

WESTERN BALKANS - Council Conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"CO-OPERATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA (ICTY)

The Council noted with deep concern the presentation today by ICTY Chief Prosecutor, Mrs. Carla del Ponte, who emphasised the need for improvement in the level of co-operation with the Tribunal. The Council recalled the pledge by the countries of the region made during the 9 December 2003 Western Balkans Forum meeting to "full and unequivocal co-operation with the ICTY, in particular with regard to the transfer to The Hague of indictees still at large and access to documents and witnesses". The Council reiterated its call on all States, in particular Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and also Croatia to render all necessary assistance to the ICTY, particularly to bring Ratko Mladic, Radovan Karadzic and Ante Gotovina, and all other fugitive indictees to the ICTY without delay. The Council looked forward to the report by ICTY Chief Prosecutor, Mrs. Carla del Ponte, to the UN Security Council in November 2004. Continued failure to co-operate fully and in a timely manner with the ICTY would seriously jeopardise further movement towards the EU.

SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

The Council welcomed the result of the mission of High Representative Solana and Commissioner Patten to Belgrade. The Council expressed its support for the twin-track approach, which would imply a single Stabilisation and Association Agreement with distinct negotiations with the Republics on trade, economic and possibly on other relevant sectoral policies. The Council reaffirmed its commitment to a strengthened State Union of Serbia and Montenegro based on the Constitutional Charter. The Council welcomed the Commission's intention to relaunch the feasibility report on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement. It urged the country's political leaders to take advantage of the twin-track approach with the aim of contributing to a positive outcome of the feasibility report early next year. It recalled that respect for international obligations, including full co-operation with the ICTY, remained crucial for further progress in the process towards EU integration. In this light, the Council welcomed the recent surrender of Mr. Beara to the ICTY and looked forward to the transfer of all other fugitive indictees to the The Hague.

The Council welcomed the commitments made by the Government of Serbia on 8 September to intensify the dialogue with all ethnic communities and looks forward to the implementation of these commitments. The EU will continue to follow the situation.

SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO / KOSOVO

The Council exchanged views on the forthcoming Kosovo Assembly elections on 23 October. It looked forward to the elections being conducted in a peaceful and democratic environment and in a free and fair manner, with the widest participation of all communities. The Council welcomed the call by President Tadic encouraging Kosovo Serbs to participate in the forthcoming elections and also welcomed the subsequent registration of Kosovo Serb parties in these elections. The Council stressed the importance of the early formation of a functioning Government, fully committed to the Standards implementation that will pave the way for a positive review in mid-2005. It also reiterated its commitment to a multi-ethnic Kosovo, ensuring full protection of minorities, contributing to the stability of the region and consistent with EU values and standards."

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The Council also adopted conclusions on:

- The extension of EU Police Mission in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (EUPOL PROXIMA) for another 12 months. (*see "General Affairs" Press release, doc. 12767/04 Presse 275*);
- The approval of the Operational Plan for Operation ALTHEA in Bosnia Herzegovina (*see "General Affairs" Press release, doc. 12767/04 Presse 275*).