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to : Delegations

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AREA OF FREEDOM, SECURITY AND JUSTICE

The French, Czech and Swedish Presidencies will coincide with a period of significant changes for the European Union. The end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009 will be the last period of full-scale activity for the European Parliament and the Commission. The elections to the European Parliament in June 2009 and the appointment of a new Commission during the second half of 2009 will have a profound effect on the work of the three Presidencies.

In this transition period, the Presidencies will do their utmost to ensure continuity of the efforts being made in the last few years to implement The Hague Programme and its Action Plan and will take pending work forward. They will also aim at further developing the area of freedom, security and justice. In doing so, they will strive to maintain a balance between enhancing the security of European citizens and guaranteeing fundamental rights and the protection of the individual.

A NEW “POST-HAGUE PROGRAMME”

In addition to the finalisation of the implementation of the Hague Programme, which has provided a successful framework for the development of freedom, security and justice, designing a new multi-annual strategic work-programme for 2010-2014 will be a key task.

This new programme, which will be prepared during the Czech and Swedish presidencies, in close cooperation with the European Parliament, will need to be ambitious, forward looking and value-adding, based on realistic objectives and accompanied by clear timeframes, as well as follow the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity.

It will build on :

- the proposals of the Commission and the contributions of the Member States ;
- a thorough evaluation of EU justice and home affairs policies, which the three presidencies aim at developing into a comprehensive assessment mechanism ;
- the ongoing work of the two high-level advisory groups on the future of home affairs and justice policies, the result of which will lead to a final report during the French Presidency.

MIGRATION

In December 2007, the European Council recalled that developing a comprehensive European migration policy, complementing Member States' policies, will remain a fundamental priority and stressed the need for a renewed political commitment in this area. To this end, the adoption of a European Pact on Immigration and Asylum will be proposed. Such Pact will identify the basis for an enhanced, broad and balanced common policy on migration issues, based on a clear distribution of tasks between community, national and intergovernmental levels, as well as on a strengthened dialogue with countries of origin.

In this framework, the three Presidencies will first focus on legal migration policy, taking into account the changing demographic conditions in Europe. They will finalize the discussions on and start the implementation and evaluation of the first two legal instruments, arising from the Policy Plan on Legal Migration, on the conditions and stay of highly qualified professionals and on the rights of migrants. The aim will also be to adopt no later than at the end of the Swedish Presidency the remaining draft Directives on Intra-Corporate transferees, renumarated trainees and seasonal workers. At the same time, during the trio of Presidencies, all efforts will be made towards the objective of removing transition periods applied in respect of the free movement of workers of the new Member States.

In the area of illegal migration, the three Presidencies will, without prejudice to measures to ensure asylum and protection of refugees, promote the adoption of measures which can contribute to a successful fight against this phenomenon, including through the final adoption of the directive on sanctions against employers of illegal immigrants. They will continue to assess the situation, examine in more detail the needs of individual Member States, aim at ensuring the effective return of illegal immigrants to their countries of origin, including through a comprehensive network of readmission agreements with third countries, and reflect on the role of FRONTEX. They also intend to open the question of the EU travel letter and its practical use for expulsion.

A strong priority will also be given to the connection between migration and development, with a view to maximising positive development potential of migration (including by taking into account the issue of brain drain) and implementing a genuine co-development policy reflected in specific projects and supported at the European level. The Presidencies will aim at further progress in the framework of the Global Approach to Migration.

With this in mind, they will strive to deepen the cooperation and political dialogue with countries of origin and transit, both from the East, South-East and South, and to promote mobility partnerships, circular migration and cooperation platforms for migration and development. For example, the French Presidency will organise, in Paris on 20th and 21st October 2008, a second Euro-African Conference on Migration and Development, as a follow up to the Rabat Conference.

