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**A Day to Remember and Honour:
European Solidarity with Victims of
Terrorism**

VI European Day on Remembrance of Victims of Terrorism

Brussels, 11 March 2010

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to be here with you today, at the sixth European Day for the victims of terrorism. It is a particular honour to welcome you, victims and families of the victims, and to be able to express my solidarity directly to you.

Today, it's the 11th March. When you look back at some particular events in history, you remember exactly where you were and what you were doing. I know exactly what I was doing and feeling this time six years ago. I was in Strasbourg, just on my way to the European Parliament.

Having lived and spent a lot of time in Spain, I have many friends there and feel strongly for the country. My first reaction, when I heard about the Madrid-attack and the bombs in the train was: Not again! And then: were any of my friends at the train station when the bombs went off? And to my great sadness, I discovered that I, like so many others, lost a friend there.

Not long after, in July 2005, we were once again confronted with terrible images – this time of the bombings in London. We should consider ourselves fortunate that since then no large-scale attacks have taken place on European soil. But that does not mean that terrorists have not tried.

The EU day for the victims of terrorism is a day to remember and honour those who have lost their lives in terrorist events in Europe and elsewhere in the world. We stand side by side with all families and friends who lost a loved one in a terrorist attack and we recall our commitment to assist them whenever and wherever we can.

I can assure you that the protection of victims of terrorism will continue to be taken forward by the Commission in the years to come. Even if there can never be adequate compensation for those who suffered a terrorist attack and for their relatives, the European Union will contribute to supporting and protecting them.

For the past six years the Commission has demonstrated its support for the victims of terrorism through financial assistance. The promotion of high quality projects will continue to be at the heart of EU policy for the aid and protection of victims of terrorism.

Furthermore, last year the Commission set up a European network of associations of victims of terrorism the main objective of which is to stimulate transnational cooperation between victims' associations and to increase the solidarity of European citizens with victims of terrorism.

The European network has accomplished remarkable work in bringing together in a very short period associations of victims of terrorism and organisations concerned with the protection of victims of terrorism.

It has also coordinated seminars and meetings, including the co-organisation of this very event. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their invaluable cooperation and excellent work.

As Vice-President Reding just said, the Commission is currently carrying out a wide ranging impact assessment to propose legislative and non-legislative solutions in early 2011 to improve existing legislation on victims' rights and its implementation and possible further measures.

We also intend to support initiatives promoting the dissemination of testimonies of victims of terrorism. These actions will help to further sensitise EU citizens and provide platforms for victims to counter and delegitimise the violence narrative of terrorism.

I know that some associations of victims of terrorism have already developed interesting initiatives in this direction. I take this opportunity to applaud these efforts and to encourage further work.

A targeted call for proposals "Radicalisation leading to terrorism and the role of victims of terrorism in preventing radicalisation", to be published in the coming days, offers financial support precisely to this kind of actions.

This target call has a budget of 2 million Euros and I strongly encourage associations of victims to submit projects and further develop their role in the prevention of terrorism.

Ladies and Gentlemen

One of my strongest commitments as Commissioner for Home Affairs is to make Europe safer and more secure. This is our obligation to our citizens. And fighting terrorism is an important part of this.

Actions are needed on the inside as well as on the outside of the Union. The first objective is of course to prevent people turning to terrorism. Inside, we have to overcome exclusion. The way to do this is to give people jobs, a good education and overall having a good integration policy. This will not solve all problems but take us a little down the road.

But we have to do more. And this goes from actions such as countering any form of violent radicalisation to suggesting legislation that strengthens security.

One of my major tasks for this year is the development of the Internal Security Strategy the EU has just adopted. The communication will include action oriented proposals on way ahead. It will send a strong signal on how committed the EU is to protect its citizens.

This work will be taken forward in line with the fundamental rights we believe in and the values that the EU is based upon. Let me be clear about this: anti-terrorism activities shall be conducted with full respect for fundamental rights and the principle of the rule of law.

Adopting counter-terrorist measures that do not respect the legal safeguards existing in a democratic state would only lead to undermine the values we seek to defend. And then the terrorists could claim victory.

But changes in the Union are not enough. On the outside we will continue to use our foreign policy instruments to improve the situation in third countries, to help develop the rule of law and good governance and support democracy in general. Trade is another key to welfare and integration. We must seek to involve more countries in global trade and exchange.

With this active and horizontal approach, I am confident that we are on the right way in the fight against terrorism.

I would like to conclude with a positive note directed to all of you here today.

Our hope is the generosity of the victims of terrorism that despite their pain, work to spread a message of non violence and reconciliation, to prevent others from suffering terrorist attacks.

Such a powerful message will never fail in the long run.

Thank you