



50th Plenary of the Committee on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL)

**Opening Address by Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni,
Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe**

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As delivered

Introduction

Chairman,

Executive Secretary of the Financial Action Task Force,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here today to address your Committee during its 50th Plenary.

We are lucky to have with us so many former Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Executive Secretaries.

In recent years your meetings have had, as their backdrop, Europe's financial and economic crises. These have added a new, important dimension to MONEYVAL's work – given the opportunity for money laundering created by weaknesses in Europe's financial systems.

There is still a great deal to be done on this front, but today it is the "Panama Papers" scandal which dominates headlines, with its revelations of corruption, tax evasion and yet more laundering activity.

I'm sure that none of us draw any satisfaction from the relevance of this Committee being underlined, repeatedly, by events around us.

However, such developments *do* strengthen our resolve to work together to tackle such crimes.

The fight against terrorism

High on Europe's political agenda is, of course, the fight against terrorism. I would like to express my gratitude – and the gratitude of the Secretary General, Mr Jagland, who unfortunately cannot be here today – for MONEYVAL's decision to dedicate a full session of this plenary to discussing counter-terrorist financing measures.

In the long fight against violent extremism, we have to hit these people where it hurts. We have to deny them the resources which allow them to wage their barbaric war.

Mr David Lewis, Executive Secretary of the FATF: I very much welcome the new strategy you have recently adopted in this area, which I know will be presented at the special plenary session on Friday morning.

I also want to thank you for the FATF's review of the manner in which 199 jurisdictions around the world criminalise terrorist financing, and apply targeted financial sanctions. The review has made crystal clear the need to focus on the *implementation* of international standards.

I know that this exercise has identified gaps in the legal systems of a number of MONEYVAL members. The fact that this will be addressed at this meeting is a good illustration of how well the FATF and MONEYVAL work together. There is no progress in the fight against terrorism and terrorist financing without solid international co-operation.

In the past year the Council of Europe has taken a number of important steps to help our member states combat violent extremism. This is a priority for us.

Last May, we adopted our "Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism" on foreign terrorist fighters. This is the first international treaty to criminalise the early preparations of terrorist acts, *including* the financing of foreign terrorist fighters. The protocol has already received 27 signatures, including the European Union, and will be open to states outside of Europe, too.

The Additional Protocol was part of a bigger Council of Europe Action Plan on Violent Extremism, which also aims to prevent radicalisation, for example in schools, prisons and online. On the basis of this Action Plan, special guidelines for prison staff were adopted by our Committee of Ministers last month.

Yesterday our Secretary General convened education ministers from across our member states, in Brussels. The Council of Europe is launching a new ground-breaking set of competences for democratic citizenship, which will be used in schools across the continent to teach young people how to live as democratic citizens in diverse societies – fostering tolerance and inclusion.

The Committee of Ministers has also recently empowered the European Committee on Crime Problems to negotiate a new international treaty on offences relating to cultural property. These are the historical artefacts - the so-called "blood antiquities" - looted by Da'esh and others before, it is believed, disappearing into European markets. This treaty will therefore seek to criminalise the illicit destruction and trafficking of cultural property which pays for terrorist acts.

So, you see: we are using every tool at our disposal to strengthen Europe's defences against terror and to help member states contain this threat – and your discussions on terrorist financing come at a very timely moment, and are a hugely valuable addition to this body of ongoing work.

MONEYVAL's work

In the past two decades, MONEYVAL has become a globally renowned player in the anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing community.

Your Committee is the most experienced FATF-style regional body when it comes to conducting mutual evaluations. You provide consistent and accurate interpretations of the FATF standards in the European region, setting the example for others to follow.

The 5th round of mutual evaluations brings, of course, new challenges to MONEYVAL's members. I would like to commend you for your greater focus on risk, and your assessments of the *effectiveness* of different systems to prevent money laundering.

And I welcome very much your discussion on streamlining the follow-up that remains for your previous evaluation round, in order to free up capacity for this new round. The Secretary General has repeatedly emphasised the need for monitoring bodies which can operate rapidly, flexibly and effectively.

We have also been very pleased to see recent efforts by several member states to accede to the 2005 Warsaw Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime. I would like to take this opportunity to urge all MONEYVAL members who have not yet signed or ratified the Convention to do so.

Finally, let me emphasise how much we in the Secretariat value close co-operation between MONEYVAL and the rest of the Council of Europe. This is a message the Secretary General asked me to convey on his behalf. The Council of Europe benefits greatly from MONEYVAL's strong reputation and high visibility. In turn, being a part of a well-established, intergovernmental body gives MONEYVAL a strong political base to work from. The relationship works very well – and long may this continue.

With that, I wish you an excellent Plenary. Thank you very much.