



## **HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE OF THE MINISTRIES OF JUSTICE AND OF THE INTERIOR**

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### **IMPROVING EUROPEAN CO-OPERATION IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE FIELD**

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Mr President,  
Ministers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a privilege for me to represent the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe at this Conference. I am grateful to the Russian authorities for their hospitality and for the excellent organisation of this event.

At a meeting in May 2005, following the 26th Conference of European Ministers of Justice held in Helsinki a couple of weeks earlier, the Committee of Ministers examined the five resolutions adopted by the Conference. This included Resolution No.5 on the functioning of Council of Europe conventions on judicial co-operation in criminal matters. The Committee of Ministers transmitted the Resolution to the European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC) entrusting it with examining the effective implementation of co-operation mechanisms provided for by the Council of Europe conventions in criminal matters, any difficulties arising therefrom, as well as possible improvements that could be made, and with making any necessary proposals in this regard. It indicated that this task should be carried out while taking due account of best practices developed by member states and the work already carried out by the Organisation in this field.

The Action Plan adopted by the Heads of State and Government at the Third Summit of the Council of Europe held in Warsaw in later in May 2005, devotes a chapter to strengthening the security of European citizens. In this context it states inter alia that the Council of Europe will support strengthened international co-operation in the fight against transnational organised crime and drug trafficking.

Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Crime knows no boundaries. New technologies, in particular new means of communication, provide new tools for organised crime and sometimes for new forms of organised crime, that often reaches across borders. The Committee of Ministers is well aware of this and a number of relatively recent Council of Europe conventions provide new means for facing the challenges our societies meet in fighting some of these phenomena. I would like to mention in particular the Convention on Cybercrime, the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and the Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime.

Nevertheless, for the Council of Europe's work within the field of crime problems, including organised crime, money laundering, cybercrime, corruption and trafficking in human beings to be successful, it is essential that the relevant legal instruments be ratified by as many member states as possible in order to enter into force and be efficiently applied. The Committee of Ministers has underlined this on several occasions and I would like to stress it again at this Conference. Some of these instruments can be ratified also by non-member states, which is of course of great value.

Another issue to which the Committee of Ministers attaches importance is the monitoring of the implementation of these conventions, in order to enhance their effectiveness.

Among the numerous conventions elaborated by the Council of Europe in the criminal field, not all have maintained their relevance. We must not forget that some of these legal instruments were elaborated fifty years ago, and although they have

sometimes been supplemented and updated by the adoption of additional protocols, which is the case for example of the Convention on Extradition and the Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, this is not always the case.

In order to improve co-operation between Council of Europe member states in fighting crime, there may well be a need to update, rationalise and complete existing texts. But consideration should also be given to the practical means for co-operation, to simplified means of communication and exchanges of information between law enforcement officers and judicial authorities, for example through the creation of a data base, which may also be a means of increasing the visibility of European norms.

In this context, I would like to underline the importance the Committee of Ministers attaches to co-operation and exchanges of information with other international fora active in this field, notably the United Nations, the European Union and Interpol. This is absolutely necessary in particular with respect to any normative work that is undertaken.

Following the instructions of the Committee of Ministers, the European Committee on Crime Problems has been working on the follow up to Resolution No. 5 of the Conference of Ministers of Justice. I am convinced that this Conference will provide useful input and new ideas on how to enhance international co-operation in the fight against crime, in particular organised crime, which could feed into this process. The Committee of Ministers will be following this work closely and consider the conclusions of your Conference carefully in order that they may be taken into account in an appropriate manner.

On this note, I will conclude by wishing you a most excellent conference, with worthwhile exchanges and good results.

Thank you.