Similarly, the Czech Presidency will hold a ministerial conference on further developing dialogue and cooperation with States of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Western Balkans and Turkey, in Prague in April 2009, with the aim to build migration partnerships as a platform for applying the Global Approach to Migration.

A full evaluation of the implementation of the Global Approach to Migration will be carried out at the end of 2008 and will pave the way for a new phase in this area.

ASYLUM AND PROTECTION OF REFUGEES

In the Hague programme it was agreed that a Common European Asylum System shall be in place by 2010. The incoming Presidencies will have a responsibility to bring forward this work, which must be based on the full and inclusive application of the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and other relevant international law obligations. Today, certain Member States receive a disproportionately large share of asylum seekers relative to other Member States. This disparity is linked to the fact that there are still significant differences between Member States' national provisions on asylum procedures, protection related statuses and reception conditions, since the existing Community legislation only contains minimum standards. The establishment of a Common European Asylum System is therefore a key measure in this respect. Such a system is also necessary in order to maintain the long-term sustainability of our asylum systems, and to promote solidarity within the EU. Moreover, we will do our utmost to ensure that a legally secure and open system which safeguards individuals' access to asylum is adopted. Every application for asylum must be assessed individually.

The development of a common resettlement programme in order to protect the most vulnerable refugees identified by UNHCR as an element of the regional protection programmes is urgent. In a global perspective, the EU must reinforce and take its share of the responsibility for managing refugee situations in third countries in order to alleviate burdens and create sustainable solutions. This should be an integrated part of the EU external relations to support regions in third countries in providing adequate protection for refugees.

Moving from minimum common standards to establishing a true common European system is a priority. Therefore, the three Presidencies will give due follow up to this asylum package, presented in June 2008 by the Commission, with a view to harmonise the area further. Furthermore, practical cooperation between national asylum administrations including, inter alia, the establishment of European Support Office, must be enhanced in order to pave the way for the establishment of a Common European Asylum System. The three Presidencies underline the need to continue with progress on the future Common European Asylum System with a view to its realisation by 2010. In order to better prepare the multi-annual work programme for 2010-2014, the French Presidency will organize a ministerial Conference on Asylum in September 2008.

SCHENGEN AREA, BORDERS AND VISA POLICY

Further development in the field of internal security in the Schengen area and control of the external borders will be one of the main priorities for the forthcoming Presidencies, in particular in connection with the extensive enlargement of the Schengen Area in December 2007 and the abolition of border checks at internal borders. The Presidencies will closely monitor and actively support not only the preparation of other states for the integration to the Schengen cooperation, but also the proper application of the Schengen acquis by those countries which are already involved in the cooperation. Besides standard Schengen evaluation, new methods for evaluating the implementation of the acquis, including thematic and regional assessments, will be introduced to increase security at borders.

The future Presidencies will support the implementation of integrated border management as an important tool to manage migration and to fight against cross border crime. This entails exploring the possibilities of using new technology in border control and related areas, such as the creation of an automated entry/exit control system. An integrated border management also requires a more efficient fight against smuggling and use of false travel and residence documents, thanks to the use of biometrics to improve security of identity and travel documents.

The ability of FRONTEX to provide substantive added value to the efforts of the Member States to ensure a high level of external border control should be strengthened. At the same time, cooperation between FRONTEX and EUROPOL, including continuous exchange of information, must be encouraged and enhanced, in order to better fight against networks specializing in facilitating illegal immigration.

On all those issues, the three Presidencies will give appropriate follow up to the border package presented by the Commission during the Slovenian Presidency.

The awaited next generation of the Schengen Information System SIS II as well as VIS will be launched during the trio of Presidencies. The Presidencies will closely follow the process of setting-up of the new information system, making it fully operational and meeting every practical and technical demand. The use of new technologies will be accompanied by adequate data-protection.

Finally, the external relations dimension in the field of visa policy will continue to be an important issue for the three Presidencies. Work will be done in areas such as visa facilitation, in line with the Council conclusions of December 2007, as well as on visa liberalisation with the Western Balkans countries, on the basis of the established roadmaps.

