



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



**2706th EXTERNAL RELATIONS Council meeting  
Brussels, 30 January 2006**

## **Council conclusions on Western Balkans**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

### **"Western Balkans**

1. The Council welcomed the Commission's Communication "The Western Balkans on the road to the EU: Consolidating stability, raising prosperity" as a good basis for further work in preparing discussions at the Gymnich and at the informal EU-Western Balkans Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Salzburg in March 2006. The EU remains committed to help the Western Balkans countries on their road to the EU through practical measures to make the European perspective more tangible.

### **Serbia and Montenegro/Kosovo**

2. The Council expressed its sadness at the death of the President of Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova. Kosovo has lost a historic leader who devoted his life to promoting peacefully the rights of his people. In this time of important decisions for the future of Kosovo the Council called on all Kosovar parties and leaders to work together so that further progress is achieved in implementing standards and that Kosovo participates constructively in the Status process.

### **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

3. The Council appointed Christian Schwarz-Schilling as EU Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Council commended the departing EU Special Representative and High Representative Lord Paddy Ashdown for his extraordinary commitment to and achievements for Bosnia and Herzegovina and its European future.

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4. The Council welcomed the discussions on constitutional reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina, assisted in recent months by the international community. It called on all parties in BiH to continue this process in a dynamic fashion and stressed the need for local ownership. In this context, the Council encouraged Bosnia and Herzegovina's political leaders to ensure that the country's central institutions function more effectively in order to meet European standards.

### **Serbia and Montenegro/Montenegro**

5. The Council recognised that the Constitutional Charter of Serbia and Montenegro allows the Republics after a three-year period to hold a referendum on independence. It also stressed that such a process has to conform to internationally recognised democratic standards, a critical element for stability and for the pace of progress towards the EU. In this respect, the Council supported the recommendations of the Venice Commission's Opinion issued last December.
6. The Council expressed its full support for the mission of Ambassador Miroslav Lajcak, the Personal Representative of SG/HR Javier Solana. It called on all political forces in Montenegro to cooperate with each other and the Personal Representative to agree on the conduct and implementation of the proposed referendum and to refrain from unilateral actions that might reduce the chances of success of the dialogue. Ensuring a broad consensus on the modalities of the referendum in Montenegro, and conducting it in line with international standards, will provide the process and the outcome with the necessary legitimacy and sustainability.

### **Cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY)**

7. The Council expressed concern at the comments of the ICTY President and Chief Prosecutor in their presentations to the UN Security Council on 15 December 2005. The Council underlined again the importance of full cooperation with the ICTY by both Serbia and Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. While welcoming the parties declared commitment to continue the implementation of the reform agenda, the Council recalled that the pace and conclusion of negotiations on Stabilisation and Association Agreements with these countries will depend *inter alia* on full cooperation with the ICTY and that it would jointly review with the Commission the performance in this area and other key areas before negotiations conclude. The Council called on both countries to take decisive action to ensure that remaining fugitive indictees, notably Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, are finally brought to justice in The Hague. Full cooperation with the ICTY is essential to achieve lasting reconciliation in the region and lift a fundamental obstacle on the way towards the European Union."

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