Role of the European Union in the fight against terrorism

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Graham WATSON (ELDR, UK) on the role of the EU in the fight against terrorism. It made a number of recommendations to the Council, including a call for the introduction of a European search-and-arrest warrant for combating terrorism in the context of action against crime, whether organised or not, trafficking in human beings and crimes against children, illegal trafficking in drugs and arms, corruption and fraud. It also advocated minimum rules at European level on the definition of criminal acts and the penalties applicable in the field of terrorism and said that formal extradition procedures should be abolished and the principle of mutual recognition of decisions on criminal matters relating to terrorist offences should be adopted. The Council was also urged to adopt legislation for the harmonisation of national laws on compensation for the victims of terrorist crimes. The report expressed concern about the increase in terrorist activities within the EU and the inadequacy of traditional forms of judicial and police cooperation. It called on Member States to adopt measures to prevent a support framework for terrorists and to prevent the formation of or collaboration between violent groups in Europe which exploit legitimate social aspirations for their own ends. The report also pointed out that in a democratic society any political, social or environmental conflict can and must be settled through the existing democratic and constitutional channels, which means there is no justification for the use of terrorist violence. However, Member States should pursue educational, social and other policies to combat social, economic and cultural exclusion and to build among the young a commitment to renounce violence and an understanding of how to use democracy to overcome conflict.