INTEGRATION AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Integration is a subject that has grown in importance in the EU and efforts are being made at the EU level to contribute to a more successful integration of migrants in Member States. Initiatives in this direction include, in particular, the Common Basic Principles for Integration and the European Integration Fund. Another important step forward in this respect was taken in the June 2007 Council conclusions on the strengthening of integration policies in the European Union by promoting unity in diversity, which include a number of concrete examples on how to achieve that goal.

These and other initiatives are based on the belief that, although primarily a national responsibility, Member States' strategies for integration can be strengthened by cooperation and exchange of best practices, with a view to deepening the emerging consensus on common political principles in order to support integration to be followed by all. With this in mind, the French Presidency will organize, on 3rd and 4th November 2008, the third Ministerial Conference on integration.

Intercultural dialogue has become an important instrument in fostering integration of citizens of different origin, cultural background and religion, in counteracting racism and extremism and in preventing radicalisation and recruitment, in the area of terrorism. An exchange of experience between Member States on intercultural dialogue has begun and the Presidencies will endeavour to bring this process forward. The possibility of widening the perspective of intercultural dialogue to include the respect for democracy and human rights will be examined.

Overall, the three Presidencies will step up the efforts to develop efficient policies to realize the social and economic potential of immigrants, being aware that employment, language skills and social policy are of key importance for their successful integration on the labour market and in society and intending to prevent isolation of certain groups and individuals. In this context, the importance of the media and of informing the public will be duly taken into account.

FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

The objective to counter all forms of terrorism remains a top priority for the European Union and will be high on the agenda for the three Presidencies. They will focus in particular on further implementing the Action Plan to Combat Terrorism. Along with the more traditional regions of interest in this respect, specific attention will be paid to deepening the cooperation with partners in the Western Balkans. For that purpose, the EU Situation Centre (SitCen) will be asked to provide Member States with strategic analysis.

The phenomenon of recruitment and radicalization will remain an important issue. There is a serious need to detect potential terrorists at an early stage, while respecting the balanced approach between the fight against terrorism and protection of individual rights.

The Presidencies will also continue to work on cyber crime in particular by supporting the initiative “Check the Web” launched during the German Presidency.

The three Presidencies will strive to develop the actions against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) threats and risks. National authorities have to implement measures to prevent and to deal with these threats and risks based on the current discussion and activities and on the model for a European strategy in relation to bioterrorism. An exercise “CBRN-EU-Terror Attack” will be organised during the second semester of 2008.

The possibility of revising the Action Plan on Terrorism Financing will be examined.

After two years of operation it seems necessary to evaluate and upgrade the role of the SitCen and to make better use at both the collective and the individual levels of strategic evaluations of the terrorist threats. Presidencies acting in close cooperation with the JHA Council and the EU counter-terrorism coordinator intend to increase the value of SitCen strategic analysis.

As part of current works taking place within the terrorism working groups (TWG), the three Presidencies will continue with the implementation of the Action Plan on Enhancing Security of Explosives. An assessment of the implementation of the action plan is to take place by the end of the Swedish presidency.

FIGHTING TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

The three Presidencies are convinced of the need to take common steps, in particular through joint analysis of the situation and trends, in preventing trafficking in human beings and strengthening the victim care programs. Consequently they will seek to further develop the EU anti-trafficking policies, as well as concrete operative measures to curb this phenomenon, including through the increased involvement of Europol and Eurojust in the coordination of investigations and prosecutions in this area.

On the basis of the Commission report on the evaluation and monitoring of the EU Plan of Action on trafficking in human beings expected in 2008, the Presidencies will initiate a process of assessing the implementation of anti-trafficking policies in order to identify gaps in the EU response. The objective will be to achieve a set of priorities for future action against trafficking.

