



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council Conclusions on Western Balkans

(2737th EXTERNAL RELATIONS Council meeting - Luxembourg, 12 June 2006)

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"ICTY

The Council took note of the recent reports by the ICTY President and Chief Prosecutor to the UN Security Council. The Council reiterated that full co-operation with the ICTY is essential to achieve lasting reconciliation in the region and to lift a fundamental obstacle on the way towards the European Union. In this context, the Council noted with concern that the Chief Prosecutor had not been able to report any progress on the arrest and transfer of the six remaining fugitives. The Council called on all countries concerned to take decisive action to ensure that all remaining fugitive indictees, notably Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, are finally brought to justice. In this context, the Council welcomed that the Bosnian authorities have recently transferred Dragan Zelenovic to The Hague.

Albania

The Council welcomed the signature of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and of the Interim Agreement with Albania as an important step on the country's path towards the EU. It looked forward to intensifying co-operation with Albania through the comprehensive framework offered by these agreements and the other mechanisms of the Stabilisation and Association Process. The Council looked forward to a sustained and effective track record in implementing these agreements.

The Council called on Albania to push ahead with its reform agenda and encouraged all political forces to unify their efforts to accelerate that process. It called on Albania to intensify its efforts on a number of priorities, set out in the European Partnership, including clear improvements in media freedom, accelerating property restitution and compensation, further strengthening of public-sector

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governance, improving respect for and protection of minorities and ensuring that the forthcoming municipal elections fully comply with international standards. Noting recent encouraging steps taken in the fight against corruption and organised crime, a key element in the European Partnership and the Stabilisation and Association Process, it stressed the importance of further determined action and sustained progress in the rule of law, including the full respect of its independent institutions.

Regional co-operation

The Council warmly welcomed the results of the Stability Pact's Regional Table meeting held in Belgrade on 30 May 2006. Underlining the need for the region of South Eastern Europe to gradually take over ownership and responsibility, including financial, for regional cooperation, it welcomes the phased evolution of the Stability Pact into a more regionally owned, streamlined and effective regional co-operation framework in which the South East European Cooperation Process, if successfully strengthened, should play a central part. The Council fully supports the creation of a Regional Co-operation Council to be operational by 2008.

Stressing the importance of preserving relevant Stability Pact achievements and initiatives, the Council welcomes the agreement on those priority areas in which the successful work should continue. It expressed the European Union's readiness to remain involved, together with other donors and partners, in the implementation of the Belgrade conclusions and in furthering regional co-operation, which is one of the prerequisites for the realization of the region's European perspective."

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