

Skopje, North Macedonia

**MEETING MATERIALS**



The Observer Research Foundation America in partnership with the Ministry of Defence North Macedonia – Military Academy “General Mihailo Apostolski,” the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, and Metamorphosis Foundation are hosting an in-person Global Cyber Policy Dialogue meeting September 20-21, 2023 in Skopje. This multistakeholder meeting will bring together 40-50 participants from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo,\* Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, as well as experts and donor countries active in the region. The central goal of the meeting is to continue to foster genuine and open dialogue among stakeholders from different sectors and backgrounds, including from government, civil society, academia, and the private sector.

This meeting builds on results achieved at an in-person roundtable, held in Skopje in June 2022 to discuss donor coordination, cyber defense, CERT to CERT cooperation, information disorder, and combating cybercrime with representatives from government, civil society, and the private sector. A [summary](#) is available to provide further background. The meeting provided an opportunity to break down silos nationally, regionally, and across sectors, facilitated engagement on shaping UN processes, bolstered stakeholder collaboration, and stimulated networking. Key cross-cutting themes included the importance of capacity building, information sharing, transparency, multistakeholder engagement, norms implementation, and training initiatives to address specific educational needs.

This second in-person roundtable will reflect on the evolving cybersecurity threat landscape through consideration of key topics including: responding to cyber attacks, United Nations norms implementation and cyber diplomacy, donor coordination of cyber capacity building efforts, strengthening incident response, and enhancing intra-governmental coordination, as well as relevant UN processes including the Open-ended Working Group on the use of ICTs in the context of international security and the Ad Hoc Committee on Cybercrime.

## Wednesday, September 20, 2023

Venue: Holiday Inn Skopje  
Filip Vtori Makedonski 5  
Skopje 1000  
Meeting Room: Millennium 1

09:00 – 09:30 **REGISTRATION**

09:30 – 09:50 **OPENING REMARKS**

**Slavica Grkovska**, Deputy Prime Minister, Good Governance Policies, Government of North Macedonia

**Vladimir Anchev**, State Secretary, Ministry of Defence of North Macedonia

**Maartje Peters**, Head, Taskforce on International Cyber Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

**Mitko Bogdanoski**, Dean, Military Academy "General Mihajlo Apostolski" – Skopje

**Bruce W. McConnell**, Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation America (Moderator)

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\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UN Security Council resolution 1244 and the International Court of Justice Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

09:50 – 11:20

### TABLE-TOP EXERCISE: CROSS-BORDER COMMUNICATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS IN TIMES OF CYBER CRISIS – PART I

As the Western Balkans is undergoing accelerated digitization across all segments of society, cybersecurity in the region has entered the debate at the highest political levels. The increased use of information and communication technology carries both great potential and new risks to security. A string of cyber incidents in the region have served as a reminder that preventing and responding to such events goes beyond national and technical domains: it requires communication and collaboration between stakeholders, across borders and at all levels, including the political and diplomatic communities. The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue will facilitate a table-top exercise based on an escalating crisis scenario. The exercise aims to focus on responses to an abstract, major cyber incident that stresses government, industry and civil society at both the operational and policy levels. The intent is to test stakeholders' readiness and preparedness to respond to such incidents and promote trust, while also identifying potential procedural or structural gaps.

Moderators:

**Karsten Geier**, Senior Cyber Diplomacy Adviser, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue  
**Elena Rückheim**, Project Officer, Cyber Program, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

11:20 – 11:45

NETWORKING BREAK

11:45 – 12:45

### TABLE-TOP EXERCISE: CROSS-BORDER COMMUNICATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS IN TIMES OF CYBER CRISIS – PART II

12:45 – 13:45

LUNCH

13:45 – 15:15

### SESSION I: DONOR COORDINATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING NEEDS

Significant progress has been made in donor coordination and capacity building, but there remains work to be done in donor, recipient, and implementer coordination in the Western Balkans. Building on several efforts being undertaken by the EU and other civil society organizations in this area, including the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE) and previous efforts from ORF America, this session will host conversation dedicated to furthering continued coordination and allow opportunity for recipient countries to articulate priorities and gaps in capacity. It will seek to establish, broaden, and deepen points of contact for establishing funder synergies, enhance civil society engagement in the Western Balkans to construct links of cooperation, and further hone targeted delivery of initiatives, capacity building, human capital development, knowledge sharing, and communication.

Moderator:

**Tereza Horejsova**, Outreach Manager, Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE)

Speakers:

**Vojtěch Hons**, Policy and Programme Officer, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), European Commission  
**Franziska Klopfer**, Principal Programme Manager, Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF)  
**Orhan Osmani**, Senior Cybersecurity Coordinator, International Telecommunication Union (ITU)  
**Gilles Schwoerer**, Cyber Project Manager, Security and Defense Cooperation Directorate (DCSD), Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France

**19:00 – 21:00**

**RECEPTION**

Venue: Dutch Ambassador's Residence  
Street 6, Pateka A, Number 31, Bardovci, Skopje

18:30 *Transportation will be provided from the **Holiday Inn Skopje** (Filip Vtori Makedonski 5, Skopje 1000) to the reception at the Ambassador's Residence. The bus will depart at 18:30.*

21:00 *Return transportation is provided from the Ambassador's residence to the Holiday Inn Skopje.*

