

G6 meeting, Paris, 1 December 2011

This written ministerial statement was laid in the House of Commons on 8 December 2011 by Theresa May, and in the House of Lords by Baroness Verma.

Secretary of State for the Home Department (Theresa May): The informal G6 group of Ministers of the Interior from France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland and the UK held their most recent meeting in Paris on 1 December under the French Presidency of the group.

The meeting was chaired by the French Interior Minister Claude Guéant. The meeting was divided into two working sessions which were attended by the G6 Ministers of the Interior. Additional guests included the US Attorney General, Eric Holder; the US Secretary of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, and European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Cecilia Malmström.

The first working session of G6 Ministers and the Commission considered Schengen governance, asylum and itinerant (mobile) criminality. Delegates agreed on the need for a stronger political governance of the Schengen area that would preserve the achievement of the border-free zone while retaining the necessary safeguards.

G6 Ministers agreed that Member States should retain the possibility of re-imposing internal border controls in the event of a major failure of the external border or a large, unexpected migratory pressure. They called for an early warning mechanism to alert Schengen states in this regard, as well as a strengthening of the Schengen Evaluation Mechanism.

On asylum, the meeting recognised the need for the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) to provide those Member States taking part in it with the tools and procedures to respond quickly and effectively to asylum claims.

Delegates noted the European Council's desire to conclude the CEAS negotiations in 2012, and as far as possible before the end of Denmark's EU Presidency. I underlined the need to deal with asylum cases as swiftly as possible and to ensure that decisions were made properly to distinguish between those claims that were genuine and those that were not. On itinerant criminality, Ministers discussed the need to direct more effectively existing EU resources, such as Europol and Eurojust, to tackle the threat of mobile organised crime groups. I raised the issue of metal theft which affects G6 countries as well as the UK.

The second session, including the US representatives, focused on the recovery of criminal assets and Transatlantic data sharing. Delegates discussed the ongoing difficulties associated with recovering the proceeds of organised crime, and agreed on the need for greater international cooperation and more robust asset recovery procedures.

The US Attorney General underlined the importance of civil procedures in asset recovery. I emphasised that financial investigation skills and techniques were not an addition but rather an essential part of the wider armoury of techniques required to investigate criminality. Delegates then discussed the progress of negotiations around the EU-US PNR and EU-US Data Protection Agreements.

In addition to the two plenary sessions, I spoke about the preparations underway for the 2012 Olympic Games, and presented the UK's plans to reform the European Court of Human Rights under our Chairmanship of the Council of Europe. I also held separate bilateral meetings with some of the other heads of delegation to discuss a range of issues including extradition, illegal migration, Passenger Name Records and data protection.

The next meeting of the G6 is expected to be held in Germany in June.

Thursday, 8 December 2011

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