international organizations, including the UN and arguably the EU. Indeed, political missions enjoy at least three interlinked comparative advantages over other actors in tackling TNTs: i) the inherent legitimacy and leverage afforded to a political mission through its multilateral mandate; ii) access to information about both the “macro” (regional or global) picture, including trends in transnational networks or markets, and the local picture (including national and local level political-economy and elite structures); iii) their access to transnational networks of influence and resources. Political missions can thus have a unique perch from which to follow the interaction of TNTs and local politics, rally national, regional and international interest in the issues, and help design – and execute – a coordinated strategic narrative and response. Yet member states are not systematically equipping these organizations to play that role.

As noted above, some political missions are beginning to find their way of their own accord, largely through innovation by charismatic and influential mission leaders and an opening within the system that allows them some space for maneuver. These leaders use to their advantage the convening power and policy-shaping opportunities inherent to political missions, especially when it comes to transnational trends. As a result, they can use TNTs as a framework for joint problem-solving and cross-border confidence building, which as noted in the 2011 WDR, may have significant knock-on benefits for conflict prevention in other areas.

Yet as important as confidence- and capacity-building efforts are to address the institutional weakness and other conditions that allow TNTs to impact on national politics and societies, without the analytical and political tools necessary to identify and respond to the TNTs and the impact they can have on political stability, political missions could be left tilting at windmills. What may be necessary, therefore, is a series of measures to improve analysis and strategic guidance to SPMs on responding to TNTs. Fortunately, the political climate for such measures may be favorable.

International organizations should begin by using existing opportunities to strengthen the analytical capacities of political missions – and political analysts/desk officers at headquarters – in relation to TNTs. At the UN, member states seem increasingly inclined to invite assistance from DPA on

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**Support for Multi-actor Efforts in Sierra Leone**

UN SPMs are also increasingly providing support to other actors in their efforts to tackle TNTs. In Sierra Leone, for example, UNIPSIL provides advice and support to the local government to develop airport security, and to the local criminal justice reform taskforce. It plays an advisory role for a $1.4 million UNODC project to strengthen institutional capacity to respond to organized crime and drug trafficking; and to a $1 million US AFRICOM project to build the Transnational Organized Crime Unit’s premises and forensic capacity.

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**TOWARDS A MORE STRATEGIC APPROACH**

In mid 2010, the previous OSCE Secretary-General presented an analysis of the missed opportunities in the organization’s response to TNTs.

…the OSCE as a whole has not made the most of its inherent comparative advantages: its broad membership and geographic scope, its key role as a forum for political dialogue, its ability to serve as a hub of co-operation for officials, NGOs and international organizations, its network of Field Operations and its unique comprehensive and cooperative security mandate. While the Organization, over the past decade, has developed important expertise in individual areas related to transnational threats, its overall response has not lived up to the coherent vision set forth [in earlier strategy documents].

This analysis could easily be applied to other