

7555/04 (Presse 94)

PROVISIONAL VERSION

Extraordinary Council meeting

- JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS -

Brussels, 19 March 2004

President : **Mr Michael McDOWELL, T.D.**

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform of
Ireland

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- *Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.*
- *The documents whose references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site <http://ue.eu.int>.*
- *Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the above mentioned Council Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.*

PARTICIPANTS

The Governments of the Member States and the European Commission were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Ms Laurette ONKELINX
Mr Patrick DEWAELE

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Justice
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Interior

Denmark:

Ms Lene ESPERSEN

Minister for Justice

Germany:

Mr Otto SCHILY

Federal Minister for the Interior

Greece:

Mr George VOULGARAKIS
Mr Anastasios PAPALIGOURAS

Minister for Public Order
Minister for Justice

Spain:

Mr Ángel ACEBES PANIAGUA

Minister for the Interior

France:

Mr Nicolas SARKOZY
Mr Dominique PERBEN

Minister for the Interior, Internal Security and Local Freedoms
Keeper of the Seals, Minister for Justice

Ireland:

Mr Pat FOLEN

Ministry of Justice

Italy:

Mr Giuseppe PISANU
Mr Roberto CASTELLI

Minister for the Interior
Minister for Justice

Luxembourg:

Mr Luc FRIEDEN

Minister for Justice, Minister for the Treasury and the Budget

Netherlands:

Mr Jan Piet Hein DONNER
Mr Joahn REMKES

Minister for Justice
Minister for the Interior and Kingdom Relations

Austria:

Mr Ernst STRASSER

Federal Minister for the Interior

Portugal:

Mr António FIGUEIREDO LOPES
Ms Celeste CARDONA

Minister for the Interior
Minister for Justice

Finland:

Mr Johannes KOSKINEN
Mr Kari RAJAMÄKI

Minister for Justice
Minister for the Interior

Sweden:

Mr Thomas BODSTRÖM

Minister for Justice

United Kingdom:

Mr David BLUNKETT

Secretary of State for the Home Department; Home Secretary

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Commission:

Mr António VITORINO

Member

Other Participants

Mr Jürgen STORBECK

Director of Europol

The Governments of the acceding States were represented as follows:

Czech Republic :

Mr Stanislav GROSS

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Interior

Estonia :

Mr Margus LEIVO

Minister for the Interior

Cyprus :

Mr Doros THEODOROU

Minister for Justice and Public Order

Latvia :

Mr Eriks JEKABSONS

Minister for the Interior

Lithuania :

Mr Virgilijus BULOVAS

Minister for the Interior

Hungary :

Ms Mónika LAMPERTH

Minister for the Interior

Malta:

Mr Carmelo Mifsud BONNICI

Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs

Poland :

Mr Pawel DAKOWSKI

Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of the Interior and Administration

Slovenia :

Mr Rado BOHINC

Minister for the Interior

Mr Ivan BIZJAK

Minister for Justice

Slovakia :

Mr Vladimír PALKO

Minister for the Interior

Mr. Daniel LIPŠIČ

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice

ITEM DEBATED: EU FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

In the aftermath of the 11 March 2004 terrorist attacks in Madrid, the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council met to give a renewed impulse to the European response to the terrorist threat to our society.

The Council started with one minute of silence to commemorate the victims of the terrorist attack of 11 March 2004 in Madrid.

The Council focused its debate on practical measures to reinforce practical cooperation with particular reference to ensuring full recourse to the possibilities offered by the Police Chiefs Task Force, Europol and Eurojust. It placed emphasis on the implementation of existing measures directed to reinforcing cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

The Council also examined how to improve mechanisms for cooperation between police and security services and promote effective, systematic collaboration in intelligence services between Member States.

The Council urged the finalization of work on existing measures, which can play their part in combating terrorism. These include, in particular, taking forward work on the Framework Decision on the Mutual recognition of Confiscation Orders, the development of the second generation Schengen Information System and the new Visa Information System and the proposed European Borders Agency. Priority should be given to the proposals under the retention of communication traffic data and exchange of information on convictions.

The Council invited the Commission to bring forward a proposal aimed at the creation of a European Programme for the protection of witnesses.

Member States committed themselves to implement an EU-wide basis existing measures relevant to the fight against terrorism.

Other measures examined by the Council included a political commitment to assure obligations contained in the Solidarity Clause included in the draft Constitution for Europe (Article I-42), measures to revise the action plan on terrorism, strengthening Border Controls and Permanent Security, EU guidelines for a common approach to fight terrorism, sharing of intelligence, preventing the financing of terrorism, measures to protect transport and population, international cooperation and the establishment of the position of a counter-terrorism coordinator.

This package of measures on fighting against terrorism will be forwarded to the next European Council on 25 and 26 March 2004.

It should be noted that the European Union's broad objectives in this area are set out in the Union's Action Plan to combat terrorism adopted by the Brussels European Council on 21 September 2001. This action plan was subsequently fleshed out and given substance in the many measures and actions detailed in the Union's anti-terrorist roadmap. The Council is not, therefore, beginning with a blank sheet. Valuable work is already being done. Some of this pre-dates September 2001, although the pace of work has quickened since then.

Following the adoption of the Action Plan in 2001, the Council and the Commission, within their respective powers, have taken a number of measures to enhance the internal security of the Union. Some of these are specifically aimed at combating terrorism, such as the framework decision establishing a common criminal definition of terrorism, the insertion of anti-terrorism clauses into Community agreements with third countries, improving aviation safety or freezing assets of terrorists and terrorist organisations. Others have more general aims, such as various measures taken as part of the establishment of an area of freedom, security and justice (the European arrest warrant, joint investigation teams, the creation of Eurojust, the reinforcement of Europol, the creation of an integrated borders management agency, security of travel documents, etc.) or to consolidate the rule of law in certain vulnerable third countries.

Moreover, new concerns have emerged among Member States (addressing the factors which contribute to support for terrorism, protection of minorities and the promotion of pluralism within the EU, violent religious extremism, maritime security) and further initiatives have been taken by the United States (passport security, biometrics, new aviation security measures).

While the European Security Strategy adopted by the European Council in December advocates a comprehensive approach which is capable of overcoming any divisions between the internal and external dimensions of combating terrorism, the normal preparatory channels inside the Council continue to be used to draw on proper expertise in all the sectors concerned. What is needed is improved coordination and efficiency. A review of the Action Plan in order to update EU objectives was launched earlier this year and several Member States have contributed comments.

For further information on EU actions against terrorism, please consult: <http://ue.eu.int/Terrorisme/index.asp?>