Revised European Union anti-terrorism action plan, work programme

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The Council heard an oral report by the Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, Mr Gijs DE VRIES, on the process of peer evaluation of national arrangements in the fight against terrorism.

The Commission also presented a package of four Communications on the fight against terrorism, to enhance prevention, preparedness and response to terrorist attacks. The Communications respond to requests made by the European Council in March and June and, together with reports/input from the High Representative and the Council, aim to contribute to the preparation of the European Council meeting of 17 December 2004. Dealing respectively with terrorist financing prevention, consequence management and critical infrastructure protection, the documents put forward suggestions on how to enhance European prevention, preparedness and response to terrorist attacks.

It should be noted that in the wake of the terrorist outrage which struck Madrid and the European Union as a whole on 11 March, the European Council agreed a set of strategic objectives which, since then, have directed the Union's fight against terrorism. The prevention, preparedness and response to terrorist attacks is at the core of these strategic objectives, which specifically include: the reduction of access by terrorists to financial and other economic resources; maximising the capacity within EU bodies and Member States to detect investigate and prosecute terrorists and prevent terrorist attacks; and enhancing the capability of Member States to deal with the consequences of a terrorist attack.

At its meeting of 18 June 2004 the European Council endorsed the revised EU Plan of Action on Combating Terrorism. The effective prevention, preparedness and response of the Union to terrorist attacks are overarching objectives reflected in many of the far-reaching measures and actions identified in the Plan of Action.

The first of the four Communications is entitled Prevention, Preparedness and Response to terrorist attacks. The other three concern the fight against terrorism financing, preparedness and consequence management in the fight against terrorism and protection of critical infrastructures.