



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on the Western Balkans

(2712nd EXTERNAL RELATIONS Council meeting - Brussels, 27-28 February 2006)

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"Western Balkans

1. The Council took note of the report on President Barroso's and Commissioner Rehn's recent visit to the Western Balkan countries.

Serbia and Montenegro/Montenegro

2. The Council welcomed progress made so far by the government and the opposition in defining the modalities for the proposed referendum in Montenegro. It called on both parties to reach a rapid agreement on the remaining open issues (majority requirement, the date and the question of the referendum), thus providing the process with the necessary legitimacy. In this respect, the Council fully supported the efforts and initiatives of the HR Personal Representative, Ambassador Miroslav Lajcak.

Serbia and Montenegro/Kosovo

3. The Council welcomed the meeting between Belgrade and Pristina on decentralisation, held on 20-21 February in Vienna under the auspices of the UN Special Envoy, as a demonstration of the preparedness of both sides to engage constructively in the Kosovo Status process. Recalling the statement issued at the Contact Group Ministerial Meeting on 31 January 2006 the Council expressed its continued support for UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari and urged all parties to continue their engagement in this process and to maintain the spirit and the momentum of negotiations aiming to reach sustainable and practical solutions acceptable to all parties concerned on all outstanding issues such as

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decentralisation. The Council also reaffirmed the importance of continued and effective Standards implementation. It urged the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government to intensify their efforts to achieve in parallel with the Status process concrete and rapid progress on Standards implementation, particularly regarding the protection of minority communities.

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

4. The Council noted with concern recent comments by ICTY Chief Prosecutor Carla del Ponte about Serbia and Montenegro's unsatisfactory cooperation with ICTY. The Council strongly supported the recent messages delivered by the Commission in Belgrade and Sarajevo that full cooperation with the ICTY must be achieved to ensure that the SAA negotiations are not disrupted. Recalling its conclusions of 3 October 2005 and of 30 January 2006, the Council urged both Serbia and Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina to take decisive action to ensure that all remaining fugitive indictees, notably Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, are finally brought to justice without delay. The Council asked the Presidency and the Commission to remain in close contact with the Chief Prosecutor and to continue to keep the Council fully informed."

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