

Distinguished Chair, Members of the European Parliament

I would like to begin by thanking you for this opportunity to brief you on the priorities of the Finnish Presidency.

The whole world is being challenged by **disruptive developments** and these challenges have certainly not passed Europe by. Our societies are transforming as we adapt to changes in climate, technology and demography. Consequently, the internal security of the Union faces diverse and cross border challenges that need to be approached from an integrated and multidisciplinary perspective. Among the most prominent threats are the climate crisis, social polarization, hybrid threats and terrorism. **None of these challenges should be addressed as separate notions**, nor side notes of politics, but as **horizontal themes that pose an overall challenge to the comprehensive security of the Union**. Moreover, it is important to understand that none of these threats will go away. What matters is **how we choose to react to these trends**.

As we embark on the journey of tackling such issues, the European Union must lead by example. **The social dimension of security**, including the widest possible integration of all members of society as well as the fight against poverty, social exclusion and discrimination, play a vital role in **preventing many security-related challenges**. Furthermore, there can be no compromise when respecting the Rule of Law and human rights. We must defend our common values by focusing on enhancing equality and creating equal opportunities for all, regardless of skin colour, gender, age and physical abilities. We must build a society where **non-discrimination is an essential value**, not a side note. All of this is possible if we make the most of our strengths, talent, diversity and potential.

In this spirit, the Finnish Presidency is fostering a debate on the future direction of internal security in the European Union. A key element in this debate is **the enhancement of operational cooperation between law enforcement authorities**, as well as the important role of the Justice and Home affairs agencies such as Europol. Law enforcement cooperation will increasingly be based on more efficient technological solutions and information systems and their interoperability. In this context, it is also essential to ensure that we implement the existing legislation more efficiently. In addition, the Finnish Presidency underlines that **every stage of the criminal justice chain has relevance for internal security in judicial cooperation**. The measures taken to enhance law enforcement have to be observed in the further development of judicial cooperation and vice versa.

The climate crisis is without a doubt the greatest responsibility and opportunity of our time. This crisis goes beyond the usual sectoral boundaries of politics, and therefore, solutions need to be made on all fronts, including in the field of security. **There is a lot to be done right now.** We only have one globe, which is in **alarm state**. We have to make the decisions and actions that will keep our planet viable for future generations. **Nothing less is enough.** The European Union must lead the way to a healthy planet by bringing all actors together. As Ursula von den Leyen has stated, **Europe is to become the first climate-neutral continent in the world by 2050.** In order to make this and beyond this happen, we must make bold decisions, together. We must act decisively and on all fronts in order for future generations to be able to live on this planet. **Young people across Europe are calling for action** to combat the climate crisis. We, the adults, have the responsibility to act now, as the youth must be able to have trust that something is being done. This is particularly important from a security perspective, as **nothing leads to violent radicalization faster than losing hope of a better future.** We need to be combating the climate crisis with ambitious policies and plans. **Now, not tomorrow.**

Looking into the future, the capabilities of countering **hybrid threats** should be strengthened at both the European Union and the Member State level. The work of internal security actors is essential in reinforcing the resilience of societies, as well as in building up resistance against various types of influencing attempts. Social cohesion is the best antidote against hybrid threats that aim to disrupt the stability of our nations. **We need to act together in a structured and coordinated way.**

Although the number of **terrorist attacks** has decreased in the recent years, the threat of terrorism lingers on. The Finnish Presidency emphasizes the importance of **continuing the discussion on preventing violent extremism and combatting terrorism**. The phenomena of foreign fighters and jihadist ideology keep posing a threat to our continent. However, it should be kept in mind that terrorism exists and appears in various forms and that the terrorist threat posed by **the violent extreme right** should be well noted.

Likewise, the prevention of **violent extremism** and the combatting of terrorism support one another. Our efforts must be based on comprehensive situational awareness, threat assessments and research data. It should be noted that the prevention of hatred directly contributes to the prevention of crime and violent extremism. The Finnish Presidency focuses on assessing **the effectiveness of the measures** used in preventing violent extremism. Moreover, it is essential that we will be prepared to counter new emerging threats.

On one hand, **new technological advances** have increased the digital tools of law enforcement authorities to prevent and investigate criminal activities. On the other hand, the use of Internet, especially social media platforms, for terrorist and other illegal purposes has increased considerably during the recent years. **Terrorist Content Online** has played a key role in almost every terrorist attack that Europe has witnessed. For these reasons, the Finnish Presidency is committed to promoting the

Commission's legislative proposal on Terrorist Content Online and is encouraging the continuation of cooperation with Internet service providers. In order to put an end to the spread of terrorist content online, **we need clear-cut legislation and comprehensive awareness** of the duties and responsibilities of each actor.

When examining the tools of preventing violent extremism and terrorism, it is important to note that **terrorists and criminals use all means of travel**. In order to prevent and investigate terrorist offences and other serious crime, we must examine the feasibility to collect **Passenger Name Record data** on travel modes other than flying. The Finnish Presidency finds it important to investigate the effects that expanding the collection of PNR data to cross-border shipping and cross-border rail traffic would have.

As previously mentioned, the ways of communications and the use of social media platforms have accelerated in the 21st century. The use of **disinformation and information influencing** have a new significant but very complex role in threat maps. **Present-day disinformation techniques** include video manipulation, falsification of official documents, troll attacks on social media as well as information theft. The core nature of disinformation - false information and spreading of it - indicates itself a **critical challenge to law enforcement**. Additionally, coordinated action by the European Union is needed to enhance the cybersecurity of critical infrastructure. The Finnish Presidency highlights the role of **Europol** and other EU agencies in identifying, preventing and addressing threats related to disinformation and information influencing.

The phenomenon of hate speech has crept its way from the backyards of the Internet to the mainstream of public debate. In line with the increase of information influencing, **the phenomenon of targeting government officials** has similarly grown more common. The aim of targeting is to interfere and disrupt the work of authorities,

weaken public trust in governance and cause social bipolarization. Undermining the public trust in law enforcement authorities can have a **very harmful impact on the core structures of democracy and the Rule of Law**. This cannot be tolerated. A society in which the authorities are not trusted is a society in which people cannot trust each other. Ultimately, tackling hate speech is a matter of defending the values of our societies.

Furthermore, despite having differing views, political actors should be able to maintain and further build on **social cohesion**. We must focus on open and transparent communication with one another, in order to decrease fragmentation and alienation in our societies. We are always stronger together. The **freedom of speech** is, and always will be, part of the **deepest core of democracy**. With this being said, the freedom of expression comes with a **responsibility**. Unreasonable questioning of the society's core institutions causes considerable harm. By doing this, things that are difficult to rebuild, are being teared apart.

Moving forward, in order to keep up with the challenges created by **technological developments**, we must be able to **identify new and emerging threats**. At the same time, it is central to identify the **possibilities and opportunities** created by new technologies. The Finnish Presidency stresses the importance of developing cyber security as part of the EU's strengthening role as a security actor. The fight against **cybercrime and cyber threats** demands resources, capabilities and rapid and forward-looking solutions from the security and law enforcement authorities. In the fight against cybercrime, it is important to **ensure that electronic evidence is stored and disclosed** as quickly as possible to law enforcement authorities. As the exchange of information is speeding up, the sovereignty of states must be respected as well as the **protection of fundamental rights and data protection** must be taken into account.

Looking into the future, **artificial intelligence and automation** are at the heart of development of the EU's internal market. As the operating environment of the public authorities are changing rapidly, it is essential that **internal security keeps up with these developments**, by ensuring the possession of advanced tools of the sector. In more detail, we need to make sure that the **law enforcement authorities will be capable of operating in the 5G network environment**, bearing in mind the impact that 5G will have on our internal security. The Finnish Presidency underscores **the need to examine existing legislation and resource development** from the perspective of artificial intelligence, automation and 5G. Ensuring the internal security of our union in this aspect, while respecting human rights, is one of the key priorities of the Finnish Presidency.

The European Union is, and must be, a union that consists of **shared values**. We are ambitious, we celebrate diversity, and most importantly, **we leave no one behind**. When it comes to **migration** and developing a common system responding to today's needs, we must build our action on a **comprehensive approach** that addresses both internal and external dimensions of migration. It is crucial to encourage cooperation with non-EU countries and to promote measures at the **external borders of the EU as well as within Member States**.

The Finnish Presidency will focus on preventive measures in regions of origin and transit of migration. In particular, **Finland wants to strengthen the partnership between the EU and Africa**. With its wide range of tools and strong international role, the EU is better equipped to address the various aspects of migration than any Member State alone. We must reduce **irregular migration** by fighting smugglers and traffickers. Furthermore, the European Union needs humane borders by preserving the right to asylum and improving the situation of current refugees.