Priority will also be given to the development of common EU standards to collect and analyse data on trafficking, the establishment of an EU specialized network and, in the context of the external dimension of Justice and Home Affairs, the development of an Action Oriented Paper, in line with the EU strategy on external relations in the field of Justice and Home Affairs. Coordination of joint preventing activities, in particular in main countries of origin, will also be supported. Full attention will be given to the fight against criminal networks involved in the trafficking of persons and especially the sexual exploitation of women and the trafficking in minors. The necessity of more efficient information exchange about the most vulnerable groups of children, such as unaccompanied minors, exploited children or missing children among law enforcement agencies and agencies of child care will be highlighted.

COMBATING DRUGS

Based on the evaluation of the 2005-2008 Action Plan against drugs, the three Presidencies will initiate a review of the EU policy on the fight against drugs trafficking and pave the way for the adoption of a new Action Plan for 2009-2012. This exercise will serve as a framework for defining a joint European position when the anti-drugs policy of the United Nations comes under review in March 2009.

The three Presidencies will make sure that the EU continues to give priority to the fight against drugs trafficking and to promote the deployment of Joint Investigation Teams with Europol focussing on this objective. The involvement of Eurojust in coordinating investigations and prosecutions with a view to the dismantling of drug trafficking networks will also be encouraged. The consideration of the link between drugs trafficking and terrorism, which started during the Slovenian Presidency, will be carried forward. A mandate will be given to Europol to provide evidence related to such link.

While the cooperation currently being pursued in Afghanistan, Pakistan and in Latin America will continue, increased cooperation to crack down on the traffic in precursor chemicals and drugs in the Mediterranean region will be promoted. The recent setting-up of a maritime police cooperation centre in Portugal covering the Atlantic could inspire the establishment of a facility for the Mediterranean. Furthermore, full attention will also be given to other increasingly challenging areas, such as West Africa.

The Commission will submit a report in 2009 on the implementation of the Framework Decision on illicit drug trafficking. If any shortcomings in the implementation of the instrument are discovered in the evaluation, the three Presidencies would like to see further actions in the fight against illicit drugs. The three Presidencies would also strive to promote a common European Drugs Profiling System (CHAIN).

CUSTOMS AND POLICE COOPERATION

Strengthening the area of freedom, security and justice implies a comprehensive approach as regards security issues, the reinforcement of the operational cooperation and an optimization of law enforcement cooperation tools.

The three Presidencies welcome the decision to provide EUROPOL with a new legal basis and a more flexible organisation, while taking into account security gaps as identified by the competent authorities of Member States, and commit to implement this decision. The role of EUROPOL will be enhanced, in particular in the context of the deployment of Joint Investigation Teams.

As an essential tool to promote joint training, cross-border communication and a common culture irrespective of initial differences, CEPOL will be evaluated in the light of priorities identified by the JHA Council and on the basis of requirements in order to enhance operational cooperation.

In addition, the three Presidencies, as part of their plan to enhance operational cooperation and exchange of information, will work towards :

- building a communication network and an *ad hoc* data base for the exchange of information regarding stolen objects of cultural value ;
- enhancing cooperation between police and customs authorities in cross-border crime. Due to the operational side of the issue and, as part of this activity, a manual for improving operational cooperation between the police and customs authorities, placing an emphasis for example on joint police and customs centres, will be drawn up. The progress report on the implementation of the Council Recommendation of 27 April 2006 on the drawing up of agreements between police, customs and other specialized law enforcement services in relation to the prevention and combating of crime will be finalized ;
- strengthening customs cooperation through the promotion of appropriate legal instruments (mutual assistance agreement or “Naples II”), the organization of joint operations and exchange of best practices between Member States ;
- reaching an agreement on the Customs Action Plan which will enter into force in 2010 ;
- enhancing police cooperation where temporary movement of EU citizens so requires : increased security in international trains could be stepped up, through the deployment of common patrols on board trains ; temporary "European police stations" could be set up, in areas and at times of important tourist concentration and where and when big events take place ;
- auditing the existing international (global and regional) networks for detecting and reporting cyber-crime, exchange of best practices in this area and overlapping of existing gaps ;
- creating an EU platform for detecting and reporting cyber crime with the aim of developing a European dedicated network ;
- establishing an appropriate forum to share analyses on environmental threats and criminality, related in particular to toxic and/or industrial waste trafficking and allowing therefore for a better coordination between law enforcement organizations ;

