

WESTERN BALKANS

52. The European Council reaffirms its full support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans, as set out in the Thessaloniki Agenda and the Salzburg Declaration. Recalling its conclusions of December 2006, the European Council stresses that by making solid progress in economic and political reform and by fulfilling the necessary conditions and requirements, the remaining potential candidates in the Western Balkans should achieve candidate status, according to their own merits, with EU membership as ultimate goal. The EU perspective remains essential for the stability, reconciliation and the future of the Western Balkans.
53. The Stabilisation and Association Process remains the framework for the European course of the Western Balkans. The progress achieved in recent years in this context, in particular through the conclusion of Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAAs), now needs to be further consolidated.
54. The European Council welcomes the significant progress in facilitating people-to-people contacts for the countries of the region. In this regard the European Council welcomes the successful launching of the dialogue on visa liberalisation with Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on the roadmaps containing clear and realistic benchmarks. The European Council also endorses the Declaration on the Western Balkans as set out in the Annex.
55. The European Council stresses again the importance of regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations. It welcomes the transition from the Stability Pact to the Regional Cooperation Council and encourages the region to further enhance regional ownership as discussed at the recent South-Eastern Europe Cooperation Process ministerial meeting in Sofia and summit meeting in Pomorie.

56. The European Council underlines that further steps by the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** in its progress towards the EU are possible by the end of this year, provided that the conditions set out in the December 2005 European Council conclusions, the Copenhagen political criteria and the key priorities of the February 2008 accession partnership are met. In this context the European Council takes note of the conclusions of the GAERC of 16 June 2008. Maintaining good neighbourly relations, including a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution on the name issue, remains essential. The EU welcomes **Albania's** commitment to ensure the conditions for free, fair and democratic elections which must take place in 2009. Further efforts with regard to institutional capacities in public administration, the fight against corruption and organised crime as well as in the judiciary will be of similar importance. The European Council takes note of the progress **Montenegro** has made and encourages the country to further focus on building administrative capacity, pursuing the fight against corruption and organised crime, consolidating the institutions as well as reforms of the judiciary in accordance with the Constitution. To reach the next stage in their respective relations with the EU, Albania and Montenegro must also establish a convincing track record of successful SAA implementation. The European Council welcomes the recent signature of the SAA with **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, which constitutes an important step in that country's European course. Bosnia and Herzegovina must continue with the implementation of the reform process without delay, particularly with a view to fulfilling the objectives and conditions for the transition from the Office of the High Representative to the European Union Special Representative. The European Council looks forward to a new Government in Belgrade with a clear European agenda to push forward with necessary reforms. Building on the recent signature of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU, **Serbia** can accelerate its progress towards the EU, including candidate status, as soon as all necessary conditions are met in accordance with the GAERC conclusions of 29 April 2008. Recalling the European Council's conclusions of December 2007 and the GAERC conclusions of 18 February 2008 the European Union remains committed to playing a leading role in ensuring the stability of **Kosovo**, also through EULEX Kosovo, EUSR and its contribution to an international civilian office as part of the international presences. The EU welcomes the UNSG's report on UNMIK and, as is described in his report, his intention to reconfigure the international civil presence in Kosovo.

This would facilitate the deployment of EULEX KOSOVO throughout Kosovo and allow for an enhanced operational role of the EU in the area of rule of law. The European Council also welcomes Kosovo commitment to the principles of democracy and equality of all its citizens, the protection of the Serb and other minorities, the protection of religious and cultural heritage as well as international presence. The European Council expresses its support to the forthcoming Donors' Conference and encourages bilateral and multilateral donors to pledge assistance. The EU recalls its willingness to assist the economic and political development of Kosovo through a clear European perspective, in line with the European perspective of the region.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Millennium Development Goals

