

ADDRESS AT THE CLOSING SESSION

Vice-chairman, colleagues,

During these two days we have heard some interesting introductions and held constructive debates on many important issues. Yesterday we spoke about exchanges of data and data protection, as well as the future of Europol. This morning we discussed control of the EU's external borders and immigration, which are difficult subjects and very topical ones. Now, this afternoon, we have recalled the Geneva Appeal and considered the state of judicial cooperation ten years on. In addition, we have attempted the difficult task of weighing up how to combat terrorism effectively while protecting individuals' basic rights. All in all, the subjects we have debated have therefore covered many aspects of the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice.

To my mind, yesterday's discussion of data exchanges and data protection was very important and very useful. Our discussion of the surrender of passenger data and the proposal for a framework decision on exchanges of data showed very concretely that genuine cooperation and coordination are needed between the European Parliament and national parliaments. Cooperation helps each of us to obtain information which is always up-to-date and comprehensive. By means of cooperation, we can also, if need be, respond swiftly to new situations.

During these two days, we have said repeatedly that the public expect decision-makers to provide security and to combat terrorism and organised crime effectively. On the other hand, it is important to bear in mind that the public also expect decision-makers to respect basic rights and to protect the law effectively. Respect for fundamental rights is essential in order, for example, to be sure of widespread public support for measures against terrorism.

The aspects which I have just mentioned – on the one hand, effectiveness and on the other hand, respect for fundamental rights – must also go hand in hand when discussing the development of EU decision-making on justice and home affairs. Here too, in our debates much has been said about ideas and recommendations for developing decision-making which are very topical in the EU. One might cautiously suggest as a summary of what has been said here, it seems to me, that decision-making can be, and must be, developed at least in certain clearly defined areas such as fighting crime. At the same time, however, care must be taken to ensure that the development of decision-making is accompanied by safeguards for basic rights.

The constructive debates here have shown once again the benefits of cooperation between the European Parliament and national parliaments. Again and again, joint debates have shown that we have very similar values and objectives as well as very similar concerns regarding the development of justice and home affairs. I believe that regular interparliamentary debates and exchanges of information help us jointly to get our objectives realised more effectively than if

each of us worked in isolation. I hope that we shall also meet during Germany's Presidency, either here or in Berlin.

On behalf of the Finnish Parliament, I should like once again to thank the meeting's organisers and participants.