PRESS RELEASE

HIGH-LEVEL "TRIPARTITE PLUS" MEETING DISCUSSES PRACTICAL MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN COOPERATION AGAINST TERRORISM AND TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

Geneva, 14 February 2003 -- High-level representatives of the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations met today for their annual meeting, marking the tenth anniversary of the "tripartite" process of consultations.

The meeting, chaired by the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze was the 12th in a series initiated in July 1993. The annual discussions – which are chaired and hosted in turn by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE), and the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), on behalf of the United Nations – are intended to share information and improve practical cooperation by drawing on each other’s expertise and know-how so as to complement efforts of common concern. Over time the agenda has widened in scope, from an essentially humanitarian emphasis, to diverse fields related to human rights, conflict prevention, conflict management and post-conflict rehabilitation.

The number of participating organizations has also increased, so that these consultations are informally referred to as the "Tripartite Plus" process. The European Commission, the International Organization for Migration and the International Committee of the Red Cross, who participate as affiliated members, have now been joined by the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union. A wide range of representatives from the UN system – DPA, DPKO, ILO, OCHA, UNDP, UNECE, UNHCHR, UNICEF, UNODC, UNHCR – also participated.

The meeting focused on two central themes: cooperation in the fight against terrorism and trafficking in human beings.

Participants exchanged information on recent developments on those themes in the CoE, the OSCE, the UN and the EU and IOM.

They underlined the need for a common framework for combating terrorism more effectively while respecting human rights and where applicable, international humanitarian law. They also welcomed the Council of Europe’s guidelines on Human Rights and the Fight Against Terrorism and the efforts of UNHCHR to distill human rights jurisprudence for the CTC and for member states.

Participants expressed satisfaction over the adoption on 7 December 2002 by the Porto Ministerial Council of the OSCE Charter on Preventing and Combating Terrorism, the adoption during the Ministerial level meeting of the UN Security Council on 20 January 2003 of resolution 1465, and the Protocol amending the Council of Europe Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism adopted yesterday as well as the Seville Declaration adopted by the European Council in June 2002, the Action Plan adopted by the Ghent European Council in September 2001 and the wide range of legislation adopted by the European Union in the areas covered by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373. They paid tribute to the numerous and significant EU assistance programmes to support countries around the world in the fight against terrorism.

Participants supported the initiative referred to by CoE Secretary General regarding
the possible elaboration of a comprehensive European Convention on Combating Terrorism to complement instruments and principles elaborated by the United Nations and OSCE in this area. In order to address the root causes of terrorism and overcome the clash of ignorance about world civilizations participants called for increased intercultural and inter-religious dialogue.


They voiced support for a successful conclusion of a Council of Europe Convention on Trafficking in Human Beings to enhance victim protection and international cooperation against this serious form of criminality at the European level as well as for the promotion of the adoption of national counter-trafficking legislation. The rights-based approach to combating trafficking being emphasized by UNHCHR was welcomed by participants.

Participants welcomed the high priority attached by their respective institutions to policy and programmes combating trafficking and explained the most effective means to enhance their cooperation not only at the operational level but also in terms of developing coherent and complementary policy directions. They also advocated joint efforts to raise public awareness in order to counter trafficking, particularly in country of destination.

Reviewing cooperation in the field they agreed that coordination to avoid duplication was important. Also the role of civil society and NGOs together with governmental and inter-governmental institutions was stressed.

Participants considered the outcome of the target-oriented meeting on Trafficking in Human Beings. This expert-level meeting compared experiences and lessons learnt in the field as well as through sustained contacts of specialized personnel at the level of headquarters of the respective participating organizations, in cooperation with inter-governmental bodies, international and local NGOs. It was felt that continuous awareness-raising as well as training for national officials, particularly law-enforcing institutions was important.

Participants agreed to work towards the establishment of a consultative mechanism on combating terrorism at the working level that can build on the Tripartite Plus exchanges between the annual High-level meetings.

It was agreed that the next meeting should be hosted by the OSCE in early 2004.