Commissioner Avramopoulos presents European Agenda on Security at European Parliament

Strasbourg, 28 April 2015

Dear Honourable Members,

I am particularly happy to present to you here in the European Parliament the Agenda, as adopted by the Commission just a while ago.

The European Citizens expect from all of us that we work together, in a coordinated way in order to ensure their security and protect their rights and freedom. They expect from us that we trust each other, share information and effectively work together to coordinate concrete actions and operations.

Because new and complex security threats have emerged, that are increasingly cross-border and cross-sectorial in nature, we cannot but face them together.

This is the meaning of the shared Agenda that we put into your and to Member States consideration.

It’s a common Agenda based on principles and priorities, on which we should all (Parliament, Member States, the Commission and its Agencies) play our role in ensuring our Citizens Security.

That’s why we are asking you to evaluate and endorse this agenda.

We will have the opportunity of debating and working together on each specific element of this Agenda in the next five years but today I think it is important to agree on a COMMON European Agenda on Security in order to meet citizens’ expectations.

The Agenda sets out five key principles that should guide EU action on security:

- full compliance with fundamental rights.
- transparency, accountability and democratic control for citizens' confidence. The European Parliament plays a key role in this.
- better application and implementation of existing instruments (as this House has as well requested many times) before assessing whether additional EU tools are necessary, in full compliance with the principles of necessity and proportionality.
- full use of EU agencies and all EU policies that contribute – directly or indirectly – to security.
- to bring together all internal and external dimensions of security with a targeted coordination of our internal and foreign policies. For instance, we will present a consistent EU approach for all future PNR requests from third countries.

The Agenda sets out concrete actions to turn these key principles into a practical reality.

For example: In December last year, the European Parliament has adopted a Resolution on what it considered being the necessary elements of an EU strategy on internal security and you made clear that the utmost priority was to use better the existing instruments, both at legislative and operational level.

We have listened very carefully and put this principle in action in the Agenda. Look for example to our proposal for enhancing the existing capacities of Europol. It is not a question to create new information networks but to make sure that all information already available in the Member States is also put at disposal of Europol, under its strict framework for data protection. The Centre would therefore assemble in one single structure the functions already existing in the Agency on terrorist financing, illicit trafficking of firearms and foreign terrorist fighters, as well as on detection of violent extremist content online. Eurojust will also be associated to the Centre.

This new capacity will support more effectively the action of Member States in their investigations and prosecutions of terrorist cases.

This is our main goal: to make sure that the Agency is able to fully implement its mandate.

Let me now present the three main priorities we will address the next 5 years:

(1) Tackling terrorism: as you will see, we won't only work on repressive measures but we will also
focus on prevention. Social cohesion policy, education, employment, justice but also the cooperation with key third countries are crucial for the EU response to address the root causes of extremism and radicalisation.

The Commission will set up a Centre of Excellence to collect and disseminate expertise on anti-radicalisation, building upon the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN). This will strengthen the exchange of experience among practitioners directly engaged in preventing radicalisation and violent extremism at local level.

We plan to update the Framework Decision on Terrorism: to provide a more coherent legal framework to deal with the foreign fighter phenomenon. This will allow for intensified cooperation with third countries on this issue.

We will also launch an EU Forum with major IT companies to counter terrorist propaganda on the internet and in social media.

(2) Disrupting organised crime: we go through various forms of organised crime linked by one principle: Cutting the financing of criminals. The cooperation between competent authorities in Europe (in particular national Financial Intelligence Units, which will be connected to EUROPOL) will be strengthened while we will assess the necessity of new legislation to counter terrorist financing and improve confiscations of property derived from criminal activities.

We plan to strength the legal framework on firearms to address the illegal trafficking and reactivation of weapons, to establish common standards, share more information and boost cooperation with third countries. And I cannot today not to mention our priority to fight the organised criminals exploiting the need of some people for protection and better life perspectives: smugglers and traffickers.

(3) Fighting cybercrime: One of our priorities is to assess whether the current tools for the law-enforcement Authorities are sufficient to address on-line investigations notably on issues of competent jurisdiction and rules on access to Internet-based evidence and information.

These three areas are interlinked and have a strong cross-border crime. It is here where EU action can make a real difference for ensuring security.

The Agenda also proposes steps to strengthen the pillars of EU action on internal security: (1) better information exchange; (2) increased operational cooperation; (3) more targeted support through training, funding, research and innovation. It is through these actions that the EU gives added value to the work of Member States.

These three pillars are the ones based on which this Agenda can evolve in course of 5 years to adapt to new threats and challenges.

Dear Honourable Members, this was just a brief presentation of the European Agenda on Security adopted by the Commission today.

I want to stress again: this Agenda it is not just the response to the recent tragic events. This Agenda has been a priority for President Juncker and this Commission and defines the Union's approach to internal security that is based on our common values, including the rule of law and fundamental rights. It also has to be seen in conjunction with the future Agenda on Migration which will further develop issues of border management and smuggling of migrants.

I will be very pleased to discuss the Agenda with you in more detail over the coming weeks, as your house will be a crucial partner in its implementation. For now, I look forward to your immediate reactions.

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Europe Direct by phone 00 800 67 89 10 11 or by email