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Subject : Revised EU Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism

Delegations will find in annex a revised EU Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism resulting from discussions in the Terrorism Working Party and the Article 36 Committee in October and November 2008. Subsequent to achieving agreement on the document in Coreper on 12 November 2008, technical and linguistic changes were introduced to the text, which is forwarded to the Council for adoption.

1. Terrorism is a threat to all States and to all people. It poses a serious risk for the security of the European Union and the lives of its citizens. The European Union is determined to tackle this scourge. Doing so requires a comprehensive response. We must reduce the threat by disrupting existing terrorist networks and preventing recruitment to terrorism. And we must reduce our vulnerability to attack by better protecting potential targets and improving our consequence management capabilities.
2. To enhance our policies to prevent recruitment, a strategy and an action plan to address radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism were adopted in 2005 with the action plan having been updated in February 2007 and November 2008 and the strategy in November 2008. This strategy builds on the considerable work accomplished since the European Council's adoption on 25 March 2004 of the Declaration on Combating Terrorism, including the Commission Communication on Terrorist Recruitment: addressing the factors contributing to violent radicalisation. It outlines how the Union and the Member States will combat radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism. It is part of a broader EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Action Plan endorsed by the European Council in 2005.

The challenge

3. Radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism are not confined to one faith or political persuasion. Europe has experienced different types of terrorism in its history. While radical Islamists are currently the main focus for clandestine networks using religion for criminal ends, radicalisation and recruitment is a common factor of all ideologies that predicate terrorist action. That is why this strategy and the accompanying action plan must reflect Europe's desire to combat all forms of terrorism, whoever the perpetrators may be.

4. The vast majority of Europeans, irrespective of belief, reject extremist ideology. Even amongst the small number that do not, only a few turn to terrorism.

The decision to become involved in terrorism is an individual one, even though the motives for it are often similar. There can be no excuse or impunity for it, but it is our responsibility to identify and counter the routes, the propaganda and the factors through which people are drawn into terrorism and are led to consider it a legitimate course of action.

5. Addressing this challenge is beyond the power of governments alone. Terrorism will only be defeated with the support of the public, in Europe and elsewhere. The overwhelming majority of people espouse the values of peace and tolerance. The European Union rejects any justification for terrorism, religious or otherwise. The Union welcomes the strong stance of the people of Europe and elsewhere against terrorism and urges them not to relent in their condemnation.

Our response

6. To counter radicalisation and terrorist recruitment, the EU resolves to:
 - disrupt the activities of the networks and individuals that draw people into terrorism;
 - ensure that voices of mainstream opinion prevail over those of extremism;
 - promote security, justice, democracy and opportunity for all even more forcefully.
7. We will ensure at all times that respect for fundamental rights is not undermined. To ensure our reactions are effective and appropriate, we will work to develop our understanding of the problem. To that end we will engage in dialogue with governments that have experienced this problem, academic experts and faith groups in Europe and elsewhere.

Disrupting the activities of the networks and individuals that draw people into terrorism

8. There are practical steps an individual must take to become involved in terrorism. The progression from idea to action has been greatly facilitated by globalisation: ease of travel and communication and of financial transfers mean easier access to radical ideas and training. The Internet plays a part in this and can be used for post-attack justification. The Internet can also be used by potential terrorists to procure the means for committing terrorist acts.

9. We need to spot such behaviour using, for example, community policing and effective monitoring of the Internet and of travel to conflict zones. We must build on our expertise by exchanging national assessments and analyses. We also need to disrupt such behaviour. We will limit the activities of those involved in radicalisation, particularly in prisons, places of education and religious training, and places of worship. We must also examine the issues surrounding the admittance to and residence in the EU of such individuals. We will step up our action to prevent individuals gaining access to terrorist training, targeting especially those who travel to conflict zones. We must put in place an appropriate legal framework to prevent individuals from inciting and legitimising violence. We will examine ways of preventing terrorist recruitment via the Internet. We will also focus on the process of rejecting radicalisation. We will pursue political dialogue and target technical assistance to help others outside the EU to do the same.

Ensuring that voices of mainstream opinion prevail over those of extremism

10. There is a particular extremist world view which leads individuals to consider and justify violence. The propaganda expounds a simplistic rhetoric, distorting the reality of conflicts around the world and using them as evidence of a clash between different values and societal choices. This interpretation distorts perceptions of Western policies.

11. We need to empower mainstream voices by stepping up the dialogue with political, religious and separatist groups which favour moderation and exclude recourse to violence. Efforts should be made to ensure that linguistic and cultural knowledge provide a more appropriate image of the leading figures.

We will coordinate and enhance our efforts to change the perception of European and Western policies. We should also continue and revise work to develop a non-emotive lexicon in order to avoid linking religion to terrorism. We must ensure that our policies do not exacerbate divisions.

Promoting democracy, security, justice, and opportunity for all even more forcefully

12. There are a number of factors in society which may create an environment favourable to radicalisation. Those factors do not necessarily lead to radicalisation, but may make the radical message more appealing to those who suffer the consequences of them and those who, in turn, identify with their suffering.

These factors may include poor or autocratic governance; states moving from autocratic control via inadequate reform to partial democracy; rapid but unmanaged modernisation; lack of political and economic prospects, unresolved international and domestic strife; and inadequate and inappropriate education or cultural opportunities for young people. Within the Union most of these factors are not present but they may come into play within individual segments of the population and there may also be issues of identity in immigrant communities.

13. We should strive to eliminate the structural factors underlying radicalisation both within the Union and outside it. As part of our response, within the Union we must target inequalities and discrimination where they exist and promote intercultural dialogue, debate, and, where appropriate, long-term integration and external economic policies. Outside Europe, we must promote good governance, human rights, democracy, education and economic prosperity, through our political dialogue and assistance programmes. And we must work to resolve conflicts.

Increasing our understanding and developing appropriate responses

14. To avoid radicalisation spreading to parts of Europe which until now have been spared, the EU will continue to develop its collective understanding of radicalisation, listening to groups open to radicalisation and others, comparing national situations and establishing a European picture. The response will need to evolve in line with the situation in Europe and beyond. To ensure that our approach remains up to date we will review progress annually.

Delivering the strategy

15. Member States will work, individually and together, with the support of the European Commission and other European Union bodies, to deliver this strategy. The key to our success will be the energy which non-governmental groups – communities, religious authorities and other organisations – across Europe devote to countering the rhetoric of the extremists and condemning their criminal acts.
16. The challenge of combating radicalisation and terrorist recruitment is the responsibility of the Member States. They set the social, education, and economic policies that can foster equality and inclusion in mainstream society. It is they who determine foreign, defence and security policies, and the manner in which they are communicated to the public. They are accountable to their parliaments and people for their action in those fields. The problems of extremism and how to counter it vary greatly from one Member State to another. This strategy enables Member States to take measures at national level based on a common understanding of the factors of radicalisation and of the principles and actions for countering them.
17. Work at pan-European level can provide an important framework. Member States are able to coordinate their policies; share information about tactical responses developed at national level; determine good practice; and work together to come up with new ideas. The Commission supports this by channelling its policies effectively, and in particular by investing in research, organising conferences, support for education and inter cultural engagement, and monitoring at pan-European level.

18. Beyond the borders of Europe initiatives can be undertaken through the instruments, mechanisms and processes that the EU has established with individual countries and regional organisations, including the political dialogue and assistance programmes.
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