

Press Release

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Statement on Europe Day by Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Strasbourg, 05.05.2006 - "European cooperation is a political concept, not a religion" said Terry Davis on the occasion of Europe Day, which marks the 57th anniversary of the creation of the Council of Europe on 5 May 1949. "As with every other political initiative, European cooperation must be exposed to constant public scrutiny and criticism or face the loss of legitimacy. We must be efficient and relevant to the needs of our citizens.

In the Council of Europe, the test of relevance is more than met through more than 80 000 pending applications to the European Court of Human Rights. These applications reflect the hopes and expectations of European citizens with regard to the Council of Europe and its defence of human rights and the rule of law. To meet the test of efficiency, however, we must improve the capacity to deal with these applications quickly and expediently.

To achieve this objective, the Council of Europe member states should speed up the ratification of Protocol 14 to the European Convention on Human Rights, which contains changes designed to accelerate the processing of applications. Our governments must also make additional money available to the European Court of Human Rights to allow it to deal with its rapidly growing caseload.

Finally, I want to reiterate the call for the European Union to become a party to the European Convention on Human Rights. This will reinforce the legitimacy and accountability of EU institutions and also reinforce the human rights of people living in EU member States".

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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 46 member states.