



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 24 June 2008

10931/08

**ENFOPOL 123
CORDORGUE 46
COWEB 164**

NOTE

From: Article 36 Committee
To: COREPER / Council

Prev. doc.: 8529/3/08 ENFOPOL 78 CORDROGUE 38 COWEB 116 REV 3

Subject: Draft Council Conclusions on co-operation with Western Balkan countries on the fight against organised crime and terrorism

1. At its meeting of 23 June 2008 the Article 36 Committee agreed on Draft Council Conclusions on co-operation with Western Balkan countries on the fight against organised crime and terrorism.
2. COREPER is invited to:
 - confirm the agreement on the text in annex
 - forward the draft conclusions to the Council for approval as an A item.

Council Conclusions
of ...
on co-operation with Western Balkan countries on the fight against organised crime and
terrorism

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Taking into account that in December 2005, the Justice and Home Affairs Council endorsed "A Strategy for the External Dimension of JHA: Global Freedom, Security and Justice" calling for action-oriented papers covering specific priority countries, regions or themes and serving as a basis for the EU's external relations policy,

Recalling the Action-Oriented Paper on Improving Cooperation on Organised Crime, Corruption, Illegal Immigration and Counter-terrorism, between the EU, the Western Balkans and relevant ENP countries¹ adopted under the Austrian presidency,

In accordance with the objectives outlined in the EU Counter Terrorism Strategy and the EU Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism,

Noting that the countries of the Western Balkans, being the EU's immediate geographical neighbours and having an EU membership perspective, enjoy a privileged position in their relationship with the EU,

Considering that the EU 's overall policy towards the Western Balkan countries is guided by the Stabilisation and Association Process, the Thessaloniki Agenda endorsed by the European Council in 2003 and the Accession and European Partnerships in the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Process, which set out priorities for action, *inter alia* in the area of freedom, security and justice, to enable those countries to move closer to the European Union,

¹ 9272/06 JAI 243 RELEX 312 ASIM 36 CATS 93COTER 13

Noting that organised crime remains a serious concern in spite of recent reports of declining trends for certain forms of crime, notably trafficking in human beings and trafficking in firearms. Taking into account the fact that the fight against organised crime, corruption, illegal immigration and terrorism are priorities in relations with the regions surrounding the EU and that developments in these fields have an immediate and reciprocal impact on the security situation both within the EU and in neighbouring countries,

Underlining that a security partnership based on trust, common interests, and the values of freedom, democracy and justice between the EU and the Western Balkan countries therefore constitutes an important element in mutual relations,

Recalling that the prospect of enlargement as articulated in the Stabilisation and Association Process is the agreed way for candidate and potential candidate countries to align themselves on EU standards in justice and home affairs,

- (1) RECOGNISES the region's progress in the field of freedom, security and justice, notably in strengthening border management and cross-border cooperation, as well as in combating organised crime,
- (2) NOTES, however, that the Western Balkan area is one of the main entry routes for drugs from Asia to the European Union;
- (3) EMPHASISES that the Western Balkans are considered to be a source of arms trafficking because of the surplus weapons which remain from the conflicts in the 1990s, the ongoing downsizing of the armed forces in the region and the fact that a significant number of these weapons have been diverted into the black market;
- (4) EXPRESSES concern at the lack of control of explosives in the warehouses of some military facilities as well as of civilian companies;

- (5) POINTS OUT that organised crime groups from the Western Balkans are involved in a variety of serious crimes in close association with other international organised crime structures;
- (6) CONSIDERS that radical elements in the Western Balkan region do not currently represent a direct terrorist threat to the EU and that structural links between organised crime groups and terrorist structures in the Western Balkan countries have not so far been demonstrated;
- (7) STRESSES, nevertheless, the importance of further developing security from terrorism in the Western Balkan region, preventing radicalisation and recruitment, limiting illegal access to explosives and weapons, and minimising potential links between organised crime and terrorism in the region;
- (8) PROPOSES the following action:
- To invite Europol and SitCen, taking into account the available resources, to consider the possibility of carrying out regular assessments of the use of explosives originating in Western Balkan states and of the extent of radicalisation and recruitment in the region. Where appropriate, such assessments should take into account the views of experts from the Western Balkan states. The competent authorities of the Member States, Europol and SitCen are encouraged to further monitor potential links between organised crime and terrorism, in particular drug-related crime and indirect logistical support to terrorism;
 - To invite competent authorities of the Member States in cooperation with EU institutions to engage in dialogue and in exchanges of best practice with Western Balkan states on the security of explosives with a view to raising security standards for the control of explosives;

- To invite competent authorities of the Member States in cooperation with EU institutions to share with the Western Balkan states the general recommendations resulting from the first round of peer evaluation on national counter-terrorism arrangements and familiarise them with EU efforts to combat terrorism with a view to enhancing the security of both EU and Western Balkan states.
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