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Security Conference: Statement / Final Discussion  
"How to make global air transport more secure"

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today you were discussing an important issue. In my closing remarks I would like to focus on the second question that serves as a headline for our panel discussion: where do we go from here? Let me share with you some thoughts on the possible consequences of today's conference from the perspective of a policy maker. I would like to focus on three issues: critical infrastructure protection, standards and emergency management.

In times of globalised or supranational economic cycles and cycles of goods, air transport is not only an international but also a critical infrastructure.

"Critical" means that, if air traffic breaks down, a chain reaction is immediately set in motion. The impacts will be felt on most relevant everyday procedures and structures in economic and goods processes. Even a complete break down of air traffic at just one airport, say Frankfurt Airport, would create serious disruptions, not only in national but even in international air traffic. But "critical" also means that air traffic *itself* could become a link in that chain reaction as a result of an event which one maybe would not think of.

I would like to give you an example from my own experience as a member of the county of Groß-Gerau's disaster preparedness staff:

A few years ago the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the UK lead to immediate emergency planning by the German authorities. Consequently all the preparedness staffs in the federal state of Hesse were requested to plan corresponding defensive measures. For our preparedness staff in the county Groß-Gerau that did not appear to be such a big problem, because there is hardly any livestock farming in that area. But then – while drawing up our plans - to our big surprise we found out that one shepherd regularly keeps his flock just south of Frankfurt Airport. So in case of an outbreak of this highly infective disease in our country, the usually required quarantine zone would have included the southern part of Frankfurt airport, including the whole CargoCity! Surely in case of emergency this flock of sheep would have been put down in order to avoid the blocking of half of the airport. But what, if the virus in question was a human pathogen and had infected people in or nearby the airport?

Yes, the issue is even more critical when it comes to human pathogens. Experts believe it is not a question of whether or not the next pandemic will sweep over us. The unanswered questions are, when, where exactly and with what intensity a pandemic of influenza will hit us.

But what we can already say today is that in our highly mobilised society, airports in particular will become neuralgic points. Airports will be focuses of infection as well as catalysts for infection. The affected airports may then have to be cordoned off for days.

But apart from these consequences of the pandemic, we surely will experience also impacts on the economy, on financial markets, etc. this will again contribute to aggravate the crisis.

However, leaving aside the quarantine measures that need to be initiated, we must consider an additional impact, one doesn't immediately think of. A serious flu pandemic would cause an extremely high sickness rate. Around 30 per cent of staff or more are expected to drop out on account of a medium rate of infection. What does this mean for the entire transport infrastructure, aircraft movements and air safety?

These examples make it clear, that we should not just be focussing our attention exclusively on the threats from international terrorism.

Both public authorities and private operators are responsible for soberly and objectively carrying out risk assessments and risk analyses. Those who do, will also have to focus their attention on the issue of structural threats to air transport posed by pandemics, supply shortfalls and loss of lines of communication when it comes to aviation security.

The issue should not only be restricted to the area of transport policy. Rather, close cooperation is also required with security policy in the broadest sense, for example with disaster protection or emergency management.

Such plans are usually based on the underlying presumption that security-relevant structures are primarily within the government's area of planning responsibility. But that is no longer the case. Quite on the contrary: the overwhelming majority of critical infrastructures now have private-sector operators. This can only mean, that public and private operators will have to cooperate more closely. Therefore interoperability between many different security-relevant stakeholders in the air transport sector is of great importance for emergency management in the field of networked critical infrastructures.

The responsibility for protecting critical infrastructures first of all lies with the owners or operators. That means that the operator is responsible for the security of that particular means of transport.

On the other hand, there is an overriding public and economic interest in the reliability of critical infrastructures, which contains security as well as safety. It is down to politics to provide this reliability, by introducing (non-binding) recommendations, such as the Baseline Security Strategy. At the same time politics should adopt binding statutory regulations to ensure the right level of security. This is also in the interests of the operators, who do not want distortions of competition on account of different security standards.

Reflecting on air transport as a critical infrastructure we see that this problem cannot only be solved by means of *national* measures. It can only be achieved by means of *international* standards like those that apply at sea. In the international seafaring convention SOLAS II the aspect of *security* was added onto the aspect of *safety*.

I would suggest to expanding the existing international civil aviation conventions in a similar way in order to achieve a higher level of international security standards in air transport.

The European Programme for Critical Infrastructure Protection (EPCIP) means an important step in exactly this direction. It is becoming apparent that, when it comes to the issue of European critical infrastructures, the EU will be concentrating on the areas of energy - excluding nuclear power - and transport in future pilot projects.

Time will tell how much progress we will make towards achieving harmonised European security standards for supranational critical infrastructures beyond non-binding framework recommendations.

As it was mentioned before, I would like to add that we also have to set regulatory frameworks, which gives incentives for security investments.

Binding legal standards aimed at providing more security not only give rise to additional costs for companies. They do not only prevent distortions of competition; security is also an argument in *support* of competition.

I think we should focus on three key points:

- Identification and evaluation of critical infrastructures as well as their various interdependences
- Achieving of joint situational awareness and joint approaches and setting of international standards
- Improving emergency management capacity by training and exercise - as we did in Germany with the LÜKEX-Exercises in 2007, where public and private stakeholders worked together in a comprehensive command and control approach.

Let me finally make a more philosophical but never the less tangible remark from the viewpoint of a policy maker.

In our post-modern, globalising world, the individual as well as economy is extremely dependent on well running systems of all kinds. If those, who are responsible, failed in providing them, they would risk an enormous loss of confidence in society. It is not unrealistic to assume, that this could even result in a crisis of our political system. No one could be interested in this.

Policy and economy are often led by different aims, but in this respect we are all in the same boat.