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SPEECH

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**Protecting People and Infrastructure:
Achievements, Failures and future tasks**

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When Harold Macmillan was asked one day what caused the greatest difficulties in his period as UK Prime Minister, he replied "Events, dear boy, events." This decades-old story has relevance for our discussions today. For one risk in preparing speeches – and indeed in organising conferences – is that even the most carefully written speech or the best planned conference can be overtaken by events. And as a result, both the speech and the conference may seem less relevant than when they were conceived.

The focus of our meeting today is security – on how to ensure the security of our citizens, our infrastructures and our economies from the threat of international terrorism. That theme is well chosen. As we all know, Europe, like other parts of the world, has been the victim on several occasions of atrocious terrorist attacks. Next month, we will be commemorating the one-year anniversary of the terrorist attacks in Madrid of 11 March. On that fateful day, a co-ordinated series of attacks on several commuter trains caused untold damage and misery. Therefore, there are good reasons why the growing threat of international terrorism has shot to the top of the international agenda.

The fight against terrorism remains vitally important for the long-term security of our citizens and our societies. But terrorism is by no means the only threat facing the international community. Think for a moment on the tragic events created by the tsunami. The threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction gets a lot of attention on the international conference circuit - and rightly so. The same is true for long-standing regional conflicts on Europe's doorstep and further afield.

On top of that, millions of lives are blighted by civil wars, collapsing states, infectious diseases or, simply, the absence of clean water. We all know this, and it should not be forgotten. It is my firm belief that that we need to pay attention to all the threats to people's lives and livelihoods. This is no doubt difficult. Our resources and attention spans are limited. But that is what we try to do in the EU, seeking comprehensive solutions to the full range of security problems we face.

With this important proviso in mind, let me turn to the topic you have invited me to address. Why should we continue to be concerned about terrorism? Because it remains a very serious threat to the lives of our citizens and to the functioning of our economies. From many devastating attacks world-wide we know that terrorists think nothing of inflicting mass casualties. And the scale of destruction would be much worse if terrorists succeeded in laying their hands on weapons of mass destruction.

Perhaps even more insidious than the threat to our lives, is the threat that terrorism poses to the very nature of our societies. Terrorism can strike anywhere, anytime, anyone. It is frightening in its unpredictability and unsettling by its random nature.

We often say that terrorism represents an attack against the values and principles on which our societies are based: freedom, democracy and the rule of law. Maybe this basic truth gets sometimes overlooked because we say this so often, almost like a mantra.

Still it is worth making this basic point, once again. Terrorists aim to undermine our societies and our way of life. By using violence to attain their ends, they show their complete disregard for national and international law, the democratic process and, most of all, the sanctity of human life.

So we must work hard to defeat terrorism. That is what our citizens want and expect. But at the same time we must not jeopardise our values and principles. That would be a victory for the terrorists. Therefore, all states must ensure that any measures they take comply with their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law. That too is a clear demand from our citizens. Those who argue that we must choose between protecting human rights or fighting terrorism are wrong. All of us in the international community can agree on this. As Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers, once said: "Those who would give up essential liberty, to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety".

For all of us, the fight against international terrorism is a growth area. And because terrorism is a global phenomenon, we need a global response. This means two things. First, to be effective, we need partnerships, with other key actors and organisations. Second, we need a comprehensive strategy tackling both the manifestations and the underlying causes of terrorism, such as political alienation and radicalisation. After all, people are not born as terrorist, they become one. Therefore we should reflect on what factors drives people to commit atrocities and ask whether we can do something about that, or not.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, many of the speakers following me at this conference will set out in more detail the EU's counter-terrorism strategy. But let me highlight just a few key areas.

First, in the fight against terror, the collection and dissemination of information is crucial. We need trust among like minded countries prepared to cooperate, particularly among the members of the European Union and the rest of the international community. Due to the international component

of terrorism, cooperation among external services and internal services of different countries is a must. This is something we are trying to do in the European Union, bringing together experts from both external and internal security agencies. The objective is to help the Union to develop a more integrated analysis of the terrorist threat.

Second, we all know that terrorists often use fake identities to prevent detection. That is why we have to work on several measures to combat identity fraud. Several are being introduced on digitalized pictures and fingerprints in visas, residence permits and passports. We are also working on the Visa Information System. This will be one of the biggest biometric systems in the world, holding millions of biometric files of all foreign nationals who apply for a Schengen visa.

Third, terrorists need money to prepare and carry out their attacks. So we have spent considerable time and effort on identifying and disrupting the mechanisms through which terrorism is financed. We started off by drawing up a list of individuals and groups whose assets have been frozen. We know now that terrorist groups make less use of the regular banking system. Instead they prefer cash couriers or alternative remittance systems. But as the ways in which terrorists operate changes, so too is our approach which is becoming more intelligence-led. We have to continue working in this front.

Fourth, today's terrorism knows no borders. To combat it effectively we must co-operate with our partners and neighbours, both bilaterally and at the wider international level. The UN and its agencies play a key role both at the political level, through the work of the Security Council's Counter-terrorism Committee and at the technical level, where bodies such as the International Civil Aviation Organisation and the International Maritime Organisation are essential in developing global standards for transport security. The UN's Counter-terrorism Committee provides a valuable framework for assessing international efforts to implement the resolutions and Conventions relevant to terrorism. All countries must implement the commitments set out in relevant UN resolutions and Conventions. And the international community should help those that are unable to do so.

Fifth, as you know, the European Union is a major provider of technical assistance in the area of law enforcement and internal security systems. The European Commission has a proven track record in building capacity in countries that our neighbours and partners. Concretely, this means developing and supporting projects on police and judiciary reform, border security, as well as countering terrorist financing and money laundering initiatives. During the enlargement negotiations the EU provided substantial financial aid to help those countries about to join the Union to modernise their police structures and support judicial reforms. This work must go on.

More than 1 billion Euro has been earmarked to continue assisting the new member states in the field of internal security during the period 2004-2006.

Before finishing, let me insist on the need to develop a strategy to address problems of radicalisation and recruitment into terrorism. We have to gain a better understanding of the problem. How is the threat of radicalisation and recruitment evolving? What are the main policy levers available for action at our level?

Finally, we must continue our efforts to promote stability and the resolution of old and new regional conflicts. Situations of endemic violence, lawlessness and ineffective governance are opportunities for terrorists to hide, to train, and to plan for attacks.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, the fight against international terrorism is a clear priority for the EU. For this global threat we need a comprehensive strategy. We must combine measures to stop specific individuals or networks with long-term measures to stabilise and transform societies. And exactly like your conference does, we need to bring together people from a wide variety of backgrounds and nationalities.

I want to thank the East-West Institute for giving me this opportunity to come here this morning and I am sure you will have a very successful conference today.

Many thanks.
