

RECOMMENDATION 763

on the fight against international terrorism: defence aspects

The Assembly,

- (i) Condemning all forms of terrorism, particularly acts of terrorism against civilian populations;
- (ii) Expressing solidarity with the Spanish people, victims of the attacks of 11 March 2004 in Madrid, and with all those in the world who suffer the consequences of terrorism;
- (iii) Recognising that recourse to terrorism has highly complex causes which must be tackled using many means and noting that this recommendation refers only to the defence aspects;
- (iv) Recognising that the best political response to terrorism is the unswerving upholding of human rights, the rule of law and democratic norms;
- (v) Recognising that the primary responsibility for the prevention and management of the consequences of terrorist acts lies with national homeland security structures;
- (vi) Recognising also the central role of intelligence in the fight against terrorism and of cooperation among European states in this field;
- (vii) Considering that the armed forces make an important contribution to the fight against terrorism in external situations and that their actions complement those of national security forces in internal situations;
- (viii) Acknowledging the expertise and knowledge gained by individual WEU nations in their own fight against terrorist groups within their borders over the years and endorsing their call for greater cooperation;
- (ix) Recognising NATO's efforts to adapt its policies and force structures in the fight against terrorism;
- (x) Recalling the 2003 European Security Strategy, which defines the new face of terrorism and lays down the foundations upon which Europe should build its security and defence strategy;
- (xi) Recalling that the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council stated on 17 November 2003 that it intended to re-examine and redefine the Petersberg tasks under a new Headline Goal 2010;
- (xii) Noting that Article III-309 of the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe specifies that the EU may use civilian and military means to contribute to the fight against terrorism, including by supporting third countries in combating terrorism in their territories;
- (xiii) Recognising the importance of the EU's 2004 Plan of Action on Combating Terrorism and its aims and priorities for the future;
- (xiv) Noting the establishment of EU battlegroups which can be made available for external operations in the fight against terrorism;
- (xv) Noting the creation of a European Security Research Programme (ESRP) and its importance in moving a step closer towards harmonising different technologies which can be used to prevent terrorist acts and manage their consequences;
- (xvi) Noting the establishment of a Preparatory Action to enhance cooperation among EU member states and ensure that the ESRP operates efficiently;
- (xvii) Highlighting the significant progress made to date in the fight against terrorism in terms of preventing the financing of terrorist groups, law-enforcement cooperation, border and transport security, relations with third countries and security cooperation,

RECOMMENDS THAT THE COUNCIL INVITE THE WEU MEMBER STATES AS MEMBERS OF THE EU AND NATO TO:

1. Continue their work with a view to building a more secure European Neighbourhood through greater cooperation with third states, the Middle East and North African countries;
2. Enhance cooperation between European states in the military sphere, and take steps to adapt their military forces so that they can respond more effectively to the new threats within and outside the homeland;
3. Ensure that the timetable set for the EU battlegroups is kept to and that they are operational by the end of 2006;
4. Maintain efforts to ensure that the NATO Response Force is fully operational as soon as possible, and facilitate its decision-making mechanisms with a view to obtaining a higher level of efficiency;
5. Increase awareness of the importance of intelligence cooperation among European states and move towards strengthening the intelligence community across three fronts: reinforcement of domestic intelligence services, better integration of the information gathered by the various agencies, and more cooperation over intelligence within the European Union framework;
6. Strengthen and adapt Europe's security forces so that they can respond to the new threats and are better prepared to cooperate with the military and intelligence communities;
7. Ensure that Europe's capabilities are further strengthened and developed, particularly as regards technologies which enhance the performance of the armed forces and the intelligence and security services;
8. Move towards a more proactive, and not merely reactive, defence strategy on terrorism, without this signifying a justification for preventive military action;
9. Continue to maximise the effectiveness of a European security network against terrorism by developing existing structures such as the Schengen Information System and Eurojust.