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25th CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN MINISTERS OF JUSTICE

Sofia (9-10 October 2003)

- **INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE
FIGHT AGAINST INTERNATIONAL
TERRORISM AND IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE RELEVANT INSTRUMENTS OF THE
COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

- **THE RESPONSE OF THE JUSTICE SYSTEM
- CIVIL AND CRIMINAL - TO TERRORISM**

Report presented by the Attorney General of

CYPRUS

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Mr. Chairman,
Honourable Ministers
Distinguished Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that I attend the 25th Conference of Ministers of Justice of the Council of Europe. I wish to extend sincere congratulations and warm thanks to the hosting country, the Republic of Bulgaria, for the flawless organisation of the Conference and the cordial hospitality which makes our work in this beautiful city so pleasant.

I would also like to congratulate the Minister of Justice of Bulgaria for his excellent Report on the important themes of the Conference.

Even though terrorism acts affected some countries in the near past, the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001, triggered a re-evaluation by Governments, Parliaments and International Organisations of threat perceptions as well as legislative, judicial and investigative policies to fight terrorism effectively.

International Organisations such as the Council of Europe, the European Union and the United Nations address thoroughly this phenomenon because of the global threat it poses. Many countries during recent years ratified International Conventions in this area and amend their domestic legislation in order to combat terrorism with preventive and suppressing means.

The fight against international crime, including terrorism, through international co-operation, through full implementation of all relevant international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, as well as Security Council Resolutions, is one of the priorities of Cyprus.

The Cyprus Authorities are committed to joining forces with all foreign Authorities on a bilateral level as well as in international fora in the struggle to eliminate terrorism. This determination has been expressed at the highest possible level. Assurances were given that all practical measures are carried out in co-operation with the international community and in line with the obligations flowing from the relevant resolutions and international conventions, which Cyprus has ratified and have already become part of its municipal law. Cyprus is a party to all 12 existing International Conventions against terrorism.

It is worth mentioning in particular that, in November 2001, the Cyprus Parliament enacted the Ratification Law of the U.N. Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. Consequently, the offences prescribed in the Convention are criminal offences and the provided maximum penalties are 15 years imprisonment and/or a fine of CY£1,000.000.

Furthermore, a specific provision is included in the Ratification Law according to which these offences are predicate offences for the purposes of the application of the anti-money laundering legislation. Thus, the provisions on freezing and confiscation of assets directly apply. Moreover, the Cyprus Financial Intelligence Unit (F.I.U) may investigate any

relevant information and co-operate with its counterparts of other countries for serving the same purpose.

It should be added that the Central Bank of Cyprus, relying on relevant decisions of the Council of Ministers, is enabled to carry out or order other banks to conduct administrative inquiries in order to identify and freeze terrorist assets, to implement U.N. sanctions and to enforce U.N. Security Council Resolutions.

It should also be noted that a Coordinating Body Against Terrorism was set up by a decision of the Council of Ministers, chaired by the Deputy Attorney General and composed of representatives of the Police, the Customs Department, the Financial Intelligence Unit (F.I.U.) and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice and Public Order.

I would like to conclude my intervention by saying that only through efficient legislation, based on common international standards, a well functioning Judiciary and effective international co-operation, serious threats, such as terrorism, can be successfully faced and stamped out. The work done by the Council of Europe and meetings like the present will go a long way towards achieving those ends.

A word of warning. Any measures taken for resisting terrorism should not tend to establish an oppressive regime for one's own citizens. Otherwise, by adopting repressive counter measures, there is a danger of falling into the trap set by the terrorist. Democracy and the rule of law, despite weaknesses, should remain high in our aspirations. It is probably the only effective answer to terrorism. In addition to unqualified respect for human rights.

