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NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Strategic Agenda - Union of freedom, security and justice - Fight against terrorism = Stock taking of actions and way forward

The events in Paris constitute a critical challenge to the core values of freedom of expression, pluralism, democracy, tolerance, solidarity and human dignity. The expression of solidarity has been unprecedented and the mobilisation of the society against discrimination, racial hatred and divisiveness overwhelming.

The resolve to reinforce our action against terrorist threats has been immediate. A number of actions have been undertaken already and further work is underway in many fora. The aim of this note is to outline the milestones of actions taken to date and those planned in the immediate future.

Paris Declaration (11 January 2015)¹

At the invitation of Bernard Cazeneuve, Minister of the Interior of France, an international Ministerial meeting was held on 11 January in Paris. During this meeting a Joint Statement was adopted identifying measures to combat terrorism as the fight against radicalization, notably on the Internet, the development of a renewed European Union Internal Security Strategy, reduction of the supply of illegal firearms throughout the Europe, amendment of the Schengen Borders Code, the need to move towards a European Passenger Name Record framework and increase the cooperation with the United States and Canada. The Paris Statement was broadly supported by all Member States and served as a basis for discussions at the informal meeting of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers in Riga, on 29 and 30 January 2015.

Freedom of Expression – Joint Statement of Ministers of Culture (11 January 2015)²

The events have had an impact on the basic principles of freedom of speech. In this light the Ministers of Culture have adopted their common statement on the freedom of speech which stressed the need to safeguard artistic freedom and freedom of expression as common European values. This topic will also be addressed in the World Press Freedom Day Conference in Riga, on 3-4 May, where journalists' safety will be one of the key topics.

Fight against terrorism - Extraordinary COSI meeting (20 January 2015)

An extraordinary COSI meeting was organized to prepare the discussions of the Informal meeting of Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs on 29-30 January 2015 in Riga. During this meeting different measures to combat terrorism were discussed. In this regard the measures identified in Paris Declaration were broadly supported by all Member States.

¹ Doc. 5322/15.

² <https://eu2015.lv/news/media-releases/124-media-release/234-eu-ministers-of-culture-issue-joint-statement-on-freedom-of-expression>

The fight against terrorist financing – ECOFIN (27 January 2015)³

In light of recent events in Paris, Finance Ministers during the ECOFIN breakfast on 27 January discussed the possible future elements to combat the financing of terrorism. Moreover, at the ECOFIN meeting the Commission and the Council adopted a joint declaration in the context of the endorsement of the Anti-Money Laundering (AML) package. The declaration stresses the commitment to enhance the efficiency of the new rules brought by the AML package and stipulates that further efforts should be promoted, notably towards:

- speeding-up the process of national implementation of those rules;
- further strengthening of cooperation between Financial Intelligence Units at European level (for example through the work of European fora such as the FIU Platform) to combat terrorist financing;
- addressing terrorist financing risks via the EU's supranational risk assessment, which should notably also assess the risks posed by virtual currencies.

It is of utmost importance that coordinated action at international, European and national level to tackle terrorist financing is as effective as possible. Council and Commission will be examining further actions on countering terrorist financing in the coming months.

Riga Joint Statement – Informal Meeting of Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs Council (29 - 30 January 2015)⁴

In response to terrorist attacks in Paris, the Latvian Presidency adjusted the agenda of the informal meeting of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers in Riga to dedicate the whole session for discussions by Ministers of Home Affairs to counter-terrorism issues and to add an information point for Ministers of Justice on judicial aspects of fighting terrorism.

³ Doc. 5116/15 ADD 3 REV 4.

⁴ Doc. 5855/15.

Ministers adopted the Riga Joint Statement on Counter-Terrorism and decided to accelerate and amplify the implementation of existing tools, noting new initiatives that could be adopted either to increase effectiveness of existing measures or to adjust the current instruments to ensure an appropriate response to the current threat. Specific measures include an invitation to the European Commission to present its Communication by mid-April 2015 in order to ensure the timely review and update EU Internal Security Strategy (mid-2015); an invitation to the European Parliament to resume dialogue on the EU Passenger Name Record directive as soon as possible; advance cooperation with internet-industry in order to detect and remove information about terrorism and extremism; use of Europol and Eurojust in information exchange; work on a targeted proposal to amend the Schengen Border Code to reinforce external borders; develop cooperation between competent authorities to prevent illegal trafficking of firearms; fight against financing of terrorism with existing instruments with development of new specific tools; improvement of information and best practices exchange and cooperation between judicial authorities; prevent and counter propaganda and radicalization in prisons; consider further legislative developments with regard to fight criminal activities related to terrorism.

The external aspects of terrorism – Foreign Affairs Council (19 January and 9 February 2015)

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs discussed the issue of counter-terrorism at the Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 19 January and agreed on the following priority actions: (1) strengthening engagement with third countries, in particular with Arab and Mediterranean countries, on security and counter-terrorism; (2) swift implementation of the Counter-terrorism/ foreign terrorist fighters strategy⁵; (3) strategic communication and prevention of radicalisation; (4) addressing the unresolved crises and conflicts fostering terrorism. Ministers also discussed the necessity to have security attachés in the EU Delegations in the relevant countries and the possibility for the High Representative to have an Arabic speaking spokesperson in her team.

⁵ Outline of the Counter Terrorism Strategy for Syria and Iraq, with particular focus on foreign fighters (Doc. 5369/15).

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs will continue their discussion on a full spectrum of the counter-terrorism external aspects on 9 February. Discussion will be based upon initiatives including strengthening the EU engagement with target countries, swift practical implementation of the Counter-terrorism/foreign terrorist fighters strategy, as well as strengthening security and counter-terrorism advisor's capacity of the EU Delegations in a number of third countries, as one of the practical contributions of this Council. Ministers will also take note of the Joint Communication on Syria/Iraq/ISIL Strategy and will adopt Council Conclusions on this Strategy in March.

Statement of the Members of the European Council (12 February 2015)

The President of the European Council has proposed to the Members of the European Council a statement with the key aspects to reinforce the EU's action against terrorism threats and guide work over the months to come. Three strands of actions have been identified, focusing on the security of citizens, preventing radicalization and safeguarding values and cooperating with our international partners.
