

# 26<sup>TH</sup> CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN MINISTERS OF JUSTICE

(HELSINKI, 7-8 APRIL 2005)

## **Statement by Mrs Kirsti RISSANEN**

### **Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice of Finland**

Distinguished Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to share with you a more general structural issue regarding the latest development. Building an area of freedom, security and justice for the whole Europe seems to indicate that the cooperation between the Council of Europe and the European union in the field of justice and home affairs might be tightened.

It is timely just now that we bear in mind the unique role of the Council of Europe in the legal and judicial cooperation on an equal footing in a Europe without dividing lines. The standard setting role of the Council of Europe has found its expression in some 200 treaties and close to 30 of them are part of the European Union's acquis in the field of justice and home affairs.

Joint Declaration on Cooperation and Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission of April 2001 emphasised the importance of close cooperation between the two organisations.

A legal basis for accession by the European Union to the convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms is included in the draft Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe, which is currently undergoing the ratification process in the member countries. The draft Treaty provision entails a firm commitment upon the European Union to join the Convention.

The EU's accession would ensure that there are not two separate systems each protecting human rights built in Europe. Development with regard to establishing coherent system of protection is welcome. The protection of human rights is an issue to be dealt with as one comprehensive whole.

It is becoming more and more evident that there are increasing synergies between the Council of Europe and the European Union and that a more formal relationship might be needed in the field of justice and home affairs in (when) promoting rule of law, security and justice.