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10 NATIONS GATHER IN WASHINGTON, D.C. TO DISCUSS PROTECTING SCHOOLS FROM TERRORISM

Following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, public authorities worldwide are learning to adjust to new realities. Government officials from 10 countries – Canada, France, Japan, Israel, Mexico, Ireland, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States – met in Washington, D.C., on February 13-14, 2002, to discuss strategies for helping schools prepare for and respond to terrorist attacks.

Many schools across the United States and around the world have emergency response plans in place that address school violence and natural disasters. This meeting was designed to discuss how government can help schools extend those plans to effectively deal with incidents of terrorism.

Jointly sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of State and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the participants used this as an opportunity to:

- understand the potential for terrorism as a school security issue and to evaluate the risks associated with that issue;
- learn how other countries are dealing with the issue of possible terrorist attacks on schools and students;

- identify policies and practices that have worked in the past, as well as those that have not been effective in protecting schools and students from terrorism;
- identify immediate needs for information exchange, research, technology and training among the participating nations; and
- establish a network and process for continuing discussion and collaboration.

Judge Eric Andell, senior advisor and counsel to the U.S. Department of Education, chaired the meeting and called it “an exciting and productive opportunity to learn what other countries are doing to address a threat to people of all ages that knows no national boundaries.”

The international group of school safety experts also addressed preventive measures, developing regional response plans, training administrators, teachers, students and parents, and helping students to cope with traumatic events. In addition, representatives from New York City and the New York City Board of Education presented an overview of their actions and experiences responding to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. The sponsors of the meeting will release a summary of the discussions as a follow up to this historic international session on school safety.

“The OECD is pleased to be able to help bring countries together on these issues,” commented Richard Yelland, head of the Paris-based OECD Programme on Educational Building. “Attacks targeted on educational facilities are rare but schools and pupils need to be prepared in case they are caught up in a wider emergency. I hope more countries will join in co-operating on school safety against attacks as well as other threats.”

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