Conclusions and Recommendations
from the international
Conference on Combating Extremism
23rd – 24th March 2010

Agenda:

Initial contributions:
1. Milica Jančulová, General director of Department of Human Rights and Minorities
2. Mr. Kjaerum, director of European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
3. Ms. Isil Gachet, Director of the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, CoE
4. Mr. Christian Ahlund, ECRI's First Vice-Chair
5. Henry Cuny – French Ambassador to the Slovak Republic
6. Ľudovít Galbavý, The Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities

I. Panel: Presentation of the programs implemented to date, measures and actions to combat extremism in the Slovak Republic and abroad
1. Activities of integrated multidisciplinary group of experts focused on the elimination of racially motivated crime and extremism and information about documentation of Conception to combat extremism in the years 2011 – 2014 - Mr. Kliment
2. Draft of the Concept of anti-extremism efforts in Slovakia – Ms. Pufflerova
3. The French Approach Against Extremism – The available tools - Mr. Laurin
4. Measures and practices to combat extremism in the French Republic - Mr. Sopo
5. Measures and practices to combat extremism in the U.S. - Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Kimball

II. Panel: The definition of "extremism" in the Slovak Republic (via the principles and value standards) in accordance with international standards and trends ("hate crimes") with examples of good practice and solutions from abroad
1. "Extremism - a product, cause, or part of a social pathology – Mr. Senkirik
2. General genesis of extremism and application conditions of the Slovak Republic - Ms. Rojcekova

III. Panel: Legislative, institutional and financial provisions to combat extremism and racist crime in the Slovak Republic and Europe
1. Presentation of interpretation of extremist provisions in the Penal Code of SR – Mr. Baran, Mr. Vlachovsky, Mr. Cech
2. Anti-extremist legislative and institutional measures in Czech republic and examples of good practices on the fight against right-wing extremism ideologies, Mr. Svoboda

Workshops:
1. Media and extremism, the impact of the media for spreading extremism and media opportunities to participate in its elimination;
2. Defining the appropriate goals and tasks of the forthcoming conception against extremism
3. Wider grip of the term „extremism" and its practical application

Extremism:

Extremism is a negative, rampant and alarming society-wide phenomenon that poses risks to a healthy and developing community, principles of democracy and constitutional values. It harms the essential values of human rights and fundamental freedoms and has destructive impacts on existing democratic systems and structures. <u>Extremism is primarily a political activity that denounces the principles of parliamentary democracy, with its ideology and actions built on intolerance, exclusion, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and ultranationalism.</u> Its displays are violent and affective. Extremism is present in all democratic countries; efforts aimed at eliminating extremism often vary considerably.

Approximately 25% of the vulnerable group members have been victims of extremist actions. Therefore, it is also important to <u>focus our strategies on providing assistance to victims, in addition to adopting preventive measures.</u>

Extremism as such shows general symptoms of social pathology in connection with existing violence, and if members of these groups (also described as "subcultures" at primary stages) call for an open conflict with society, their behaviour is aggressive and violent and their attention is focused on a certain segment of society, thus becoming a threat to society. Such development may also occur in situations where confidence in the authority of the state and its standards is lost due to the obvious misuse of power, public life is vulgarised, and a culture of impunity is commonplace. It is therefore extremely important to promote positive social and cultural values at all levels of society.

<u>The concept of extremism should not and cannot be based on a single definition</u>, and it is also important to carefully distinguish between political radicalism (calling for major changes in a democratic society, not for the removal of democracy as such) and political extremism (striving to replace democracy with a totalitarian, authoritative system the does not respect human rights).

Extremism can be subdivided into right-wing (ultranationalism, neo-Fascism, and neo-Nazism), left-wing (communism, anarchism, eco-extremism) and religious (e.g., Christian Separatist Church Society, Church of Scientology).

Slovakia has recently witnessed a rise in serious crimes and a more radical approach of certain groups of the population towards minorities, the Roma and foreigners with a different skin colour in particular; in addition, stepped up efforts by extremists to enter the existing political scene, along with an increased number of officially permitted demonstrations by right-wing extremists, have been observed. Democratic forces, represented by political parties and other civil society organisations, should under no circumstances associate with extremist movements; quite the contrary, they should clearly and publicly condemn them. Extremism in Slovakia is also considerably influenced by extremist movements from the Czech Republic, Poland, Germany, Serbia, and Hungary.

