



Strasbourg, 14/02/06

## PRESS RELEASE

### MEPs outline plans to probe CIA flights and detention centres

"We are here not to work on prejudices but to find out the truth. It is a question of gathering facts" said the rapporteur of the Temporary Committee on alleged CIA flights and detention centres in Europe, Giovanni Fava (PES, IT), on Monday night. He was speaking at the committee's first working meeting, convened to discuss its working methods and the list of individuals who might be called for questioning. The committee also had a discussion with Commissioner Franco Frattini.

Mr Fava stressed the need to gather as much evidence as possible of CIA operations in Europe before the committee submits its interim report in June. The plan is to divide the committee work up to that point into two stages. The first step would be to hear "*first hand sources*" - human rights organisations, journalists who have made allegations, people from the legal world involved in current investigations and former members of intelligence services. The second step would be to call upon senior officials from EU Member States, candidate countries or EU-associated countries and ask them questions arising from the facts gathered.

"Trips in the field to look for traces of detention camps [in Romania or Poland] will only be discussed at a second stage, when we have more information available", added Mr Fava. During the debate, Wolfgang Kreissl-Dörfler (PES, DE) said that "*identifying or pointing at countries involved without having sufficient proof would have dangerous political consequences for them. We need to work in a professional way*".

#### US officials

As far as senior US officials are concerned, Mr Fava mentioned the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her predecessor Colin Powell as possible invitees but he also warned: "*We need to check first and foremost who in the US administration would be ready to cooperate*". Jas Gawronski (EPP-ED, IT) warned of the risk of fomenting prejudice against the US and added that organising a delegation trip to Washington was only desirable if it could be well prepared and result in fruitful meetings. "*Otherwise our credibility would be harmed*".

#### Support from the Commission

Franco Frattini, Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security, began his appearance before the committee by stressing that "*the fight against terror cannot undermine [...] guarantees and fundamental freedoms for individuals*".

Alluding to transatlantic cooperation on tackling international crime, Mr Frattini expressed disappointment that, to date, only four Member States had ratified the 2003 EU-US extradition and mutual assistance treaties. The ratification processes, he said, must be sped up ahead of the June 2006 EU summit - during which the extradition treaty should be the subject of talks.

Asked to dismiss claims that the EU institutions were focusing only on particular countries - the Commissioner cited Poland and Romania as examples of those mentioned most by the media - Mr Frattini said "*We are not charging anyone*". He later added "*We cannot talk of guilt till the facts are proven*". Pledging his support for the committee's investigation, Mr Frattini also assured MEPs that all documents made available by the Commission to the Council of Europe for the latter's investigation will also be available to Parliament.

Asked by Augusto Catania (GUE/NGL, IT) whether, during his tenure as Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, he knew about an alleged CIA kidnapping of a Muslim cleric in Milan in 2003, Mr Frattini answered directly: "*No. I knew nothing*".

The next meeting of the EP Temporary Committee will be on 23 February, when the Council of Europe's investigator Dick Marty and representatives of various NGOs will be invited.

Press enquiries:

María Andrés Marín - tel. (32-2) 28 44299

Mobile: +32 (0) 498 98 35 90

e-mail: [libe-press@europarl.eu.int](mailto:libe-press@europarl.eu.int).