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NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Delegations

Subject: Ministerial Conference on the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes
- Joint Statement

On 23 August 2016, the Presidency hosted a Ministerial Conference on the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes, in Bratislava.

Except from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice of the Slovak Republic, Ms Lucia Žitňanská and the Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Mr Tibor Navracsics, Ministers and Deputy Ministers from Estonia, Romania, Latvia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Malta, Poland and Sweden were present. Moreover, representatives from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and United Kingdom, Fundamental Rights Agency, Committee of Regions and many National Memory and Remembrance Institutes and similar NGOs took part in the conference.

The ministerial part of the Conference discussed the issue of "radicalisation on the rise" and agreed on the Joint Statement set out in Annex.

Joint Statement
Ministerial Conference on the European Day of Remembrance for
Victims of Totalitarian Regimes

(Bratislava, 23 August 2016)

We commemorate today victims of totalitarian regimes that tortured Europe in the past century and we recall the cruelty, lack of freedom and disrespect for human rights in its most severe way. Acknowledging the uniqueness of the Holocaust, the mass extermination of nations, ethnic groups, social classes and political groups by which these regimes operated and maintained their power shall never be forgotten.

In the face of the challenges following from the financial crisis, the increasing number of terrorist and other extremist acts throughout Europe and the growing visibility of racist and xenophobic expressions and behaviour in our society strengthened by the migration flows, we express our determination to protect democracy, the rule of law and human rights. We confirm that adequate actions are needed at all levels and in all fields, including in the justice sector, while respecting and upholding fundamental rights and freedoms.

We recall the ministerial conference on the criminal justice response to radicalisation organised by the Commission and the Luxembourg Presidency in October 2015 and we express our continuous support for the actions identified in the ensuing Council conclusions of 20 November 2015 on enhancing the criminal justice response to radicalisation leading to the terrorism and violent extremism.

We believe that it is very important to work with young people who are particularly vulnerable to the appeal of radical ideologies due to the insecurity of their future and the economic and political atmosphere in Europe. We recall Council Conclusion on the role of the youth sector in an integrated and cross-sectorial approach to preventing and combating violent radicalisation of young people of May 2016.

Education and training are similarly important in raising awareness among prosecutors and judges dealing with violent extremism and radicalisation. The voice of victims should also be taken into account in this context. We also recall the importance of de-radicalising and reintegrating prisoners and radicalised individuals and welcome the work of the RAN Centre of Excellence in this regard.

We also appreciate the Commission Communication supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism which was published in June 2016 and we welcome the work of the Commission and its efforts to combat dissemination of hate speech online and the results achieved in the form of the Code of Conduct established with social networks and media.

We should also stay alert to the intrusion of extremist tendencies and attitudes into politics which may threaten our democracies and the rule of law. Our history should not become our future, therefore we must learn from the fatal mistakes Europe made in the past, which allowed past totalitarian regimes to come into being.