- enhancing law enforcement cooperation, through the setting up of an appropriate network, in the area of traffic police, so as to provide for better cooperation of law enforcement response and facilitate legal proceedings against traffic offenders from other Member States and enforcement of sanctions, in consistency with the draft instrument on facilitating exchange of information pertaining to the identity of offenders and the nature of the committed offences.

EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

In an area without internal borders and with almost 500 million inhabitants, improved exchange of information between law enforcement authorities is a fundamental aspect of security. In order to improve our common performance in preventing and fighting cross-border criminality an efficient exchange of information between our respective law enforcement services is essential, as is the possibility to use aggregated data for follow-up analysis of trends. The three Presidencies will give priority to developing a coordinated and coherent approach with regard to the exchange of information between law enforcement authorities, as well as promoting greater interoperability between the systems concerned.

The Presidencies will also seek to complete the establishment of the major information systems by launching and implementing SIS II, allowing access of law enforcement authorities to Eurodac, completing the work of integrating the Treaty of Prüm into the legal system of the EU and implementing the Visa Information System (VIS).

One of objective will be to make progress, in a constant dialogue with the European Parliament, on the European “Passenger Name Record” (PNR). A necessary prerequisite is that the PNR should bring substantial added value in preventing and combating international terrorism and crime, while fully respecting data protection and fundamental rights of individual travellers.

COOPERATION IN CRIMINAL LAW

In consistency with The Hague Programme, the three Presidencies will continue to implement the principle of mutual recognition of judicial decisions in criminal matters, which has been since Tampere the cornerstone of judicial cooperation between Member States.

In this regard, the three Presidencies will give priority to the proposals relating to Judgements in Absentia and a European Supervision Order and will endeavour to adopt the instruments as soon as possible. A proposal by the Commission for an extended European Evidence Warrant should also be brought forward. The evaluation of the European Arrest Warrant is progressing. The three Presidencies will strive for an implementation and coherent enforcement of the Arrest Warrant in a way which is upholding legal safeguards.

With a view to facilitate judicial cooperation between Member States, the three Presidencies will aim at strengthening cooperation instruments, such as Eurojust and the European Judicial Network (EJN). To this end, they will seek, as a matter of priority, to complete the decision-making process concerning those instruments submitted in January 2008 by fourteen Member States, including France, the Czech Republic and Sweden. The objective is to increase operational capability of the bodies concerned, allowing them to better coordinate enquiries into cases involving several Member States. This will be an important step in the development of Eurojust.

The best way to fight crime is to prevent its occurrence. The Commission will present an evaluation of the European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN) in spring 2009. Based on this evaluation, the Presidencies will work to further strengthen and professionalize the EUCPN and make the tasks of the Network more concrete. This should include further development of the exchange of best practices in the field of crime prevention and in building knowledge about crime and crime prevention. EUCPN should also have a role in collecting and disseminating information on support to victims of crime.

The Commission recently presented a follow up to the implementation of the Framework Decision on the Standing of Victims in Criminal Proceedings. The three Presidencies will give priority to the forthcoming Commission's proposal in the area of the rights of victims.

The three Presidencies will also pursue the necessary approximation of legislation, regarding both incriminations and sanctions, which reflects the common values of the European Union and which facilitates judicial cooperation.

