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NOTE

From: Austrian delegation
To: Delegations
Subject: Vienna Declaration - Tackling Violent Extremism and Terrorism

Delegations will find in annex the declaration of the Ministerial Conference of Foreign and Interior Ministers “Tackling Jihadism Together” held in Vienna on 20 March 2015.

Vienna Declaration

Tackling Violent Extremism and Terrorism

We, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Ministers of Interior of Croatia, Italy, Slovenia and Austria (as host of the Conference) together with our colleagues from the Western Balkans 6 in the presence of the European Commission, the OSCE, the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, Europol and the Regional Cooperation Council at the Conference “Tackling Jihadism Together – Shaping, Preventing, Reacting”,

RECOGNISING the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the universality of the values of peace, security, human dignity, as well as freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion,

RECALLING Europe’s cultural, religious and humanist inheritance and AWARE of its cultural and religious diversity,

DETERMINED to ensure, respect and safeguard common values, fundamental rights and freedoms and to defend them against the background of terrorist attacks, like those occurred in Paris, Copenhagen and Tunis in early 2015, that are a challenge to all European States and their open societies,

AWARE that radicalisation and extremism which leads to terrorism are among the major challenges confronting internal and external security in Europe and that the phenomenon of “foreign terrorist fighters” who travel to conflict areas in Iraq and Syria for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or for terrorist training, constitutes a new threat to the security of Europe,

EMPHASISING the significant role of the Western Balkans with regard to security and stability in Europe and acknowledging the considerable efforts made and progress achieved by them in improving their capacities in the area of justice, freedom and security as well as their readiness to cooperate efficiently among each other as well as with the Member States of the European Union and other relevant international actors,

DETERMINED to fully and effectively implement the UN Security Council resolutions¹ on all measures against extremism and terrorism, taking into consideration the intercultural dialogue concept developed by the UN Security Council,

UNDERLINING their determination to further promote the efforts of the OSCE regarding intercultural and interreligious dialogue²,

SUPPORTING the special role, responsibility and potential of the Council of Europe in safeguarding human rights in Europe, as well as the Council of Europe's current efforts against radicalisation including the current negotiations on formulating an Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism which aims at strengthening the common legal basis for criminal prosecution of persons who travel abroad for the purpose of terrorism,

EMPHASISING the intention of the European Union and the Western Balkan Partners to enhance targeted measures against terrorism and violent extremism in collaboration as proclaimed in the Conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council on 09 February 2015 and in the statement by the members of the European Council of 12 February 2015,

INTENDING to pursue a comprehensive, proactive approach as set forth in the Conclusions adopted by the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council on 04/05 December 2014 and in its Riga Joint Statement of 29/30 January 2015, including measures to prevent radicalisation, promote social cohesion and intensify the intercultural and interreligious dialogue,

REFERRING to the Joint Statement on Terrorism, adopted by the SEECF Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Tirana on 24 February 2015 to the declaration of the 'Intercultural Dialogue and Internal Security' Conference adopted on 28/29 April 2010 in Sarajevo by the Ministers of the Western Balkan Partners and the Salzburg Forum, which outlines in particular that basic values, fundamental freedoms and human rights are crucial in promoting social cohesion in a society and have to be seen as a comprehensive concept which - if well understood - serves as a basis for people to live together in harmony and security in their daily lives,

¹ In particular Security Council resolution 2178 (2014) and Security Council resolution 2199 (2015)

² The motto of the Security Day 2015 in Vienna being "Promoting Dialogue to Advance Tolerance and Prevent Radicalization"

CONSIDERING the results of the 'Integration, Fundamental Rights and European Values' Expert Conference organised by Austria in cooperation with the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights on 10/11 December 2012 in Vienna on communicating clear and simply selected fundamental rights relevant for integration and social cohesion,

DETERMINED to follow an integrative and complementary approach countering the occurring forms of terrorism, extremism and radicalisation, presented as Slovenian Initiative (WBCT) to the SEE participants at the EU "Regional Workshop on Countering Violent Extremism", in Ljubljana on 16/17 October 2014, and supported by the Ministers of Brdo Process in Slovenia on 3 June 2014 and the Ministers of Salzburg Forum Ministerial Conference and Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe Meeting in Slovenia on 11/12 November 2014,

ARE OF THE OPINION that the following three-tier approach "shaping - preventing - reacting" should be followed and relevant measures be taken in order to promote living together in freedom and security on the basis of fundamental rights and values as well as to jointly tackle violent extremism:

SHAPING

The Ministers will enhance their political and economic cooperation as well as collaboration in terms of security and development policies in the common interest of security, prosperity and peace. They will proactively contribute to building strong partnerships between the European Union and the Western Balkans. In this context, the EU enlargement process plays a central role in adopting the EU acquis and EU standards with respect to the fight against terrorism and the prevention of radicalisation.

The Ministers will continue to support efforts to strengthen social cohesion, as well as living together in freedom and security on the basis of fundamental rights and values of people with different cultural and religious backgrounds.

