

**INFORMAL LONDON MEETING ON COUNTER-TERRORISM
16 AUGUST 2006**

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

Terrorism affects us all, individually and collectively, as nations and as a Union. No country or society is exempt from its threat. We share a common duty to tackle terrorism, which is an affront to all that the European Union stands for. We all unequivocally condemn those who seek to murder their fellow citizens. There can be no excuse or justification for terrorist murder.

The European Union has played its part in the response to the terrorist threat. After 9/11, we introduced the European Arrest Warrant, enabling the swift transfer of suspects between our countries. After the bombings in Madrid, the EU agreed a Counter-Terrorism Action Plan, which drew together an ambitious work programme. And after the London bombings, the EU agreed measures to improve law enforcement authorities' access to mobile phone data for law enforcement purposes. All this and other work strands have made a substantial contribution to the fight against terrorism.

However valuable our work so far, the Union must now step up its efforts. We have an ambitious EU strategy to combat terrorism: we need now to deliver it, both at EU level, and nationally by Member States. The threat to our citizens is serious and we reaffirm our political commitment to take action to make a reality of what we have agreed to do.

The events of last week demonstrated that terrorist groups are constantly seeking new ways of attacking our societies. We recognise that as set out in the EU Counter Terrorism Strategy, effective counter-terrorism measures and the protection of human rights are not conflicting goals, but are complementary and mutually reinforcing. We must not allow terrorists to undermine the values and rights of the individuals that bind our societies together. But protection of our citizens is our main duty and as we face the threat of mass murder, the rights of the individual that we enjoy need to be balanced with the collective right of security that our citizens demand.

Ministers representing the current Finnish EU Presidency, the future EU Presidencies (Germany, Portugal, Slovenia and France), the UK Home Secretary and Vice-President Frattini of the European Commission discussed the EU's plans for the remainder of the year and onwards. In particular they emphasised the need:

- for urgent work to prevent EU citizens turning to terrorism through radicalisation and recruitment. EU Member States and the Commission should accelerate delivery of the EU strategy, including an even greater focus on addressing home-grown terrorism. The Finnish Presidency will start a process of regular expert meetings on this issue with a view to analysing the causes of radicalisation and, based on this analysis, taking targeted measures. This will include exchanging experience and carrying out research into radicalisation in key environments like prisons, schools, places of worship, and examining the role of the media. The Commission also agreed to broaden its network of experts to include both academics and government specialists, and to establish an active programme of contacts and joint projects;

- to make the internet a hostile environment for terrorists and those who seek to radicalise young people, spread messages of hate and plan mass murder;
- to ensure the continued effectiveness of standards of protective security adopted at European airports. The relevant aviation experts in the EU should meet as soon as possible to review the implications of this incident for European aviation security regulation. Any response should include reference to the wider EU work on law enforcement and counter-terrorism. The EU should also continue to work to raise airport security standards in third countries, through its technical assistance programme. The Commission agreed to consider how it could best target funding for these priorities;
- for research into explosives particularly to be targeted at work on liquid explosives. Ministers also gave their support to the development of Europol's weapons and explosives database; and
- to pre-empt the terrorists' next plot. The Ministers commended the excellent work of the UK authorities so far and expressed their full support to the UK authorities in their investigations. Terrorists will already be trying to identify the next weak spot in our security to exploit. We need to ensure that risk and impact assessment is central to the EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy, including in the delivery of the important European Programme for Critical Infrastructure Protection (EPCIP), which will help share expertise among Member States.

As Ministers responsible for internal security and counter-terrorism, we gave our full support to the Presidency and Commission and agreed to do all that we could to give swift effect to this work. We agree to continue discussions in the EU Council meetings, including the upcoming informal meeting of the Council in Tampere, Finland in September.

Press Statement issued jointly by Ministers of UK, Finland, Germany, Portugal, Slovenia, France and the Vice-President of the European Commission.