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For the Media

Finnish Minister of the Interior Kari Rajamäki:
IMMIGRATION, TERRORISM, BORDER CONTROL AND MORE EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING
ON POLICE COOPERATION HIGH ON THE AGENDA IN TAMPERE

On 20-22 September, EU interior ministers will discuss migration management, further development of the common European asylum system, concrete counter-terrorism measures during the Finnish Presidency, development of external border management and improvement of decision-making on police cooperation. Kari Rajamäki, Finnish Minister of the Interior, expects practical debate on the basis of which matters can be taken forward. The informal ministerial meeting in Tampere will be attended by about 60 justice and home affairs (JHA) ministers.

"I hope that the EU Member States reach mutual agreement that immigration issues must be explored comprehensively. The Finnish Presidency will present an initiative on solidarity in migration management in Tampere. With the help of this initiative, all Member States, even those which are faced with strong migratory pressures, would be able to take full responsibility for the implementation of common European rules. The initiative will be successful if all of its elements are adopted and not just some of them," Mr Rajamäki stressed.

"An assessment of how the EU Member States have implemented the EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy and related Action Plan will be completed at the end of the Finnish Presidency. In addition to broad strategic guidelines, we need small concrete measures. I expect that the Tampere meeting will present a number of proposals for measures which we could already start implementing during the Finnish Presidency," Mr Rajamäki continued.

"Moving towards qualified majority voting in the field of police cooperation is important for the EU's internal security. As regards police cooperation, this would mean more effective and democratic decision-making. This would also enable us to more rapidly agree on operational cooperation and exchange of information within the EU. At the moment, decision-making on internal security issues is artificially divided. Qualified majority voting can be used on issues concerning immigration, border control and visas whereas issues relating to police cooperation require unanimity. The EU must be able to make decisions more effectively with regard to combating cross-border security threats. Citizens rightly expect this of the EU," said Rajamäki.

Topics on the Tampere agenda relate to the assessment of the Hague Programme

The topics to be discussed at the informal JHA ministerial meeting in Tampere relate to the assessment of the Hague Programme. Discussions will be based on the relevant Commission Communications of June 2006 and documents drawn up by the Presidency.

On Thursday, 21 September, JHA ministers will discuss migration management (Presidency's initiative on European solidarity in immigration, border control and asylum policies), development of the EU's integrated management system for external borders (the so-called border management strategy), development of the common European asylum system, counter-terrorism, and the enhancing of operational activities and multidisciplinary law enforcement cooperation.

On Friday, 22 September, JHA ministers will discuss how to improve the effectiveness of decision-making in relation to police cooperation and judicial cooperation in criminal matters. The existing Treaties make it possible to decide on these matters by a qualified majority together with the European Parliament. At present, decisions on police cooperation and judicial cooperation in criminal matters can only be taken if all 25 EU Member States are unanimous. Decision-making by qualified majority voting would be a significant reform, improving the effectiveness of decision-making.

Prior to the actual ministerial meeting, the JHA ministers of Germany, Portugal and Slovenia will convene together with Franco Frattini, Vice-President of the European Commission, on Wednesday, 20 September to discuss, for example, the JHA Financial Programmes for the period 2007-2013 and issues related to reforming the Schengen Information System. This meeting will be led by Finland.

Media representatives may listen to the debate on immigration

Media representatives may listen to the debate on migration management and development of the second phase of the asylum system in an overflow room at the meeting venue on Thursday, 21 September at 14.00-16.00.

A preliminary press conference will be organised at the Court House of Tampere on Wednesday, 20 September at 18.30-21.00. The press conference will also be attended by Mr Rajamäki and Ms Leena Luhtanen, Finnish Minister of Justice. On Friday, 22 September media representatives will have an opportunity to visit the Police School of Finland in Tampere at 10.00-12.00. Accreditation is required before all these events.

About 400 participants and over 100 media representatives are expected to attend the meeting in Tampere. The JHA ministers of the 25 Member States, in addition to the ministers of the candidate countries, Commission Vice-President Franco Frattini, EU Commissioner responsible for Justice, Freedom and Security, Max-Peter Ratzel, Director of Europol, Ilkka Laitinen, Executive Director of Frontex, and representatives of the European Parliament and the Council have been invited to the meeting.

Memorandums on the themes of the meeting can be found at www.eu2006.fi.

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