Efforts to develop communication strategies to promote tolerance and respect, non-discrimination, fundamental freedoms and solidarity should be increased. Based on existing activities, such as the numerous ongoing projects in the field of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, a joint concept for this purpose should be elaborated. The dissemination of information relating to the respect for human rights in culturally diverse societies plays a major role in this context.

European identity is culturally and religiously diverse. Therefore, it is important to understand the challenges young people are confronted with in terms of linguistic diversity, social inclusion and employment as a key factor for integration.

Appropriate measures to protect the individual's right to decide whether or what to believe and how to practice, change or give up one's religion. Among other aspects, these measures must be geared to protect minority communities, such as Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities, and to promote Islam together with European values. Participants are encouraged to exchange their experiences in this context and intensify their joint efforts, e.g. in the framework of intercultural and interreligious dialogue. At the same time, intrareligious dialogue on fundamental rights and values should be strengthened.

Religious dignitaries play an important role in promoting living together in freedom and security on the basis of fundamental rights and freedoms and should therefore be involved in preparation of effective prevention campaigns. The Ministers concerned will pay increased attention that religious pedagogic training, reflects this principle. They will support closer cooperation with national educational institutions.

Intercultural dialogue opens up new horizons and builds bridges. In this context, the cooperation with third countries in the field of education, in particular university education is an important element. Accordingly, appropriate measures will be considered to ensure that young people in non-European countries can access information on the importance of universal human rights for their personal lives and are able to enter into a dialogue with European partners on fundamental rights and European values.

The Council of Europe and the EU Fundamental Rights Agency should strengthen their cooperation with each other and should ensure that their activities are relevant to current fundamental rights issues and future trends.

PREVENTING

The Ministers will enhance their cooperation in order to counteract the development of any kind of extremism at its early stage. Special emphasis will be placed on the prevention of youth radicalisation, recruitment of potential "foreign terrorist fighters", committing of hate crimes, as well as planning and carrying out of terrorist attacks.

The establishment of counselling services for affected relatives can contribute to preventing radicalisation of potentially vulnerable persons and thus avert terrorist offences. Participants will share experiences and best practices of services already offered in the field of preventing youth radicalisation.

Another focus of the joint efforts relates to monitoring and removing Internet content that promotes terrorism and violence. Therefore, cooperation between authorities and the private sector should be intensified. The aim is to remove terrorist content from the Internet as fast as possible and to create effective counter-narratives. It is encouraged to explore how cooperation between a future EU Internet Referral Unit (EU-IRU) and the Western Balkan Partners can be developed.

Closer cooperation between the relevant law enforcement authorities and the private sector should be fostered. In this respect, the creation of a common platform for Member States of the EU and Western Balkan Partners in order to intensify cooperation between the law enforcement authorities and the private sector could be considered.

The Ministers will exchange their experiences on legal measures against 'hate crimes', 'hate speeches' and racist, xenophobic, inhumane, or religion-based discriminatory incidents, with the intention to develop best-practice approaches.

An emphasis shall be placed on prisons where radicalisation also takes place. Religious support in prisons can add to counteracting such tendencies and support deradicalisation. The Ministers will exchange their experiences in this respect and will support appropriate measures if necessary.

REACTING

The immediate threat posed by 'foreign terrorist fighters', including by radicalised single perpetrators, calls for swift, efficient action by the law enforcement authorities. In this context, it is necessary to exploit all existing operational and legal instruments at the national and international level.

Securing borders is paramount for the detection of violent extremists. The Ministers of the participating EU Member States reaffirm their commitment to implement the measures adopted at EU level. All Ministers will take appropriate measures in this regard on the national and regional level.

Exchange of information and operational best practices are key elements in the joint fight against international terrorism. To this end, the cooperation with the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, Europol, Interpol and other institutions should be intensified.

Europol is the EU's central body for the prevention of and fight against radicalisation, extremism and terrorism. The Ministers will call upon all authorised bodies to forward any relevant information to Europol's 'Focal Point Travellers' and to the 'Network of Contact Points entrusted with the task of collecting and exchanging operational information on foreign fighters', as founded on 11 December 2014. Europol's capacities should be used in full in the fight against violent extremism and terrorism. The Ministers of the Western Balkan Partners commit themselves to the full implementation of the existing operational and strategic agreements with Europol. Further agreements should also be concluded in line with identified needs.

Operational cooperation should be enhanced through speedy further implementation of the Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe. The aim is to ensure the best possible cooperation of the Contracting Parties comparative with Schengen standards. In this context, the Counter-Terrorism Network established in December 2014 should be used as a common platform in the best possible manner.

The possible connections between illegal migration and terrorism are a source of concern. The Ministers will promote information exchange between their authorities. Better use of and cooperation with Europol and Frontex in this context should be considered.

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Ministers of Interior will ensure that the agreed measures are implemented in their respective areas of responsibility. They seek and support further cooperation and joint efforts between the Western Balkans and the European Union, also within existing regional cooperation fora, such as the Salzburg Forum and the Brdo Process. Analysis and further development of the measures taken will follow in the course of a conference of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Ministers of Interior in the framework of the Salzburg Forum and “Friends of the Salzburg Forum” to be held in Sarajevo in 2016.
