Justice and home affairs: priorities and policy objectives for external relations

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PURPOSE: to present the European Union's priorities and policy objectives for external relations in the field of justice and home affairs (JHA). CONTENT: The report deals with the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) dimension of external policies of the Union, the priorities to be set, the means to implement these priorities and working structures. The Report stresses the need for the Union to integrate JHA matters fully in the Union's external policy so that a comprehensive, integrated, cross-pillar action is carried out by the Union as a whole. The priorities for this action are defined in the report and include in particular immigration and asylum matters, fight against organised crime and terrorism, drugs and money laundering, high-tech crime and trafficking in human beings, civil law cooperation and building partnerships with important countries including the candidate countries, international organisations and bodies relevant to the Union's priorities. The Report suggests ways and means to make full use of all instruments available to the Union to integrate JHA matters in Union policies, and deals with representation of the Union both in Title IV and Title VI matters. The Report suggests appropriate working structures to ensure a coherent approach to these matters under the authority of COREPER. The present Report has been drawn-up, pursuant to a mandate given by COREPER, by JHA Counsellors at meetings of 23 April, 8, 16 and 23 May 2000. It was based upon a draft of the Presidency and a contribution of the Commission services. JHA Counsellors agreed that the external dimension of the Union's work in the JHA field would entail the following: developing long-term strategies; preparing positions on subjects going beyond the terms of reference of a single working party or incorporating cross-pillar aspects; ensuring for attention of COREPER, overall consistency of external JHA aspects by drawing up a body of general principles; monitoring work carried out by other bodies relevant to JHA external relations; early warning mechanism on new problems that might arise and finally, identifying, for the attention of COREPER, priorities in this field. These tasks would require a thorough knowledge of programmes and measures taken in the JHA field, ongoing activities in international fora and oversight of upcoming events to enable the Union to take a more proactive approach to these matters. The role of the COREPER is crucial in this respect since it is the only Committee in a position to assess the overall objectives of the Union's external policy. In order to ensure coherence, COREPER will, where appropriate, assess on a regular basis and give guidance on the development of the external dimension of the Union's work in the JHA field. The mandate of geographical and thematic merged Working Parties of the Council extends, where appropriate, to the JHA dimension, receiving for that purpose substantive input from the existing structures, in particular the existing formal JHA working groups. Assistance of the JHA/Relex Counsellors will be available to COREPER. COREPER will evaluate how such an arrangement has worked in the interest of strengthening EU external dimension in JHA matters within one year. The European Council is invited to endorse the above orientations based on the attached report and to askCOREPER/Council to start implementation and to submit a progress report to the meeting of the European Council in December 2001 together with the report requested in the Conclusions of the Tampere European Council.