The current view of extremism has recently been modified, quite inspiringly, to perceive it as a *hate crime*; a hate crime can be described as <u>any criminal offence, including offences against persons or property, where the victim, premises or target of the offence are selected because of their real or perceived connection, attachment, affiliation, support or membership with a group selected on the basis of a common feature such as race, national or ethnic origin, language, etc.</u> (OSCE, ODIHR – Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2005). When considering such criminal offences, the primary focus is given to demonstrating that a motive for the criminal conduct shows the aforementioned characteristics. Crimes defined in this manner may replace the currently used term of racially motivated crimes, which, after all, has a narrower scope. At the same time, the term *hate crime* clearly identifies the essence of the problem and is less vague than the term *extremism.*

Measures to combat extremism:

Measures to combat extremism should primarily consist of seeking preventive solutions in the form of wide-ranging positive awareness-raising activities. They should include education towards the respect for the principles of the rule of law, constitutional values, positive aspects of a multicultural and tolerant society, equality before the law, etc.

Effective cooperation and coordination among all relevant stakeholders, including individual ministries and non-governmental organisations, is essential. All institutions concerned should pay increased and particular attention to activities aimed at reducing extremism in society and specifically allocate necessary capacities, including human and financial resources, for this purpose. Also, consistent coordination should be ensured with respect to counter-extremism efforts taken at the international level, with international organisations and political bodies of European Union countries. Equally important is the consistent use of existing legal instruments to combat extremism.

All negative social phenomena, such as racism and discrimination, are an ideal breeding ground for extremism to emerge and survive. On that account, measures to eliminate such phenomena must be included in extremism prevention efforts.

Preventive solutions must include systematic and exhaustive preventive actions at all grades of basic and secondary schools with respect to training teachers and employees of institutions engaged in youth education. Working with young people, the active provision of information and denouncing segregation practices in schools considerably contributes to the reduction of extremist manifestations.

Setting up life-long regular training programmes for the police, prosecutors and the judiciary seems equally crucial. Training programmes should also target local authorities and media as important public opinion-forming bodies. The media often only reproduce stereotyped clichés when providing similar information, thus indirectly affecting the intensity of extremism in society. Positive propaganda of the system of values via media is very efficient.

A wide-ranging strategy to prevent extremism should comprise systematic instruments to monitor and evaluate individual cases, media reports and various activities concerning this issue, including surveys and statistics translated into particular outputs.

Proactive systematic monitoring of extremist individuals, groups and movements should be strengthened, along with early prevention of their unlawful actions with an emphasis put on zero tolerance towards perpetrators of crimes with an extremist element, including hateful statements by political elites who thus encourage further hateful actions and *de facto* legitimise them. This should be achieved, *inter alia*, by preventing the inflow of extremist influences from abroad.

However, counter-extremism measures should only be modified in such a way so as to fully respect rights and freedoms guaranteed under the constitution and to not constrain them, especially the freedom of expression and assembly.

Currently, the Multidisciplinary Integrated Group of Experts on the Elimination of Racially Motivated Crimes and Extremism is operating in Slovakia, working within the inter-ministerial Expert Coordination Body for Combating Crime. This group participates in drafting counter-extremism measures to be included in the Concept of Counter-Extremism Efforts for 2011-2014.

Preliminary defined objectives under the prepared Concept of Counter-Extremism Efforts in Slovakia include:

- definition of the system of values and legally relevant documents;
- improved awareness of the general public and all relevant actors;
- improved expertise of all relevant actors in the public sector and public institutions in the system of life-long learning;
- open professional and public discussion;
- research activities to find out the opinions of the general public and experts on this issue;
- possible legislative amendments;
- identification of all stakeholders addressing the issue of "extremism" and racially motivated crime;
- networking and coordination of activities carried out by such stakeholders and other relevant actors from the public sector;
- determination of specific tasks for the public sector and public institutions, with precisely defined responsibilities and deadlines.