With this in mind, the three Presidencies will ensure rapid adoption of the Framework Decision making incitement to terrorist acts and recruitment for terrorist purposes criminal offences, the Directive on the protection of environment through criminal law and the Directive on ship-source pollution

Coercive measures should be accompanied by corresponding rules to strengthen the rights of the individual, whether a suspect, victim or witness. Without prejudice to a future proposal by the Commission for a legal instrument on procedural rights in criminal proceedings, practical measures will be encouraged. A conference on the individuals' access to justice, including procedural rights in criminal proceedings, will be held in Stockholm in July 2009.

COOPERATION IN CIVIL LAW

The judicial cooperation in civil matters should continue to be improved, with the aim of ensuring a higher level of legal certainty for EU citizens who travel, live or work in another Member State. The three Presidencies will do their utmost to meet the challenge of responding to the practical needs of European citizens, in a changing society.

The three Presidencies will focus on family law, a crucial area affecting the everyday lives of people. The negotiations on amending the regulation 2201/2003 as regards jurisdiction and applicable law in matrimonial matters and on adopting a new regulation on maintenance obligations must be finalized. The Presidencies will also seek to initiate work on succession and wills and on matrimonial property regimes.

Furthermore, they will cooperate in bringing forward the arising problem related to the protection of vulnerable adults who tend to live longer and move more often within the EU. Without prejudice to the ratification by the European Community itself, Member States will be invited to ratify The Hague Convention of 13th January 2000 and to reflect, in addition, on the possibility of tools in order to facilitate operational cooperation and thus implementation of the Convention by Member States.

With respect to increasing legal certainty for European citizens in the business sector, progress has been made in order to facilitate free movement of executive orders within the EU. Amending the Regulation on jurisdiction, recognition and enforcement of judgements in civil and commercial matters (Brussels I) will contribute to further improvements in this area and is a matter of priority.

The possibility for our citizens to benefit from the application of the mutual recognition principle to authentic acts established by the competent authorities of Member States, in other areas than uncontested claims which are already covered by the Regulation creating a European order for uncontested claims, could also be envisaged.

The three Presidencies will also follow up on the project to establish a common frame of reference in the area of European contract law. Regardless of the outcome of the forthcoming political discussions, this project will have an impact on future revision of the acquis and on further possible harmonisation measures in this area. The Presidencies will aim at results useful for the legislator and beneficial for businesses and consumers.

The scheduled amendment to the decision establishing the European Judicial Network on civil and commercial matters should give the opportunity to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of this cooperation instrument. The Network should become a platform for exchange of best practices in implementing community law in the European judicial area and a website opened up to the public. It could also be used as a way of getting rapid and reliable information on foreign law for jurisdictions which need to implement it.

Regarding judicial cooperation in civil matters with third countries, an appropriate solution needs to be found in order to allow Member States to negotiate or amend existing legal instruments in cases where the Community does not intend to exercise its competences. The three Presidencies will work towards that objective.

JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND CONCRETE COOPERATION

Further work will be devoted to the proper and efficient exchange of information on criminal proceedings between the criminal registers of Member States, while respecting the fundamental principles of due data protection in the context of judicial cooperation.

The Presidencies are aware of the importance of the E-Justice agenda. They will continue to work on particular projects relating to the progressive completion of the European Justice Portal, in order to provide a simple access to both the EU legislation and national law from a single place. Particular attention will be given to meeting all the necessary conditions for the success of the particular projects, in particular those identified by the previous Presidencies.

Training is an important asset with a view to increasing confidence between professionals of Justice. The European Union needs to support training of judges and other professionals. In this context, the three Presidencies will work at establishing common guidelines for such support.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Apart from the regular meetings at political level in the area of Justice and Home Affairs, the three Presidencies will focus on enhancing expert-level cooperation with third countries and on taking forward the work on initiatives which are already running. The Strategy on JHA external relations provides a general framework for activities. The existing action oriented papers offer a great deal of practical advice and suggestions. Further steps will draw from the evaluation of the Strategy on the basis of a report of the European Commission and the General Secretariat of the Council, presented in June 2008. The Presidencies will consider drawing up a new strategic document, which would give orientation for the future external relations. They will also consider whether any further action oriented papers are necessary to meet the requirements of on-the-ground cooperation.