57. The year 2008 should mark a turning point in enhancing the collective efforts to eradicate poverty in the context of sustainable development, in order to ensure that by 2015 all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will be achieved worldwide. In the light of progress made in some countries and areas, the European Council is convinced that all MDGs can still be attained in all regions of the world, provided that concerted action is taken immediately and in a sustained manner until 2015. However, it is seriously concerned about the trend in many countries and regions, in particular sub-Saharan Africa, in terms of achievement of the MDGs.
58. The EU will continue to play a leading role as the world's largest donor and will make all necessary efforts to ensure an ambitious action-oriented response before, during and after the key events to be held in the second half of this year: the third High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (Accra, 2-4 September), the UN High-Level Event on the MDGs (New York, 25 September) and the International Conference on Financing for Development (Doha, 29 November-2 December).

59. The European Council fully endorses the Council conclusions of May 2008, which provide a strong collective EU response to the global development challenge. In particular, with a view to attaining all MDGs, the EU strongly reaffirms its commitment to achieve a collective ODA target of 0,56% GNI by 2010 and 0,7% GNI by 2015, as set out in the May 2005 Council conclusions, the June 2005 European Council conclusions and the European Consensus on Development. These commitments should see annual EU ODA double to over EUR 66 billion in 2010. At least half of this collective increase will be allocated to Africa. Member States are encouraged to establish their indicative timetables illustrating how they aim to achieve their agreed ODA targets.
60. The EU will undertake radical reforms to improve aid effectiveness, building on the full implementation of the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the 2005 European Consensus on Development and the 2007 EU Code of Conduct on complementarity and division of labour.
61. The EU will continue to improve policy coherence for development (PCD) in the twelve areas identified in 2005, ensuring furthermore that the PCD principles are part of the international agenda for the MDGs and aid effectiveness.
62. The EU will fully implement the 2007 EU Strategy on Aid for Trade, striving to achieve its collective target of EUR 2 billion spending on EU trade-related assistance annually by 2010 (EUR 1 billion from the Member States and EUR 1 billion from the European Community) and to increase overall Aid for Trade in coherence with the increases in overall ODA. In the range of 50% of the increase in the collective EU trade-related assistance will be available for ACP countries.
63. The European Council welcomes the EU Agenda for Action on MDGs. The EU proposes to its partners in development to share this agenda, which identifies, within time frames, specific milestones and actions in the context of pro-poor growth development in key areas, such as the reduction of poverty and hunger, education, health, environment, gender equality and the empowerment of women, water, agriculture, private sector and infrastructure, that will contribute to ensure the achievement of the MDGs by 2015.

64. The EU is determined to provide an effective collective response to the new challenges to development posed in particular by climate change and high food prices. With regard to climate change, the EU is determined, where relevant, to help developing countries, particularly poor developing countries most vulnerable to climate change, to move towards sustainable economic growth and to adapt to climate change, in line with the agreement reached in Bali to launch negotiations aimed at securing a global agreement on climate change in Copenhagen in 2009. It will work for the effective implementation of the 2007 "Global Climate Change Alliance" and will explore ways to mobilise new financial resources to tackle climate change and combat its negative impact. In this context, the EU will work, inter alia, on the basis of the Commission proposal for a global financing mechanism.

Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean

65. The Mediterranean region is an area of vital strategic importance to the European Union in political, economic and social terms. The Barcelona Process has been the central instrument for Euro-Mediterranean relations since 1995 and has allowed the strong promotion of multilateral and bilateral cooperation. Building on and reinforcing previous successes, the "Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean" will inject further momentum into the Union's relations with the Mediterranean. It will complement ongoing bilateral relations which will continue within existing policy frameworks.
66. The European Council welcomes the Commission's Communication of 20 May 2008 and, in particular, the proposals to add an enhanced political and institutional dimension to the EU's relations with Mediterranean partners through a new political impetus, notably by holding biennial summits, and to reinforce the shared ownership of the Partnership through the establishment of a co-presidency with due regard for the relevant provisions of the Treaties.
67. On this basis, the EU will conduct the necessary consultations with all Euro-Mediterranean partners with a view to preparing a joint declaration to be adopted at the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean on 13 July 2008.

