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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council

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To: Delegations

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Subject: Council Conclusions on the creation of an informal network of experts
competent in the field of Disaster Victim Identification
- Council conclusions (8 June 2017)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council Conclusions on the creation of an informal network of experts competent in the field of Disaster Victim Identification, adopted by the Council at its 3546th meeting held on 8 June 2017.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

on the creation of an informal network of experts competent in the field of Disaster Victim Identification

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

AWARE

- That serious incidents, whether or not caused by human intervention, often lead to large numbers of casualties and fatalities; and
- That the overall ease of travel has facilitated significant movement of people leading to a high probability that should a major incident take place both within and outside of the EU, victims will most likely have diverse nationalities,

TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION that following such incidents, the identification of victims as part of the process of consequence management should take place as swiftly and smoothly as possible to alleviate the suffering of surviving relatives and allow for the repatriation of the victim's remains,

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the right of the person to be treated with dignity,

BEARING IN MIND that Title V TFEU on the area of freedom, security and justice, and especially Article 87 thereof, provides for the establishment of police cooperation involving all the Member States' competent authorities, including the police, customs and other specialised law enforcement services in relation to the prevention, detection and investigation of criminal offences; whereby the process of victim identification may assist in investigations of serious and organised crime and terrorism,

KEEPING IN MIND

- The work at EU level on the management of the consequences following terrorist attacks particularly the meeting of Directors-General for Civil Protection which focused on strengthening preparedness and response and improving cooperation in line with specific challenges for emergency medical services, Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) and raising public awareness; the Ministerial discussion at the Council Justice and Home Affairs meeting of 9 December 2016 on the management of the consequences following terrorist attacks;
- The possibility that the scale of the disaster may overwhelm a country's response capacities, resulting in the need for outside assistance;
- That a coordinated effort by Member States working together can significantly speed up the recovery of victims and the identification process;
- The ongoing efforts to implement the Council Conclusions on the creation of a European Forensic Science Area by 2020 and the associated Action Plan to further develop the forensic science infrastructure in Europe¹.

RECOGNISING

- The individual efforts and actions taken by Member States in the field of DVI;
- The international efforts of INTERPOL in the field of DVI;
- The scope for further efforts to streamline practices, particularly within the EU, and;
- The need for, joint exercises, training programmes, sharing of good practices and guidelines between the Member States to effectively carry out the process of DVI.

¹ 10128/16

CONCLUDES that it is recommendable to take further measures that will increase the effectiveness and swiftness of the DVI process, whilst bringing together European experts in this field so as to allow for the sharing of information and experiences, facilitate contact and enhance joint exercises and training opportunities in this area in close cooperation with existing networks like INTERPOL; and therefore,

WELCOMES the creation of an informal network of DVI experts, for the purpose of strengthening coordination between Member State DVI teams,

UNDERLINES that the network should cooperate closely with INTERPOL, as well as with the relevant national and Union bodies in the field of DVI, and complement ongoing activities in the area of the management of consequences following terrorist attacks. The network should not duplicate the work of existing groups and should seek to support already existing processes,

NOTES that cooperation between law enforcement, judicial and other entities of Member States is governed by the existing relevant instruments and that the creation of an informal network is without prejudice to such provisions,

SUGGESTS that the network fulfil the following objectives:

- 1) Ensure that relevant stakeholders, including but not only law enforcement, civil protection, judicial communities, health authorities and NGOs, within Member States are made aware of the DVI process at the strategic level,
- 2) Compile a list of national contact points from each Member State and participating Schengen Associated Country, and carry out a mapping exercise of existing DVI resources and capabilities as necessary,
- 3) Cooperate with relevant entities including INTERPOL on the deployment of Member State DVI teams in case of international disasters, if necessary,

- 4) Review current training opportunities related to DVI and exploring possibilities for future training in the field of DVI,
- 5) Organise and manage voluntary exercises for DVI practitioners with the aim of maintaining a uniform and high level of ability and expertise in the area of DVI across Member States,
- 6) Encourage the use of existing secure information exchange channels such as INTERPOL's i24/7 as a uniform and secure method for sharing information relating to the DVI process (e.g. the sharing of ante-mortem and post-mortem data),
- 7) Explore relations, and work closely with the Commission international forensic institutes such as the European Network of Forensic Science Institutes (ENFSI), DVI networks such as the Nordic DVI group and INTERPOL, and judicial authorities such as the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN),
- 8) Seek possible avenues of cooperation with other networks related to the Law Enforcement Working Party such as EMPEN and Kynopol,
- 9) Encourage the setting up of national DVI units in Member States and strengthen cooperation between these units,
- 10) Stress the importance of using the guidelines as established by INTERPOL to conduct the DVI Process,
- 11) Promote the use of INTERPOL's Disaster Victim Identification Guide by national DVI Units.

SUGGESTS that the activities of the network be organised in the following way:

- 1) All Member States and Schengen Associated Countries, as well as the Commission, Europol and INTERPOL, are invited to take part in the network,
- 2) Cooperation may be sought with other relevant organisations and entities such as the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), Eurojust, CEPOL, ENFSI, EJTN and the United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation,

- 3) The possibility of cooperating with third countries on the DVI process is considered in consultation with INTERPOL,
- 4) The network should favour a multidisciplinary approach in order to reflect the composition of the DVI team and be able to draw upon specialisations within specific areas of expertise related to the DVI process,
- 5) As recommended in the Guidelines on the relationship between the LEWP and its related expert groups and networks², a Secretariat of the Network shall be set up to provide administrative support in terms of planning and monitoring of activities and seeking funding opportunities,
- 6) In line with the Guidelines, the meetings of the network should be needs-driven. The network should regularly inform the competent structures within the Council about its activities,
- 7) After two years of activity, and by not later than the end of 2019, the competent Council bodies shall assess whether such a network is still needed.

INVITES THE COMMISSION to consider the provision of financial support for specific activities such as the hosting and delivery of specific table-top and field exercises for DVI practitioners,

INVITES EUROPOL to provide practical support to the network, for example by making use of the Europol Platform for Experts (EPE),

INVITES CEPOL to cooperate with the EU network on DVI to continue organizing training activities and to consider the development of other training tools in the field of DVI, with particular regard to multilateral exchange programmes, common curricula, e-learning modules and online seminars, keeping in mind the multidisciplinary nature of the DVI process, and

INVITES EJTN to work jointly with the network to set up and deliver training programmes to the judicial community to enhance its awareness of the DVI process, outsourcing the appropriate experts to assist the DVI team in its investigative methods and to be able to interpret the evidence presented.

² 12915/2/15 REV 2