

# Press Release

**Council of Europe Press Division**

**Ref: 302a07**

**Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 25 60**

**Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 39 11**

**[pressunit@coe.int](mailto:pressunit@coe.int)**

**internet: [www.coe.int/press](http://www.coe.int/press)**

47 members

Albania  
Andorra  
Armenia  
Austria  
Azerbaijan  
Belgium  
Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Bulgaria  
Croatia  
Cyprus  
Czech Republic  
Denmark  
Estonia  
Finland  
France  
Georgia  
Germany  
Greece  
Hungary  
Iceland  
Ireland  
Italy  
Latvia  
Liechtenstein  
Lithuania  
Luxembourg  
Malta  
Moldova  
Monaco  
Montenegro  
Netherlands  
Norway  
Poland  
Portugal  
Romania  
Russia  
San Marino  
Serbia  
Slovakia  
Slovenia  
Spain  
Sweden  
Switzerland  
"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"  
Turkey  
Ukraine  
United Kingdom



## **117th Session of the Committee of Ministers (Strasbourg, 10-11 May 2007) – Final press release**

Two years after the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe member States held in Warsaw in May 2005, the 117th Session of the Committee of Ministers, chaired by Mr Fiorenzo Stolfi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of San Marino, reviewed the implementation of the decisions taken at the Summit.

The Ministers warmly welcomed their colleague from the Republic of Montenegro, Mr Milan Rođen, on the occasion of the accession of Montenegro as the 47th member state of the Council of Europe.

### **1. Relations between the Council of Europe and the European Union**

The Ministers welcomed the signature by the Council of Europe of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union which constitutes the new framework for enhanced co-operation the Heads of State and Government called for in Warsaw. They underlined the importance of this text for achieving greater unity between the states of Europe through respect for the shared values of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, strengthening pan-European co-operation at the service of a Europe without dividing lines, along the lines of the guidelines adopted at the Warsaw Summit. They expressed their wish for swift and full implementation of the Memorandum.

The Ministers expressed their gratitude to the San Marino Chairmanship as well as to the previous chairmanships for their efforts in leading the preparation of the text and welcomed the contributions made by all parties involved in the negotiation.

The Ministers noted with satisfaction that the Memorandum was the first significant step in the follow-up to the report on the relations between the Council of Europe and the European Union prepared in his personal capacity by Jean-Claude Juncker, Prime Minister of Luxembourg, at the request of the Heads of State and Government. They considered an interim report discussed in the High-level follow-up group set up following the previous Ministerial Session on the feasibility of other recommendations in the strategic vision contained in Mr Juncker's report. Responding to one of the recommendations of the Juncker report, it was decided to revise the procedure concerning the appointment of the Secretary General in order to enhance the visibility of the work conducted by the Council of Europe and its relations with the European Union. It was agreed that work on follow-up to the Juncker report would be continued and kept under regular review at the future sessions, on the basis of updated reports to be prepared by the High-level group.

/...

To receive our press releases by e-mail, contact : [Council.of.Europe.Press@coe.int](mailto:Council.of.Europe.Press@coe.int)

**A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 47 member states.**

The Ministers welcomed the express reference in the Regulation establishing the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, adopted by the Council of the European Union on 15 February 2007, to the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. They also welcomed the fact that this Regulation provides for coordination of the Agency's activities with those of the Council of Europe in a sense of complementarity and added value, in order to ensure the coherence of the human rights protection system in Europe. The Ministers took note of the ongoing negotiation of a cooperation agreement between the Council of Europe and the Agency – an agreement which they will have to approve - and underlined the importance that it reflect these goals of added value and complementarity. They also emphasised the importance of the sound implementation of the future agreement between the Council of Europe and the Agency.

## **2. Consolidation of the Council of Europe system of human rights protection**

The Ministers reiterated their determination to secure the long-term effectiveness of the unique protection system of the European Convention on Human Rights. They paid tribute to the work of the Group of Wise Persons, which had been charged by the Council of Europe's Third Summit with making recommendations for this purpose.

In this context, the Ministers recalled the significant efficiency and capacity increases that Protocol No. 14 to the Convention would introduce. They expressed their strong hope, stressing the need for solidarity between all member states as collective guarantors of the Convention, that Protocol No. 14 will come into force in the nearest future and will become an important element of the Convention system.

The Ministers, stressing the importance of the Report of the Wise Persons' Group and the need to give it appropriate and speedy follow-up, in particular as regards the recommendations that could be implemented without amending the Convention, commended the San Marino Chairmanship for the organisation of the recent high-level colloquy on the future development of the European Court of Human Rights, as the start of a broader multidisciplinary consultation at European level. Important contributions have been made by the Parliamentary Assembly, the Court, the Secretary General, the Commissioner for Human Rights and civil society. The Ministers asked their Deputies to continue their reflection on measures to guarantee the long-term effectiveness of the control mechanism of the Convention, involving in this reflection all relevant actors, including civil society.

The Ministers reaffirmed that they will provide the Court with the necessary support in conformity with the Warsaw Action Plan, bearing in mind the necessary accompanying measures in the Council of Europe which contribute to securing the long-term effectiveness of the human rights protection system of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Ministers also reaffirmed their determination to reinforce the institution of the Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe in conformity with the Warsaw Action Plan. They looked forward to the memorandum on prospects for reinforced cooperation with the European Union, which the Commissioner would submit to their Deputies before the end of the year.

Recognising the important role of the monitoring mechanisms of the Council of Europe, including the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, the Ministers expressed their continued support to the work of these mechanisms in protecting and promoting human rights and reaffirmed their pledge to provide them with the necessary means to carry out this work.

