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Subject : The European Union Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism

1. Terrorism is a threat to all States and to all peoples. It poses a serious threat to the security of the European Union and the lives of its citizens. The European Union remains determined to tackle this scourge. Doing so requires a comprehensive response. We must reduce the threat: by disrupting existing terrorist networks and by preventing new recruits to terrorism. And we must reduce our vulnerability to attack: by better protecting potential targets and improving our consequence management capabilities.
2. To enhance our policies to prevent new recruits to terrorism, at the European Council of 17 December 2004 we agreed to elaborate a strategy and action plan to address radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism. This strategy builds on the considerable work since the 25 March 2004 European Council Declaration on Combating Terrorism, including the Commission Communication on Terrorist Recruitment: addressing the factors contributing to violent radicalisation. It outlines how the Union and Member States will combat radicalisation and recruitment into terrorism. It will form part of a broader EU Counter-Terrorism strategy and Action Plan that the European Council will be asked to endorse by the end of 2005.

The Challenge

3. Radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism are not confined to one belief system or political persuasion. **Europe has experienced different types of terrorism in its history.** But the terrorism perpetrated by Al-Qa'ida and extremists inspired by Al-Qa'ida has become the main terrorist threat to the Union. While other types of terrorism continue to pose a serious threat to EU citizens, the Union's response to radicalisation and recruitment focuses on this type of terrorism.
4. The vast majority of Europeans, irrespective of belief, do not accept extremist ideology. Even amongst the small number that do, only a few turn to terrorism. The decision to become involved in terrorism is an individual one, even though the motives behind such a decision are often similar. There can be no excuse or impunity for such actions, but it is our responsibility to identify and counter the ways, propaganda and conditions through which people are drawn into terrorism and consider it a legitimate course of action.
5. Addressing this challenge is beyond the power of governments alone. Al-Qa'ida and those inspired by them will only be defeated with the engagement of the public, and especially Muslims, in Europe and beyond. The overwhelming majority of people espouse the values of peace and tolerance. The European Union rejects any justification for terrorism, religious or otherwise. The Union welcomes the strong stance that the people of Europe and beyond, including Muslims, have taken to reject terrorism and urges them not to relent in their condemnation.

Our Response

6. To counter radicalisation and terrorist recruitment, the EU resolves to:
 - disrupt the activities of the networks and individuals who draw people into terrorism;
 - ensure that voices of mainstream opinion prevail over those of extremism;
 - promote yet more vigorously security, justice, democracy and opportunity for all.
7. Throughout we will ensure that we do not undermine respect for fundamental rights. To ensure our responses remain effective and appropriate, we will work to develop our understanding of the problem. In doing this, we will engage in dialogue with governments which have faced this problem, academic experts and Muslim communities in Europe and beyond.

Disrupting the activities of the networks and individuals who draw people into terrorism

8. There are practical steps an individual must take to become involved in terrorism. The ability to put ideas into action has been greatly enhanced by globalisation: ease of travel and communication and easy transfer of money mean easier access to radical ideas and training. The Internet assists this facilitation and provides a means for post-attack justification.
9. We need to spot such behaviour by, for example, community policing, and effective monitoring of the Internet and travel to conflict zones. We should build our expertise by exchanging national assessments and analyses. We also need to disrupt such behaviour. We will limit the activities of those playing a role in radicalisation including in prisons, places of education or religious training, and worship, and by examining the issues around admittance and residence of such individuals. We will develop our work to prevent individuals gaining access to terrorist training, targeting especially those who travel to conflict zones. We must put in place the right legal framework to prevent individuals from inciting and legitimising violence. And we will examine ways to impede terrorist recruitment using the Internet. We will pursue political dialogue and target technical assistance to help others outside the EU to do the same.

Ensuring that voices of moderation prevail over those of extremism

10. There is propagation of a particular extremist worldview which brings individuals to consider and justify violence. The core of the issue is propaganda which distorts conflicts around the world as a supposed proof of a clash between the West and Islam and which claims to give individuals both an explanation for grievances and an outlet for their anger. This diagnosis distorts perceptions of Western policies and increases suspicions of hidden agendas and double standards.

11. We need to empower moderate voices by engaging with Muslim organisations and faith groups that reject the distorted version of Islam put forward by Al-Qa'ida and others. We need to support the availability of mainstream literature, seek to encourage the emergence of European imams and enhance language and other training for foreign imams in Europe. We need to get our own message across more effectively. We will co-ordinate and enhance our efforts to change the perceptions of European and Western policies particularly among Muslim communities, and to correct unfair or inaccurate perceptions of Islam and Muslims. We should also develop a non-emotive lexicon for discussing the issues in order to avoid linking Islam to terrorism. We must ensure that by our own policies we do not exacerbate division.

Promoting yet more vigorously security, justice, democracy and opportunity for all

12. There is a range of conditions in society which may create an environment in which people can more easily be radicalised. Such factors do not necessarily lead to radicalisation, but may make the radical message more appealing both to those who suffer them and those who identify with their suffering. These conditions may include poor or autocratic governance; states moving from autocratic control via inadequate reform to partial democracy; rapid but unmanaged modernisation; and lack of political and economic prospects, unresolved international and domestic strife; and inadequate and inappropriate education or cultural opportunities for young people. Within the Union, most of these factors are not present, but within individual segments of the population they may apply and there may also be issues of identity in immigrant communities.

13. We must eliminate the structural factors supporting radicalisation both within the Union and outside it. As part of our response, within the Union we must target inequalities and discrimination where they exist and promote inter-cultural dialogue, debate, and, where appropriate, long term integration. Outside Europe, we must promote good governance, human rights, democracy, as well as education and economic prosperity, through our political dialogue and assistance programmes. And we must work to resolve conflict.

Increasing our understanding and developing our response appropriately

14. Radicalisation of certain Muslim individuals in Europe is a relatively recent phenomenon. Even those areas of Europe where radicalisation is not a major issue at present, or where large Muslim communities do not exist, could become targets for extremists. The EU will continue to develop its collective understanding of the issues, listening to Muslims, and others, comparing national situations and establishing a European picture. The response will need to evolve in line with the situation in Europe and beyond. To ensure that our approach remains up to date we will review progress annually.

Delivering the Strategy

15. Member States will work, individually and together, with the support of the European Commission and other European Union bodies to deliver this strategy. The key to our success will be the degree to which non-governmental groups – communities, religious authorities and other organisations – across Europe play an active part in countering the rhetoric of the extremists and highlighting their criminal acts.

16. The challenge of combating radicalisation and terrorist recruitment lies primarily with the Member States, at a national, regional and local level. They set the social, education, and economic policies that can foster equality and inclusion within mainstream society. It is they who determine foreign, defence and security policies, and the manner in which these are publicly communicated. It is their Parliaments and people to whom Governments are accountable for these policies. The challenge of radicalism and means to counter it vary greatly in each Member State. This strategy allows Member States to take forward work at national level based on a common understanding of the factors and of principles and actions for countering them.
17. Work at the pan-European level can provide an important framework. Member States are able to co-ordinate their policies; share information about responses developed at national level; determine good practice; and work together to come up with new ideas. The Commission supports this through channelling its policies effectively, including through the investment of funds for research, the organisation of conferences, support for education and inter-cultural engagement, and monitoring at the pan-EU level.
18. Work beyond Europe can be undertaken through the instruments, mechanisms and processes that the EU has established with individual countries and regional organisations, including through political dialogue and assistance programmes.