Eastern Partnership

68. The European Council welcomes the proposals for developing the eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy, which will aim at enhancing EU policy towards eastern ENP partners in bilateral and multilateral formats.
69. The European Council agrees on the need to further promote regional cooperation among the EU's eastern neighbours and between the EU and the region, as well as bilateral cooperation between the EU and each of these countries respectively, on the basis of differentiation and an individual approach, respecting the character of the ENP as a single and coherent policy framework. Furthermore, such cooperation should bring added value and be complementary to the already existing and planned multilateral cooperation under and related to the ENP, in particular the Black Sea Synergy and the Northern Dimension.
70. In line with this, the European Council invites the Commission to take the work forward and to present to the Council in Spring 2009 a proposal for modalities of the "Eastern Partnership", on the basis of relevant initiatives.

Other issues

71. The European Council welcomes the encouraging progress made in implementing the Union's Strategy for a New Partnership with Central Asia adopted in June 2007. It looks forward to further strengthening the Union's partnership with Central Asia.

72. The European Council remains deeply concerned by the situation in Zimbabwe and reiterates the need for the upcoming second round of presidential elections on 27 June to be held in a peaceful, free and fair environment in accordance with international norms and standards. Violence so far, intimidation and action taken against NGOs to suspend aid and international access to rural areas, heighten further the fears of the Zimbabwean people and the international community about the conditions under which this poll, crucial for the future of Zimbabwe, will be held. The European Union regrets that its offer to provide monitors has been rejected. It is vital that ordinary Zimbabweans vote on election day and their votes are counted swiftly and transparently in accordance with the Southern Africa Development Community's own rules and standards. Zimbabweans should be allowed to choose their future freely, which will open the way for delivering political stability to the country. A free and fair presidential runoff is critical to the resolution of the ongoing crisis. The European Council calls on the SADC and the African Union to deploy a significant number of election monitors as soon as possible and to ensure their continued presence until the electoral process is completed and results officially declared. The European Council reiterates its readiness to take additional measures against those responsible for violence. The EU stands ready to support and reengage with a democratic, legitimate and reform-minded government in Zimbabwe.
73. The European Council took note of the discussion by the GAERC on 16 June of the situation in Sudan. It is deeply concerned about the lack of cooperation with the ICC by the Sudanese authorities and calls on the Government of Sudan to work constructively with the ICC, the EU and with the international community. The European Council called on the GAERC to continue to follow developments in Sudan closely and contemplate additional measures in case of lack of full cooperation with the UN and other institutions, including the ICC.

74. The European Union expresses its continuing deep concern about the humanitarian situation in Burma/Myanmar following Cyclone Nargis. It welcomes the efforts of the UN and ASEAN and the resulting increase in aid reaching the 2.4 million people affected by the Cyclone, but calls on the authorities of Burma/Myanmar to remove all remaining restrictions on the distribution of international aid. The European Council underlines that while the immediate priority is humanitarian relief, the need for a genuine transition to democracy in Burma/Myanmar is stronger than ever. It deeply regrets the decision of the authorities of Burma/Myanmar to renew Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest and reiterates its call for the release of all political prisoners. The European Council regrets that the way the referendum was conducted did not contribute to an inclusive and transparent process of national reconciliation, which is the only path to prosperity and stability in the country. The European Council calls on the authorities to ensure that the elections announced for 2010 will be prepared and conducted in a way that contributes to a credible and fully participative transition to democracy. In this regard, the European Council welcomes the UN Secretary-General's personal engagement and underlines its full support for his good offices mission.
75. The European Council welcomes the Lima Declaration issued at the recent EU/Latin America and Caribbean Summit and calls for the necessary efforts to be made to conclude the subregional negotiations by 2009.
76. The European Council endorses the Presidency Report on ESDP, which includes the mandate for the incoming Presidency. The European Council also endorses the Annual report on EU activities in the framework of conflict prevention; incoming Presidencies are invited to build on the substantial progress made so as to make the Union more coherent, capable and active in this area.