Achieving full visa reciprocity between all EU Member States and third countries (and especially the USA and Canada) is of utmost importance. The three Presidencies will maintain sustained effort to reach this goal.

The Presidencies will also strive to fulfil and further implement various instruments mentioned in the Global Approach to Migration. They will, in close cooperation between JHA and external relations working parties, further develop the dialogue and cooperation with third countries on migration issues.

A key topic for cooperation with the third countries is also fight against all forms of crime, mainly organized crime. A particular attention will be paid to cooperation with the source and transit countries for trafficking in human beings. The three presidencies will present an action oriented paper on this subject, in which the need for cooperation with third countries will be highlighted. This process will culminate in a ministerial conference to be held under the Swedish Presidency, with participants from the EU, Russia and the European Neighbourhood Policy partners, NGOs and other parties concerned.

The three Presidencies consider that EU agencies, such as Frontex, Eurojust, Europol and CEPOL, play an important role in JHA external relations. They will build on their expertise and involve them fully in the ongoing dialogue with third countries, as well as support the extending of the contractual framework for cooperation of these agencies with the third countries in compliance with the Strategy objectives.

JHA partnership with the neighbouring countries through the European Neighbourhood Policy is key to enhancing also our own security. The three Presidencies will strive to maintain good momentum in cooperation in JHA matters with partners to the East and South of the EU, in line with the relevant Council conclusions. They will promote easier people-to-people contacts, while paying attention to ensuring legitimate security interests of the EU. The three Presidencies will also pay attention to the Western Balkans region. Taking initiatives in that particular region, which includes candidate as well as potential candidate countries will help to prevent and combat organized crime and terrorism. Therefore, the Presidencies will promote the threat assessment related to organized crime (OCTA) in this particular region and also consider its possible extension to other areas. Current works aiming at providing the SECI Centre in Bucharest with appropriate legal texts and at setting up a partnership with Europol and Frontex will be followed up.

The Baltic Sea region will also be one of the priorities. The cooperation with Russia on JHA issues should be enhanced through a follow-up and a revision of the action oriented paper adopted during the Finnish Presidency and by promoting an intensified cooperation on civil matters and on the fight against organized crime. Ministerial meetings (Permanent Partnership Council) between the EU and Russia in troika format will be held.

With regard to the United States, the work of the three Presidencies will build on progress achieved so far. They will focus, inter alia, on counter-terrorism, especially radicalisation and recruitment, visa-free travel, exchange of information for law-enforcement purposes and data protection.

Due to the importance of a strategic approach to the external dimension of JHA policies, the three Presidencies have, for the first time, prepared a common JHA External Relations Multi-Presidency Work Programme, which will be presented in July 2008.

CIVIL PROTECTION

The three Presidencies acknowledge the need for the European Union to improve its capacity to respond effectively to crisis and emergency situations, both within the EU and outside its borders. The EU will enhance and coordinate its contributions to the prevention, preparedness and response (including recovery) activities of the Member States under an integrated all-hazards approach encompassing all relevant instruments. Due follow-up will be given to the Commission communication on reinforcing the European Union's disaster response capacity and on the prevention of disasters. Attention will, in particular, be given to strengthening the Monitoring and Information Center (MIC), to implementing and developing civil protection intervention modules and to developing training of civil protection professionals. Moreover, the EU will support the development of early warning systems and alarm systems and contribute to the protection of critical infrastructure. In addition, the three Presidencies will strive to improve cooperation and further develop common actions to enhance security against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) threats and risks. Closer relations will be established with relevant international organizations, in particular UNOCHA, and regional cooperation will be encouraged.