

**Inaugural speech by Right Hon Terry Davis
Secretary General of the Council of Europe
First Consultation of the Parties to the
Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism
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Distinguished Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having had some experience of terrorism, I appreciate very much having been asked to open the First Consultation of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, which coincides with the 119th session of the Committee of Ministers in Madrid.

I congratulate the Government of Spain for its excellent Chairmanship of Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the particular attention which Spain has given to the Council of Europe activities against terrorism.

About three weeks ago, in Strasbourg, the Parties to the 2005 Council of Europe Convention on laundering, search, seizure and confiscation of the proceeds from crime and on the financing of terrorism held their first conference. The time has now come for a consultation of the parties to its sister Convention, the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism.

These two instruments were adopted jointly in 2005 in Warsaw, and they put into practice the main principles of the Council of Europe multidisciplinary approach to fighting terrorism.

Throughout my mandate I have insisted on the fact that the only effective anti-terrorist policy is one which stops more terrorists than it helps to recruit. This means that robust law enforcement must be accompanied by strict respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. That is why the Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism is so important.

How is the prevention of terrorist acts reinforced? First by establishing new criminal offences which may lead to the commission of terrorist offences, such as acts of public provocation, recruitment and training for terrorism. It also aims to reinforce co-operation in prevention at both national and international levels, by building on national prevention policies as well as by modifying the existing extradition and mutual assistance arrangements.

The Convention contains a provision for the protection and compensation of victims of terrorism and, finally, it foresees a consultation process. This is the stage we are at today.

Our Convention has received wide recognition as a state of the art standard in this area.

It served as a precursor to the UN Security Council Resolution 1624 adopted in September 2005.

More recently in 2008, the European Union amended its Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism in line with the three main offences established by the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism so that it updates the Framework Decision to deal with public provocation to commit a terrorist offence as well as recruitment and training for terrorism, including the use of the Internet for these purposes, and classifies these activities as crimes which should be punished accordingly.

The Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism has now been ratified by 19 States.

That leaves 24 States which have signed the Convention, but not yet ratified it, and I encourage them to do so as soon as possible. And of course I urge those Member States which have not yet signed the Convention to get on with it.

Terrorism is international in character. It requires an international response. The broader the coalition against terrorism, the better are our chances of preventing it. That is why the Convention is also open to non-European countries. I therefore invite all the observer countries at this Conference to join us.

Some countries have more experience in fighting terrorism than others. Our host is one of them, and we are all aware of the tragic cost Spain has paid as a target of domestic and international terrorists. But this experience must be used to prevent similar tragedies in Spain and elsewhere in the future. That is the point of this Convention. It provides for mutual assistance and exchange of good practices, and that is why I encourage as many countries as possible to become parties to it.

In conclusion, I should like to make a few comments about the role of CODEXTER – which is what we call the Council of Europe Committee of Experts on Terrorism. It was the CODEXTER who prepared the draft Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism as well as its explanatory report. But CODEXTER did not stop there.

In June 2006, the CODEXTER reviewed the state of play in the implementation of all the Council of Europe Conventions dealing with terrorism. In 2008 and 2009, it undertook its Second Review, concentrating this time on the issue of recruitment for terrorism.

As Secretary General of the Council of Europe I have always stressed the need for efficiency in the use of our scarce resources, and that also applies to the work of intergovernmental bodies. We must always avoid duplication.

So that is why I encourage you to take advantage of the experience and expertise of CODEXTER in any arrangements which you make for the future follow-up of this Convention, including regular reports to Consultations of the Parties.

Thank you for your attention, and I declare open the First Consultation of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism.