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Permanent Mission of Spain to the OSCE

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(Vienna, 25-26 June, 2003)

Statement by Ambassador Joaquín Pérez Gómez

WORKING GRUOP A
PREVENTING AND COMBATING TERRORISM

Vienna, 25-06-03

Mr. Co-ordinator,

First of all, I would like to thank Ambassadors Black and Alivey for their interesting previous contributions. The fact that two representatives of countries so distant each other from East to West of Vienna make their presentations on terrorism is proof enough of the importance that this issue has in the OSCE area these days.

Mr. Co-ordinator,

Spain has been one of the first countries, after 11 September 2001, to raise awareness at the OSCE regarding terrorism because we believe that terrorism is a phenomenon with its own entity and it needs to be analysed separately. Thus, our Delegation has collaborated actively since the beginning, first in the preparation of the Decision and the Plan of Action for Combating Terrorism adopted at the Ministerial Council in Bucharest, in December 2001, then in the preparation of the Porto Ministerial Declaration, last year, and now in the works that are being carried out by the Infomal Group of Friends of the CiO on the Implementation of OSCE Commitments and Activities on Combating Terrorism.

At the same time, our Delegation has participated in the discussions on this issue within the Forum for Security and Cooperation and we note with satisfaction that some of our practical proposals made recently are being taken into consideration in the works of the Forum.

However, I wonder if in this debate we have now we could indeed put emphasis on another proposal that this Delegation considers not only pragmatic but also could it even mean a qualitative step in the work that our Organization is doing for preventing and combating terrorism. We would like to insist on that fact that the proceedings for information exchange on the implementation of the OSCE commitments for combating terrorism should not be limited to a national contacts network, more or less sophisticated, that in the end will not oblige any of the Participating States. We think that such proceedings should impinge on the information about the terrorist groups or the groups that support terrorism, drawing a list of them within the OSCE area.

We are aware of the doubts that some of our Colleagues have about the drawing of such a list because they think that the exercise of citizen liberties would be affected. But I ask: if we are concerned about the citizen fundamental liberties and we take care of them when we look for the most appropriate ways to prevent and combat terrorism, why should not prevail –in same conditions, at least- the right to life of the potential victims of the terrorists?

Then, why should we fear for the drawing of list of groups of terrorists in the OSCE area, if we all agree that terrorism must be combated on two fronts: the political front that works to allow a free exchange of ideas and information; and the police front that uses all means available to a modern State?. Our Delegation shares the general thought that it is necessary that basic citizen liberties must be guaranteed through clear and effective police and judicial action. But our Organization must be watchful of the linguistic subtleties used by terrorist groups, their supporters or other unsuspecting participants who in good faith may be led to believe that these groups are willing to yield in exchange for peace. In sum, the main weapons to face this problem are firmness, police and judicial effectiveness, guaranteed citizen liberties and the exercise of full democracy. But we must never forget that right to life is the most important of all Human Rights

Mr. Co-ordinator,

Another element that has been mentioned very often during the works of our Organization when we discuss on the ways of fighting against terrorism is the one that refers to the “root causes” of terrorism. Our Delegation believes that, as a practical measure, the use of such a phrase should be avoided, since we understand that there are no root causes for terrorism, and talking about them leads to a degree of justification.

Instead, opposite to what some of our Colleagues support, we prefer to use the following expression: “situations that can be a breeding ground or raise terrorism”. This allows us to deal with problems such as poverty, economic inequality, weak political involvement, etc. as situations that could lead to terrorism. But they are not, nor can be, the causes of it. Thus, we propose that

this thought be taken into account in the discussions on terrorism within our Organization from now on.

Mr. Co-ordinator,

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 were the most severe example of terrorism in the modern era and they meant a turning point of such magnitude that they qualitatively and quantitatively changed the cooperation between nations against terrorism and its sponsors. This cooperation is indispensable given the complexity of terrorist networks and means.

We hope, Mr. Coordinator, that with our contribution in the different fora created to that end at the OSCE, and with my intervention in this Working Group, the position of Spain, where this blot is very well known, will be very clear. We consider that terrorism is the most important problem that our society is facing today, and we believe that, firmly, terrorism must be combated with all means available to the modern States that are based on democratic values.

Thank-you, very much.