77. The European Council reaffirms that the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, in particular children affected by armed conflict, is a priority of the EU's external action. The European Council calls on the Commission and Member States to continue ensuring coherence, complementarity and coordination of human rights, security and development policies and programmes, in order to address the short, medium and long-term impacts of armed conflict on children in an effective, sustainable and comprehensive manner.
78. The European Council acknowledges efforts to promote the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. In this context it recognises the value of cultural cooperation and intercultural dialogue as an integral part of all relevant external policies, in line with the recommendations of the conference on "New Paradigms, New Models & Culture in the EU's External Relations" and the work underway within the framework of the Alliance of Civilizations. The European Council underlines the importance of cultural cooperation in addressing political processes and challenges, based on dialogue with civil society, in promoting people-to-people contacts and in fostering good neighbourly relations.
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DECLARATION ON THE WESTERN BALKANS

Considerable efforts have been made to render the European perspective of the Western Balkans more tangible and visible to the people across the region. With reference to the Commission's Communication "Western Balkans: Enhancing the European Perspective" the European Council underlines the importance of the following three areas:

1) Extending Community policies to the Western Balkans and enhancing regional cooperation

In order to deepen the ongoing cooperation between the EU and the region, which enjoys a European perspective, and to enhance regional cooperation, the European Council:

- calls for efforts to encourage the participation of the Western Balkans countries in **Community programmes and agencies**;
- looks forward to the launching of negotiations to establish a **Transport Community Treaty with the Western Balkans** as well as to their early conclusion;
- recognises the importance of effective implementation of the **Energy Community** in South East Europe;
- Stresses the importance of **cooperation and reforms in the field of freedom, security and justice**, sharing EU experiences in combating organised crime and terrorism and recommends the preparation of the first South East European organised crime threat assessment to be coordinated by the SECI Center in Bucharest;
- recognises the importance of promoting **judicial cooperation in civil and commercial matters**;
- welcomes progress made in associating the Western Balkans with the Community **Civil Protection Mechanism** and underlines the intention of the European Commission to further strengthen cooperation, including by launching a Disaster Risk Reduction Initiative;
- acknowledges the importance of the transition from the Stability Pact to the **Regional Cooperation Council** as well as of the cooperation undertaken through the **Central European Free Trade Agreement** and pledges full support to these forms of regionally owned co-operation.

2) Facilitation of people-to-people contacts and development of civil society

Promoting people-to-people contacts between the Western Balkans and the EU is of the utmost importance, as it facilitates a better mutual understanding and reconciliation and promotes the principles upon which the EU is founded. Therefore the European Council:

- welcomes the successful launching of the dialogue on **visa liberalisation** as mentioned in paragraph 54 of the European Council conclusions;
- supports the intention of the Commission to offer more **scholarships** for students from the Western Balkans under Erasmus Mundus;
- recognises the importance of the "**Steering platform on research for the Western Balkans**". It calls for the continuation of cooperation in the area of science and research;
- supports the establishment of a new Facility under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) to promote **civil society** development and dialogue in the Western Balkans, while strengthening partnership and networking with civil society counterparts from the EU.

3) Economic and social development and strengthening of good governance

The EU will continue to work closely with the Western Balkans to strengthen socio-economic development and good governance and will support further progress and reforms in the region. With this aim the European Council:

- welcomes the initiative to establish a comprehensive **Western Balkans Investment Framework** by 2010. It calls for swift implementation of the objectives mentioned in the ECOFIN Conclusions of 14 May 2008;
- acknowledges the work done by the **Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA)** and calls for its development into a fully fledged school;
- recognises the fundamental **contribution of cultural cooperation** in promoting European values and intercultural dialogue in the Western Balkans, and thus fostering democratisation, reconciliation and respect for human rights.