

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Statement

by

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to the

ANNUAL SECURITY REVIEW CONFERENCE

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WORKING GROUP A

PREVENTING AND COMBATING TERRORISM

Mr Coordinator,

Whether we consider terrorism an act of war or criminal activity or both, one thing is certain: terrorism threatens security. Indeed terrorism threatens the very fabric of our societies.

That is why the Council of Europe believes it is so important for the international community and the international organisations present here today to act in unison and to uphold the values which terrorism and terrorists seek to destroy.

In that context, and as an example of a common front and a common approach to tackling the terrorist threat, I would like to recall the joint UN/OSCE-ODIHR/COUNCIL OF EUROPE statement made in the aftermath of the 11 September attacks in the United States.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Director of OSCE-ODIHR, and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe underscored, in a common declaration, that the threat of terrorism requires specific measures, which should, however, exclude any excessive steps, which would violate fundamental freedoms and undermine legitimate dissent.

After all the purpose of anti-terror measures must be to protect human rights and democracy, and not to undermine the fundamental values of democratic societies.

Today, almost 2 years on, the Council of Europe remains committed to that joint cooperative approach to fighting terrorism. To that end the Council has sought to modernise and open up its panoply of some 11 multilateral conventions relevant to the fight against terrorism and organised crime, which includes agreements on issues such as extradition, dealing with money laundering, or combating cyber crime.

Since we are short of time, I will take only one example. I would like to draw the attention of this group, and of the conference as a whole, to the fact that the Council of Europe's 1977 Convention on the suppression of terrorism has been revised to broaden its scope and make it more effective. What is more the Protocol to the Convention, which was opened for signature at the Council of Europe's Ministerial Meeting on 15 May makes it possible for non-Member States to accede to the Convention.

In a similar move to share with other organisations and the world community the Council of Europe's expertise in the field of human rights, in July 2002, the Committee of Ministers adopted the first international common guidelines on human rights and antiterrorism measures. They remind states of their duties to protect their populations against acts committed in defiance of human rights. Such action may lead them to take specific measures, even possibly derogating measures, provided they are reasonable and proportionate and that they strike a proper balance between the obligation to provide protection against terrorist acts and the obligation to safeguard human rights.

If the proposal made by the Swiss representative for ODIHR to draw up guidelines is pursued, I would like to stress how important it would be to coordinate any such work with the Council of Europe. After all it would be most regrettable if there were to be two differing sets of guidelines.

As I have already mentioned the Council of Europe has a range of conventions on countering terrorism and organised crime many of which are open to non-Member States.

We share your desire to make the world a safer place and the Council of Europe stands ready to work with you.

The forthcoming 2+2/3+3 COUNCIL OF EUROPE-OSCE Meetings provide an opportunity to carry such work forward.

Thank You Mr Coordinator.