The Ministers took note of an interim report on the state of implementation of their 2006 Declaration on sustained action to ensure the effectiveness of the European Convention on Human Rights at national and at European levels. Stressing the need for resolute action to ensure full implementation of the 2006 Declaration, including swift and full execution of the Court's judgments as well as effective action at national level to reduce the need for individuals to apply to the Court, they asked their Deputies to present a comprehensive report at their 118th Session in May 2008, covering not only the follow-up to the 2006 Declaration but also the effects produced by Protocol No. 14 following its entry into force. They also welcomed the work of the European Commission on the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), both its first report on the efficiency of European legal systems, and those dealing with the length of domestic procedures.

Recalling the importance of cohesive societies in Europe based on the values of the Council of Europe, Ministers called on member states to transcend the wounds of the past in a spirit of remembrance, to move ahead in mutual respect, reconciliation and tolerance and to prevent the spread of extremism.

The Ministers reiterated the concern expressed at the Third Summit on unresolved conflicts that still affect certain parts of the continent, and expressed their determination to ensure that the persons concerned be able to enjoy the protection of the rights guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights.

### **3. Follow-up to other priorities resulting from the Warsaw Summit**

Recalling their determination to ensure complete implementation of the Action Plan adopted during the Warsaw Summit, the Ministers welcomed the progress made in streamlining the Council of Europe's activities in order to contribute to the fundamental objective of preserving and promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law in line with the Warsaw Declaration and Action Plan. They emphasised the evolving character of this process, and agreed to examine achievements as well as possible further steps at their 118th Session.

#### *Council of Europe activities to develop intercultural dialogue*

The Ministers recalled their commitment to the promotion of intercultural dialogue as decided by the Heads of States and government in Warsaw and reaffirmed the importance they attached to the implementation of the strategy for developing intercultural dialogue, adopted by the Council of Europe in Faro in October 2005. They noted with satisfaction the progress made. They welcomed in particular the open and inclusive consultations in the preparation of the "White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue" to be worked out in 2007.

A crucial contribution has been made to the White Paper process through the San Marino Chairmanship's initiative concerning the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue. The Ministers welcomed the European Conference on the subject held in San Marino on 23 and 24 April 2007, which was a significant step in the dialogue with religious communities and civil society and were pleased that agreement was reached to hold the "Council of Europe annual exchanges on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue", in spring 2008 on an experimental basis. This meeting which would provide an opportunity to conduct an open and transparent dialogue with participants representing the religions traditionally present in Europe and civil society on a theme inherent in the values of the Council of Europe. They also noted with satisfaction the official launching of the Kyiv Initiative Regional Programme open to all interested member states and international partners. The Ministers called for enhanced coordination of efforts in the field of intercultural dialogue with all relevant international organisations to avoid duplication and ensure complementarity of work.

#### *Implementation of Chapter V of the Action Plan of the Third Summit*

The Ministers took note of the report by their Deputies on the work accomplished since their last session on the reform process of the Council of Europe's organisational structures and working methods. The work carried out so far has followed the road map for reform presented at their last session and its timetable, focusing on 2008 as a target date for stocktaking and decisions on how to proceed. It constitutes a solid basis for further efforts. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance they attach to the reform process and instructed the Deputies and the Secretary General to make increased efforts centred on measures for greater cost efficiency, effectiveness, internal co-operation and transparency. They asked their Deputies to prepare a comprehensive report on the reform process for their 118th Session in May 2008.

#### *Strengthening democracy, good governance and the rule of law in member states*

The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to reinforce Council of Europe action for democracy and good governance. They thanked the Russian authorities for the successful organisation of the 2nd Forum for the future of democracy in Moscow on 18-19 October 2006 and expressed their gratitude to Sweden for hosting the next session of the Forum on 13-15 June 2007 on the theme "Power and Empowerment – The interdependence of democracy and human rights".

#### *Relations with other international organisations*

The Ministers noted with satisfaction recent progress made towards greater co-operation between the Council of Europe and other international organisations, which is reflected by the resolution on co-operation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe adopted by the UN General Assembly on 13 November 2006. They instructed their Deputies to reinforce this co-operation in the different fields, indicated by the resolution. They recalled in this connection the decisions adopted by their Deputies to achieve greater synergy between the activities of the Council of Europe and the United Nations in human rights matters. As regards co-operation with the OSCE, the Ministers welcomed the impetus given over the past two years to co-operation through the Council of Europe/OSCE Co-ordination Group and the organisation of an increasing number of joint activities.

#### *Combating terrorism*

The Ministers noted with satisfaction the forthcoming entry into force on 1 June 2007 of the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism and called on the Council of Europe member states to sign and ratify it as soon as possible. They welcomed the ongoing work of the Committee of Experts on Terrorism (CODEXTER).

They also welcomed the international conference “Why terrorism?”, held in Strasbourg on 25-26 April 2007, underlining the necessity to strengthen international cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

*Other follow-up*

The Ministers took note of the progress made in the implementation of the various campaigns launched at the Warsaw Summit, in particular that on violence against women, including domestic violence, as well as the youth campaign “All different – all equal”; the progress achieved in the mainstreaming and coordination of children rights issues within the Council of Europe, in particular with the negotiation of a new convention on the protection of children against sexual abuse and exploitation; and the creation of the Enlarged Partial Agreement in Sport (EPAS) at their present session.

\* \* \*

The Ministers took note of the priorities of the incoming Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Mr Vuk Drašković.