As mentioned earlier, **the climate crisis is a considerable threat to the internal security of the EU**. This is particularly apparent in the current challenge of forced migration, and even larger consequences are to be expected **in the future**. Therefore, I would like to take the opportunity to stress once more the significance of our fight against climate change in this respect: how we succeed will have **major consequences** on the outlook of forced migration globally. It is imperative that the European Union takes serious efforts to tackle the **critical root causes of uncontrolled migration**, including population growth and youth unemployment. We need a fair way to share responsibility and address these challenges globally. It is in our common interest to engage in sustained partnerships with countries of origin and transit, in order to relieve overall pressure and promote safe and orderly migration. .

Furthermore, as part of the comprehensive approach and the securing of the Schengen Area, it is necessary to closely monitor **migration routes** and maintain situational awareness. A well-functioning, human rights-based asylum and migration policy is important for the future of the European Union as well as for the credibility and acceptability of its activities. Finland's Presidency also wants to promote **legal migration pathways**, such as **resettlement**, meaning the reception of quota refugees. While many legal pathways already exist under national and EU legislation, their accessibility should be improved.

The Finnish Presidency underlines the need to reform the **Common European Asylum System** (CEAS), if we want a system that functions better both during times of ordinary and high migratory pressure. We aim to promote this reform through constructive and practical discussions. **All Member States must bear their responsibility** for effectively implementing the common rules. In the past four years, the debate on migration has focused on the issue of **solidarity and fair burden-sharing** between the Member States, particularly with regard to people who have applied for international protection. Because of these issues, it is essential that the

discussion on reforming the Common European Asylum System continues. It is clear that while working on **the long-term reform** we also have an acute need for practical disembarkation arrangements following **search and rescue operations**. Moreover, **preventing fatalities at sea is an imperative** for us, based on not only legal obligations but also our common European values, notably the **protection of human life and dignity**. There can be no compromise when it comes to these values.

The respect of fundamental rights, including access to legal protection, is also a key consideration when improving the effectiveness of the **EU's return policy**. It is important to revise the **Return Directive**, which can be used as the basis for improving internal rules on **the return of third-country nationals** with no right to stay in Member States. The use and development of incentives in readmission cooperation with third countries should and will stay on the agenda. In addition, The Finnish Presidency stresses the issue of **reintegration of returnees** – an integral part of an effective return policy because of the need to ensure the sustainability of the return.

While upholding humane border policies, the European Union must be efficient and more coordinated in managing its external borders. Hence, completing the **European Border and Coast Guard Regulation** is one of the priorities of the Finnish Presidency. The implementation of the regulation will be a significant joint effort for Europe, but I am certain that we can succeed, together. Following the agreement on a stronger mandate, **Frontex has better capabilities in assisting Member States** in optimising integrated border management in Europe.

Communication within the European Union must be easy, fast and effective. Several regulations on **European information systems** have been recently negotiated, adopted and updated. Moving forward, we must focus on a rapid and coordinated implementation of all systems, keeping in mind the **interoperability of our systems**. With regard to the proposals for regulations supplementing the information exchange

of the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) and the conditions for access to other information systems, the Finnish Presidency hopes that we can swiftly proceed to trilogue negotiations.

A fully functioning Schengen Area of free movement is a key driver of our prosperity, security and freedom. In fact, the Schengen Area may be considered as one of the central achievements of the European Union. The Finnish Presidency is committed to taking forward negotiations on the amendment of the Schengen Borders Code with regard to internal border controls. In addition to the existing Commission proposal, however, we also need **new initiatives to safeguard the freedom of action of the Member States.** Finland is moreover prepared to seek new solutions in order to abolish **internal border checks.**

Looking into the future, the Finnish Presidency is committed to the implementation of the **European integrated border management.** While the EU institutions and agencies, such as Frontex, have a role to play in this, it is the Member states that retain primary responsibility for external border control. We must have effective and transparent tools to ensure that Schengen obligations are fulfilled, especially concerning external border control. Finland's Presidency is committed to supporting the development of quality assurance systems.

Promoting **EU funding for migration, border management and internal security** is one of the key objectives of the Finnish Presidency. Funding can respond to both the internal and external needs of migration management, promote access to legal pathways as well as prevent irregular immigration. The use of EU funding must be flexible, adapting to the constant changes in our operating environment. **The fight against cross-border crime, terrorism, violent radicalization and other serious crime must be a common goal** that benefits from EU funding. The needs of victims of crime

must also be met. It is very important that fundamental and human rights remain respected in all aspects of the implementation of these financing instruments.

In conclusion, **we must look far** when coming up with solutions to the complex threats and challenges facing the internal security of our Union. Minor changes and short-term plans are **not enough**. We have to make wise and far-reaching decisions on the basis of knowledge, consideration and research. We must do it the European way. If we stay cohesive, strong and united on the inside, nobody will be able to divide us from the outside. Thank you.