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Preventing and combating terrorism and related threats in the Commonwealth of Independent States

The activities of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in preventing and combating terrorism and related threats employ a concept of comprehensive security in combating terrorism, as adopted in the OSCE, and also the relevant United Nations documents.

Co-operation between member States and agencies of the CIS in countering crime, terrorism and related threats takes place as part of the implementation of five programmes dealing with those States' interaction in combating terrorism, trafficking in human beings, illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors, and illegal migration.

In 2008, for example, measures were carried out in the following major areas of co-operation.

I. The organizational and legal framework for joint action

Systematic steps have been taken to formalize the participation of CIS member States in the documents under international law regulating co-operation in combating crime and countering present-day threats and challenges to security.

Virtually all the CIS countries have formalized their participation in the basic counter-terrorism conventions (protocols) of the United Nations and also in the universal international agreements aimed at preventing transnational organized crime and illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs.

Questions dealing with an intensification of this work have been regularly discussed at meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the CIS member States and of those CIS bodies that are engaged in co-operation to combat crime.

Work has continued to further refine the organizational and legal modalities of co-operation between CIS member States in implementing the Concept for the further

development of the CIS in matters connected with combating terrorism and ensuring security. Several basic documents have been adopted, among them the Agreement on Co-operation in Combating the Illegal Trade in Weapons, Ammunition, Explosives and Explosive Devices and the Programme of Co-operation between the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States in Countering Illegal Migration during the Period 2009-2011. A number of draft documents dealing with these areas of activity have been submitted for examination at forthcoming meetings of the decision-making bodies of the CIS, while others are at the reconciliation stage.

The Inter-Parliamentary Assembly has adopted the model laws “On countering trafficking in human beings”, “On providing assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings”, and others.

II. Organizational measures of a practical nature

In 2008, the law enforcement agencies operating on the territories of the CIS member States carried out 12 simultaneous, comprehensive interventions of an operational and preventive nature and two special operations that resulted in the uncovering of 26,200 crimes, the detention of more than 8,200 persons who were being sought by the police, the interdiction of the activities of 147 organized criminal associations and organized criminal groups, the confiscation of 6,500 firearms and more than 8,300 tons of narcotic substances, the shutting down of 36 laboratories used for illicit drug producing, and 54 illegal migration channels, and the uncovering of 258 cases of trafficking in human beings.

Measures were carried out on the basis of special plans by the law enforcement agencies of the CIS member States and by the Border Troop Command Council.

The experience gained from these activities has been examined at meetings of those CIS agencies that are responsible for co-operation in combating crime.

In September 2008, under the co-ordination of the Counter-Terrorism Centre of the CIS member States, the territory of the Republic of Belarus was the scene of a joint command staff exercise of an operational and strategic nature on the subject “Organization and execution of operational and investigatory measures and special operations to uncover and interdict the activities of members of international terrorist organizations”. Taking part in this exercise were representatives of the security agencies and intelligence services of most of the CIS countries, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure of the Shanghai Co-operation Organization along with observers from Vietnam, Germany, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, the United States and Sweden.

As part of the exercise, a meeting of the senior staff of the counter-terrorism units of the security agencies and intelligence services was held.

III. Information and scientific support

The CIS countries and agencies are developing a set of organizational and technical measures to create and make effective use of modern and forward-looking communication

systems and information technologies to permit an exchange of information between the law enforcement agencies of the CIS member States.

The Council of Ministers for Internal Affairs is implementing a Plan of Organizational and Technical Measures to put into place a single network of automated databases and telecommunication systems linking the home affairs ministries of the CIS member States.

The Border Troop Command Council has approved a Concept, a List of Information Types and Standard Forms for an Automated System for the Rapid Exchange of Information.

Work is proceeding on a Consolidated Database for use by the security agencies and special services of the CIS member States and on a Specialized Database of the CIS Counter-Terrorism Centre on problems connected with prevention, disclosure and interdiction and also with the investigation of illegal actions of a terrorist or extremist nature.

The specialized educational institutions of the CIS member States conduct a regular exchange of materials having to do with teaching techniques, programmes and methods as well as academic works on the training and advanced training of personnel for the internal affairs agencies.

The practice has continued of exchanging experience and methodological guides on preventing, uncovering, interdicting and investigating criminal activities.

The media provide ongoing coverage of the problems of crime and other security threats and challenges and of the experience gained in combating them.

IV. Co-operation in the area of personnel training

Co-operation has been stepped up between the CIS countries in the field of personnel training, advanced training and retraining.

The educational establishments under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation have provided training for 593 employees of law enforcement agencies from nine CIS countries, with 211 internal affairs officials from Commonwealth countries receiving advanced training under supplementary vocational education programmes.

Training is being provided at appropriate institutions in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine for employees of national security agencies and border control departments as well as for counter-terrorism specialists from CIS countries.

A centre has been set up under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation for the joint training of internal affairs (police) specialists on combating crimes in the area of information technology.

The CIS Council of Heads of State has adopted a decision to confer on the educational institution known as the "Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus" the status of a base organization of the CIS member States for the

training, advanced training and retraining of personnel dealing with migration and trafficking in human beings.

Conclusions and proposals

Within the Commonwealth of Independent States co-ordinated collective and national measures are being taken to improve co-operation in combating crime and terrorism and in countering new threats and challenges. The regulatory and legal basis for this co-operation is being expanded at the same time that improvements are being made to the system under which the member States and agencies of the CIS co-ordinate their work and interact in this area.

The result of these joint efforts has been a reduction in the total number of recorded crimes, including crimes of a terrorist nature, on average for all the Commonwealth countries.

Under the co-ordinating role of the agencies responsible for co-operation within the CIS in specific branches, the law enforcement and other competent bodies of the member countries have succeeded in generally controlling the criminogenic environment.

At the same time, there is a need for more effective joint activities. A genuine threat to security is posed by illegal migration, trafficking in human beings, especially women and children, and other transborder crimes. There has been a significant increase in the risk that new threats and challenges to security may emerge, involving the possible use for terrorist purposes of nuclear, chemical and biological (bacteriological) weapons and information technologies.

A report on the progress of these programmes of co-operation between the member countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States can be found on the website of the CIS Executive Committee (www.cis.minsk.by).