Your Excellences,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am delighted to be here today. Allow me to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of the United Arab Emirates for hosting this important event. It is a great honor to take the floor on behalf of GRECO (the Council of Europe’santicorruption body) and share with you a few thoughts revolving around our common interest: a more effective and collaborative fight against corruption.

2. The Merida Convention represents a most prominent achievement in the global fight against corruption. Likewise, the establishment of a monitoring instrument for its implementation, which took root in this very same region, in Doha, 10 years ago, signified an outstanding accomplishment.

3. This year also marks a meaningful anniversary for GRECO. We are celebrating 20 years of experience in fighting corruption, building integrity and
delivering change, since our establishment in 1999. Today, GRECO’s membership extends to 49 countries: all European States and the United States of America, covering in total over one billion citizens. New accessions are in the pipeline. All our members accept, often very critical, judgments of their performance, and are required to react to them and demonstrate actual change in 18 months.

4. The fight against corruption is like the fight against a serious disease: you need money to buy vaccines, willingness to apply the remedy and professionals who know how to do it and how to follow-up. Furthermore, it is always better to invest in prevention than in treatment. The goal should be to introduce a good vaccination tool before the disease spreads.

5. In this regard, GRECO’s experience proves that several tools are essential to effectively curb the scourge of corruption. Allow me to focus on some very key ones:

1. a multidisciplinary approach where repression and prevention walk together;
2. legislative measures, and as (if not more) importantly, their practical implementation;
3. the mobilization of civil society and the private sector;
4. sustained political will to serve and not to be served.

6. To that, let me also stress the relevance of international follow-up in making sure that internal anticorruption reform succeeds. In GRECO, we see our role not only as a reference
anticorruption monitoring body, but also as a supportive mechanism for our members to bring about and capitalize on change.

7. It is most important that we all international anticorruption monitoring bodies work together in an unequivocal direction. We all share an unparalleled position to generate synergies and give momentum to a commonly shared concern. Our effective collaboration can prove crucial to keep anti-corruption policies high up, not only on the international agenda, but also as a political priority at national level.

8. Accordingly, I am very pleased to report that our respective Secretariats’ cooperation has been further enhanced since COSP7, with very practical examples, which will be illustrated in a panel taking place later this week.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. We hear today that corruption is critically dangerous and erodes the protection of human rights. We hear reiterated claims for effectively ensuring that the rule of law, integrity and transparency govern the conduct of both public and private affairs. Against this background, we must ask ourselves why is it that our citizens are not satisfied. Pollsters repeatedly point at citizens’ disquiet with their institutions and representatives. The private sector has also come under the spotlight following the devastating consequences of the financial crisis, from which many countries are still trying to recover. The
constant drumbeat of corruption allegations and scandals has eroded institutional credibility, breeding public disillusionment and causing significant social and political tensions across all world regions. Much work lies ahead.

10. For that reason, we have to apply at least the four necessary prerequisites I mentioned before. Moreover, the fight against corruption starts at “kindergarten”. The issues that will be addressed in the course of this working week are of the utmost importance and I wish us all every success in fueling political responsibility and engagement towards fighting corruption and I look forward greatly to the deliberations before us.

11. Furthermore, the holding of the UN Generally Assembly Special Session on Corruption in 2021 is a most welcome development. GRECO stands ready to offer its long-standing experience and expertise, as necessary.

Thank you very much for your patience and attention.