

**Address by Mr Väino Linde, Senior Adviser to the Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Estonia, at the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the Baltic Assembly**

**Coherence between the internal and external dimensions of the internal security of the European Union: comprehensive objectives in the protection of our societies – Vilnius  
2015**

Honourable Chair of the sitting,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

It has to be admitted that in addition to all other important skills, the collective assembly of the representatives of the parliaments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the Baltic Assembly, also has the power of foretelling. The issue that is discussed here today and deals with the internal and external dimensions of the internal security of the European Union is of extreme importance at the present moment, namely today, for us all. Much more important than, for example, a week ago, when machine gun blasts and explosions had not yet sounded in Paris.

I am sure that the ministries of the interior of all three Baltic States had much work to do also before the last week: let us mention here the protecting and representing of the positions of their countries in Brussels – where the minister of the interior of the European Union are meeting again also today –, planning and implementing of various domestic activities enhancing internal security, and naturally the migration crisis in Europe.

And now fighting against terrorism has been added to all this and become extremely urgent. Terrorist attacks in Paris influence the security of people in the whole Europe. But, my good friends! It was not really very long ago when something similar happened in Paris. The journalists of Charlie Hebdo perished only in January. Just ten months ago. But hadn't we already almost forgotten that tragic event? Until the terrorists reminded us of it again on 13 November in a very bloody way. Probably we, as Europeans, had let it all sink to the background. Why? The reason for this is understandable, because since spring, the societies of all Member States have been strongly discussing one main issue: the unprecedented refugee crisis.

Our attention has been focused on the people fleeing from their homes, who arrive in Europe by hundreds of thousands and ask for an asylum here. And the European Union, in accordance with its values, has tried to grant it. Although the countries of Europe have had long arguments over who exactly should help the refugees, and how, and which activities are the most important here. I am not betraying a secret when I say that these discussions have more than once resulted in the fear that the Schengen free movement space will not withstand the pressure and may fall apart, or that it may be a blow to the integrity of the European Union as such.

Both the first and the second version are the ones we – Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia – have to avoid at all costs. Movement towards the constant weakening of the European Union in any way is not good or right for us, the three Baltic States. We must do all we can to make the Schengen area endure, and to make the European Union endure. Without that, our sovereignty and territorial integrity would be many times more vulnerable than they are now.

And now terrorism is also back in the picture. The safety and feeling of security of the people should be protected. We, it means the Member States of the European Union with their police and law enforcement forces and mutual cooperation have to guarantee that our people were protected and feel safe. And as the general feeling of security of the people is based on the combination of our practical activities and our emotional level, it is a very hard task.

But this very hard problem also has another side, or dimension, if you wish. There are already very many such people who fear that in the name of the better guaranteeing of security, the fundamental freedoms and rights of persons may be restricted in Europe – in free Europe. By the way, such fears were spreading also after the horrors in Paris in January. There are no good further solutions here, but if it is decided in any European country to considerably limit the fundamental freedoms of people, the terrorists have gotten what they wanted and have started to change Europe. But this cannot be in any way our future aim.

Very much has been said already about the external border of the European Union. It has been said that the external border has to be firm and hold. But we are still in the situation where the refugees just walk through some of the countries on the external border of the European Union, as simply as if they were crossing a field. And go on, towards the heart of the European Union. Without anybody having clear information on who these war refugees are, where they come from and what is their past like. Actually this should not happen, and this should also not be allowed.

But after the tragic lesson of Paris, we must also try to avoid that in the future all refugees will be feared and considered unwelcome. This would be unacceptable. After all, refugees are mostly people who are fleeing such murderers who sowed fear and horror in Paris last Friday.

And some more words about state borders. We know that unfortunately it is sometimes very easy to cross a state border without authorisation and illegally. And not only in for Islamic terrorists. The events of the last two years in Ukraine have very seriously shown what can happen if an independent state cannot control its border. In Estonia, we have followed the events in Ukraine and their reasons very closely, and drawn the necessary conclusions.

It can be said that the Republic of Estonia contributes to protecting its border very seriously, and does it in two ways. First, the Estonian-Russian border treaty, which was signed already in 2014 by ministers of foreign affairs, is being ratified in our parliament, and it should at

least de iure increase our feeling of security. There is a difference if the border between two independent countries is a temporary control line, or a state border officially recognised by both states. And second, next year Estonia will contribute 20 million euro to the modern construction and protection of the border between Estonia and Russia (which is also a part of the external border of the European Union!). Investments of similar size are planned also for next years, so that by the 100th anniversary of Estonia in 2018, our eastern border of the European Union and NATO would be the most modern in Europe.

And there, on the state border, is the place of meeting of the migration crisis and fighting against terrorism as the issues of the area of responsibility of the ministry of the interior, and foreign policy as the main sphere of activity of the ministry of foreign affairs. Or the external dimension of our internal security policy.

Dear listeners! We can see that all these issues and questions are mutually closely connected. In order to stop the flows of refugees, we have to provide the people who flee their homes stability in their homeland. Today, many refugees from Syria come to the European Union. If we could bring peace to Syria with the foreign policy means of the European Union and through international cooperation, the need to call the migration crisis a crisis would disappear. In the same way, if it were possible to destroy the ISIS, that has found a foothold especially in Syria and Iraq, through international cooperation, the threat of terrorism in our home countries, in Europe, would diminish.

In conclusion: The two greatest challenges of the European Union today are the solving of refugee crisis and ensuring the security of people. Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia are dealing with these issues in the cooperation of the ministries of the interior, foreign affairs and defence. The European Union is also doing that in the cooperation of its Directorate General of Home Affairs and the foreign service of the EU. And all this serious work should be done consistently, in a coordinated and committed way.

Thank you!