## Thursday, September 21, 2023

Venue: Holiday Inn Skopje  
Filip Vtori Makedonski 5  
Skopje 1000  
Meeting Room: Millennium 1

08:15 – 08:45 **REGISTRATION**

08:45 – 09:00 **OPENING REMARKS**

**Azir Aliu**, Minister, Ministry of Information Society and Administration of North Macedonia

09:00 – 10:30 **SESSION II: DEFENDING AND RESPONDING TO CYBER ATTACKS**

The Western Balkans exposure to cyber attacks has intensified during the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, reinforcing the need to further solidify elements of national cyber defense. What is the role of international security cooperation in defending against and responding to attacks? Concurrent efforts for confidence building from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) also provide a framework for enhancing trust and collaboration among relevant ministries and stakeholders in the region to preserve an open, free, and secure cyberspace: what is the progress in better integrating the private sector into cyber defense while respecting international law? What mechanisms, including public private partnerships, are working well in national cyber defense? How can civil society contribute to education for resiliency and critical infrastructure protection? What remaining work needs done to build out portals and best practices for vulnerability disclosure and threat information sharing?

Moderator: **Bruce W. McConnell**, Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation America

Speakers: **Mergime Ajdini**, Head, C-4 Department, Ministry of Defence of North Macedonia, and **Blazo Georgievski**, Head, J6 of the Army, North Macedonia  
**Kujtim Kryeziu**, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Sentry  
**Pavlina Pavlova**, Public Policy Advisor, CyberPeace Institute  
**Rexhion Qafa**, Director, Cybersecurity Analysis Directorate, National Authority for Electronic Certification and Cyber Security of Albania  
**Milan Sekuloski**, Senior Cybersecurity Expert, e-Governance Academy

10:30 – 11:00 **NETWORKING BREAK**

11:00 – 12:30 **SESSION III: UN NORMS IMPLEMENTATION AND CYBER DIPLOMACY**

The Western Balkans are part of an ongoing global process for the implementation of agreements on the normative framework for cyberspace, including norms of responsible state behavior established under the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts in 2015, for which development and implementation continues internationally under the United Nations 2021-2025 Open-ended Working Group on the use of ICTs in the context of international security (OEWG).

In addition, the global community has chosen to address cybercrime through the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee to Elaborate a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes (Ad Hoc Committee). This panel will explore opportunities and obstacles to increased engagement from Western Balkan stakeholders in these processes. How are training and funding to improve capacity for cyber diplomacy progressing? Overall, this session will raise awareness about what has been agreed at the international level, bridge gaps between the diplomatic communities and other stakeholders, flag upcoming hurdles, and promote increased engagement in the negotiations and implementation of outcomes.

**Moderator:** **Bruce W. McConnell**, Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation America

**Speakers:** **Denisa Asko**, Prosecutor, Public Prosecutor's Office of Albania  
**Vladimir Radunović**, Director, E-Diplomacy and Cybersecurity, DiploFoundation  
**Marica Ristevska**, Senior Associate for Cybersecurity, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia

**12:30 – 13:45** **LUNCH**

**13:45 – 14:30** **BRIEFING FROM NORTH MACEDONIA: PROGRESS FIGHTING DISINFORMATION**

Following the onset of the Russia-Ukraine war, the Western Balkans has been exposed to a heightened level of disinformation from a variety of actors seeking to sow instability. This information session will present concrete examples of progress, such as the Western Balkans Anti-Disinformation Hub's work building societal resilience, and NATO's collaboration with the North Macedonian Ministry of Defence's Public Affairs Regional Centre to train communications officers throughout Europe.

**Moderator:** **Filip Stojanovski**, Director, Partnership and Resource Development, Metamorphosis Foundation

**Speakers:** **Aleksandar Jovanovski**, Public Affairs Regional Centre, Ministry of Defence of North Macedonia  
**Ilija Zhupanoski**, Digital Communication Associate, Office of the Prime Minister, Government of North Macedonia

**14:30 – 14:45** **NETWORKING BREAK**

**14:45 – 16:15** **SESSION IV: INTRAGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION ON CYBERSECURITY**

As governments in the region increase capacity and enhance cybersecurity capabilities to address issues across the spectrum of cyber threats, many new agencies, institutions, and legislative authorities have been established. However, communication and coordination within national governments across multiple organizations' jurisdictions are an ongoing challenge. Moreover, governmental efforts require collaboration with a variety of traditional and new actors, as well as expertise from the private sector and civil society. What are best practices for improving national level coordination and retaining talent? Where are the biggest gaps or potential points of failure? What organizational strategies have been

effective for internal information sharing and engagement? This session will identify best practices and practical examples of what has worked for interagency coordination in cyberspace and examine how governments can shape communication processes through public facing institutions to reflect and absorb input from the various stakeholders essential to creating durable cybersecurity.

Moderator: **Bruce W. McConnell**, Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation America

Speakers: **Leonora Hasani**, Project Officer, Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF)  
**Amir Husić**, Head, ICT Department, Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina  
**Maja Lakušić**, Advisor for Cybersecurity Promotion, Regulatory Authority for Electronic Communications and Postal Services of Serbia (RATEL)  
**Maartje Peters**, Head, Taskforce on International Cyber Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

**16:15 – 16:45** **REFLECTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**16:45 – 17:00** **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

**17:00 – 18:00** **RECEPTION**