



Brussels, 30 March, 2004
S0090/04

Summary Transcript of Joint Press Briefing

**Javier SOLANA,
EU High Representative for the CFSP,
Gijs de VRIES,
Counter-terrorism co-ordinator**

Brussels, 30 March, 2004

Introductory remarks:

Javier Solana: It is a pleasure for me to introduce Gijs de Vries, whom I have recently appointed as co-ordinator for terrorism-related matters in the Council of the European Union. Let me start by saying why I have chosen him to do this job. His curriculum speaks for itself. He is somebody with a successful political career in his country. Moreover, he has been a member of the European Parliament for many years and he has represented his country in the European Convention. Mr de Vries is thus a very seasoned politician. He is also in possession of a very important asset for all of us, European citizens, he has been secretary of state at the Dutch ministry of the interior and this experience is something that we need in the Council.

What will be his main tasks? Allow me to start by saying that we are not re-inventing the wheel, we have been working very hard and at a very good pace since "September 11", but we wish to see how the wheel can turn much more rapidly. We have no time to waste. At least three types of things will have to be done in order for us to be more efficient.

Firstly, we need to analyse the work that has been done so far and see how it can be done in a more efficient manner. Secondly, Mr de Vries has to do the preparatory work, so that ministers of the interior can have as much information as possible to make serious decisions when they meet in the Council. Thirdly, and very importantly, we must make sure that every country, once a decision has been made collectively by the European Union, implements it at national level.

As you can see, Mr de Vries has a significant amount of work ahead of him. I'm totally confident that he is going to do it with perfection. He will have all the support of everybody here in the General Secretariat of the Council. His job is of key importance to all of us, not only to ministers of the interior, but most importantly, to the citizens of the European Union, for whom we are going to work day and night if necessary.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

Cristina Gallach - Spokesperson of the Secretary General, High Representative for CFSP

+ 32 (0)2 285 6467 / 6217 / 8239 / 5150/ 5151 + 32 (0)2 285 5694

internet: <http://ue.eu.int/solana>

e-mail: presse.cabinet@consilium.eu.int

Gijs de Vries: Thank you very much Javier for that brief introduction. Ladies and gentlemen, as you know the European Council in Brussels has decided on an ambitious programme of legislative and other activities for the next number of months. On top of the big amount of work which has already been carried out in recent years, and which, fortunately, has already yielded its fruits, a lot more has to be done. That is what the European Council has said and the role of the Council's secretariat, and of myself in particular, will be to assist member states in doing the things that they have said they would do, i.e. to deliver on commitments. That is the central challenge. It is a challenge notably in terms of the legislation which must be put in place, but which must also be implemented swiftly and properly. We have to look at how the different agencies of the member states, which have already beefed up their collaboration, can be made to work together even more effectively. So, we are not in the business of creating a new institution, or a new bureaucracy, we are in the business of making sure that the commitments entered into will be carried out as planned. That is what our citizens expect from us, and that is what we must do.

Obviously, we live in an open society in Europe, where people enjoy many liberties. It is important to preserve those liberties, to build on them. That means, of course, that there can never be in any society a guaranty of 100% security. But what we can do, and what our citizens must expect, is that as governments and as institutions of the European Union we do everything in our power to strengthen our collaboration and to make sure that all the necessary measures are in place in time.

o
o o

Questions:

Reuters: *You will be asked to produce a report in 180-days time, could you please explain to us what will be the basis of this report?*

Javier Solana: Mr de Vries will produce another report before that one, on how to make intelligence co-operation more efficient. As you know, we already have in place an Intelligence Group here at the Council. What we have to see now is how the co-operation with this group and with the intelligence agencies can be enhanced. These are some of the ideas that we were asked to propose for discussion at European Council in June.



Radio 1, Netherlands: *Mr de Vries, do you believe that your mandate is sufficiently strong?*

Gijs de Vries: If our common efforts were to depend on the initiative of one or two individuals than we would not be in a very good situation. In Europe, we have many institutions and many agencies and government bodies, and all have a responsibility in making our society as safe as it can possibly be. The job of the European Union is to allow member states to do their work better and more effectively, on the basis of the commitments made by their heads of state and government. The European Council has indicated what it wants to be done, now we have to do it, not only we in Brussels, but also the national capitals and that is were I think the emphasis will be and should be.

Javier Solana: When you ask about the strength of the mandate, the important thing to keep in mind is the quality of the people who take the responsibility for that mandate. You can be sure that the person we have chosen has the right profile to tackle the difficult problems ahead of us, and we intend to tackle them collectively in a very constructive manner as a Union of 25 states.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

Cristina Gallach - Spokesperson of the Secretary General, High Representative for CFSP

 + 32 (0)2 285 6467 / 6217 / 8239 / 5150/ 5151  + 32 (0)2 285 5694

internet: <http://ue.eu.int/solana>

e-mail: presse.cabinet@consilium.eu.int