

# Press Release

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## European Prosecutors General should protect human rights and the public interest

St Petersburg, 03.07.2008 – At the close of their two-day discussions dealing with the role of the Public Prosecution outside the criminal law field, the Prosecutors General of the 47 Council of Europe member states, stressed the importance for prosecution services to respect principles enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights.

The participants underlined that despite the absence of common European legal norms and rules regarding tasks, functions and organisation of prosecution services, in all Council of Europe member states, prosecutors have an important role and duty to protect human rights, safeguard the law and defend the public interest. Whatever the extent, the action of the prosecution services outside the criminal law field should respect a number of principles directly linked to the European Convention on Human Rights and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, such as the right to an independent and impartial tribunal, the right of access to justice, the respect of the principle of equality of arms and the right to adversarial proceedings.

"The mechanisms for the protection of human rights and freedoms need to be improved in all states. All European countries have to fulfil the task of using to the maximum possible extent the potential of state bodies, including prosecution services, for the protection of human rights," said Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation Yuri Chayka in his general report on the conference.

"Without an efficient and independent judiciary, there is no rule of law, and without the rule of law there is no real democracy and no real respect for human rights," said Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis, adding that "we must ensure that member states have legal instruments adapted to their current needs and to the challenges they face today".

Participants in the conference underlined the growing need in European societies to protect effectively the rights of vulnerable groups, notably children and young people, witnesses, victims, handicapped persons, as well as social and economic rights of the population in general. They expressed the belief that prosecutors have a crucial role to play in this respect.

Furthermore the increasing involvement of the state in the settling of issues such as the environment, consumer's rights or public health, may lead to increased involvement of the prosecution services in full respect of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The conference invited the Consultative Council of European Prosecutors (CCPE) to base its work on the role of public prosecution in the protection of human rights and public interest outside the criminal law field on the conclusions and other contributions presented during the conference with a view to drafting an opinion on this theme.

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