Conclusions and recommendations from individual workshops:

Media and Extremism, Impact of the Media on the Propagation of Extremism and Possibilities for the Media to Participate in its Elimination
- The fundamental condition for the elimination of extremism is to successfully resolve those problems on which extremism parasitizes, i.e., social exclusion of the part of the Roma community and the subsequent negative impacts it has on their coexistence with the majority population.
- The need for more support to the presentation of a minority insight and view of the world in mainstream media and a wider support to minority media, with a particular focus on Roma media.
- Providing adequate media coverage to all groups exposed to the risk of intolerance, discrimination and extremism (immigrants, LGBT community, etc.).
- A proactive approach by structures responsible for combating extremism taken towards the media – cooperation, exchange of information, and contribution to developing a fair way of providing information (language, historical facts and context) to the public with the aim of its sensitisation.
- Systematic training provided to journalists and reporters (journalist community), utilising advanced teaching instruments, such as e-learning, which better match the needs of this target group.
- Providing information packages to the media on topical cases, showing them in a wider context (of international law, national context, etc.).

Concretising plans and tasks of the future Concept of Counter-Extremism Efforts in Slovakia
- Tasks to be performed by individual entities should be self-initiated, i.e., individual ministries and entities – future holders and implementers of the tasks and measures – will specify and define their tasks by themselves, in a best-case scenario;
- Responsibilities should be assumed and decisions should be taken at the highest level (e.g., by a person authorised by a minister, with the full capacity allocated for making proposals and taking measures; at an implementation stage, by a ministry department/unit with a specified number of human resources and clearly defined responsibilities);
- Important is the mandate of the authorised person at the stage of preparation, implementation and evaluation of the Concept (they must bear responsibility and have decision-making powers);

- Proposed measures must be realistic, binding and, at the same time, address identified problems;
- For each measure, the Concept should also define human and financial resources necessary for the fulfilment of individual tasks, including specific quantifications (but only in the case when they are not classified; the Concept, which is not a classified document, does not have to specifically define personnel and financial capacities allocated for selected tasks to be carried out by security agencies, since such disclosure might harm, thwart or impair their activities in combating extremism);
- Measures must comply with other strategies/strategic documents (they must be complementary in order to avoid the overlapping of tasks and produce synergistic effects instead);
- In order to ensure their effective incorporation in the future Concept, tasks/measures should be prepared following a standardised structure:
    o name of the measure
    o objective (what we want to achieve through this measure)
    o action (described in minute detail, e.g., database development, representative survey, etc.)
    o responsible entities (the government as a whole, ministry, institution)
    o deadlines
    o resources (financial, human, information, etc.)
    o means (how the objective will be accomplished; e.g., legislative procedure, establishment of a specialised department, strengthening personnel capacities, etc.)
    o output indicator (e.g., legislative amendments, number of police officers trained, etc.)
    o impact indicator (e.g., expertise of people representing public institutions, effective implementation of laws)

Wider understanding of extremism and its practical application
- A single comprehensive definition of extremism is impossible, as every area of public life requires that the definition be adjusted to issues addressed by each particular ministry (criminal law, sociology, education).
- It is, however, particularly essential to define the term *extremism* for the purposes of interpretation of criminal offences by the police, prosecutors and the judiciary in practical application - the definition may be based on the definition of extremism in Council of Europe Resolution No. 1344 – one of the possible solutions.
- It is necessary to define political and other activities aimed against parliamentary democracy, or against the system of values which the parliamentary democracy represents.
- The definition of extremism should contain a list or description of threats which are associated with unlawful conduct. Where the unlawfulness of such a threat is absent, it would probably not be purposeful to include such conduct under the term extremism (it may conflict with the fundamental, constitutionally guaranteed principle that permits everyone to do anything which is not prohibited by law). Any position or opinion may only be associated with extremism when a violation of rights occurs.
- The definition of extremism should not be a moral axiom but rather specify limits acceptable to society.
- What is important is an open discussion with regard to criminal law, which in practice will ensure the status quo in society.