

MARTENS - "MUTUAL RESPECT VITAL IN DIALOGUE WITH ISLAM"

Brussels, September 28 2001

Following the EPP Council and Political Bureau's toughly-worded declaration on terrorism, EPP President Wilfried MARTENS said today: "While we reject negotiating with terrorists, we will and must ensure a rational dialogue with the Muslim and Arab world. This can only be on the basis of mutual respect, and of genuine equality."

Referring to remarks made on 26/09 by Italian Prime Minister Silvio BERLUSCONI, Martens said the EPP rejected the idea of a war of civilisations. "President Bush himself has had the delicacy to withdraw the word 'crusade'.

"This is a time for determination, certainly. For resolution. But also for a decent attitude towards the vast majority of humanity trying to live their lives in peace together. We should not forget there were numerous Muslims killed in the Twin Towers as well.

"None of the great world religions believes in wanton murder, and that includes Islam."

Martens said he was personally relieved that the US was pursuing a highly-targeted campaign, and including its allies. An alliance against terrorism was essential. But it had to consist of more than declarations.

"That was the logic of what we decided yesterday," he said. "To show solidarity, but also to demonstrate that we mean business. Our cooperation has to be practical and determined."

The resolution passed by the EPP's highest bodies yesterday called for dialogue with the ASran and Islamic world, and *inter alia* also for:

- more operative competencies for EUROPOL, with support for an enhanced budget next year.
- implementation of an EU-wide arrest warrant.
- better surveillance of financial markets
- the accelerated establishment of EUROJUST
- enhanced spending on defence and better integration of forces, materiel, and intelligence services by EU Member States
- isolation of those states which tolerate, promote, or even actively support terrorist activities.