

The Council's action in the Western Balkans (1999)

Caption: Excerpt from the Annual Report on CFSP for 1999 concerning the Western Balkans Region as an example of the Council's action under the framework of the second pillar. In 1999, NATO authorised air raids against Yugoslavia in response to the Serbian policy of repression in Kosovo. The European Union fully supported NATO's action and developed its approach towards the countries of the region into a Stabilisation and Association process.

Source: Council of the European Union, Annual Report CFSP 1999. [ON-LINE]. [s.l.]: [26.09.2001]. Disponible sur <http://ue.eu.int/pesc/rapports/ractiv/rapport99EN.pdf>.

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5. Western Balkans Region

In March, following the implementation of irresponsible policies by President Milosevic in Kosovo, NATO launched air strikes against the Belgrade regime. The EU has fully supported NATO action, considering the use of the severest measures, including military action, as a necessary step.

In 1999, the EU's Regional Approach towards the countries of the Western Balkans region ((Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY)) was developed into the EU Stabilisation and Association process. This process did not change the conditions for the development of bilateral relations, but upgraded the nature of the contractual relations on offer — replacing the prospect of a Cooperation Agreement with that of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA).

The Council reviewed — on the basis of a Communication by the Commission — the performances by the countries of the region in the light of the conditions set out in the Council conclusions of 29 April 1997 as well as of 31 May 1999. The review concentrated on the following areas: democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law, the respect for and protection of minorities, regional co-operation, and market economy reform, as well as — concerning especially Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the FRY — compliance with the obligations imposed by the Dayton/Paris and Erdut agreements and the conclusions of the different Peace Implementation Councils (PIC).

The European Community Monitor Mission (ECMM) continued to be active in all the countries of the Western Balkans. The Council reconfirmed its resolve to reach, at the earliest possible date, a decision concerning the future of ECMM, including the questions of role, mandate, legal base and financing.

The European Council in Helsinki invited the Secretary-General/High Representative, together with the Commission, to present to the Council for further urgent consideration a political and economic analysis of future prospects for the region.

(a) Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

FRY/Serbia

On 11 October, the Council met the democratic forces of the FRY and welcomed their commitment to a continued process of discussion on democratisation and reform in the FRY. It strongly supported the launching of the Energy for Democracy initiative, initially providing the cities of Nis and Pirot with heating oil as emergency assistance. The Council adopted a Declaration on "EU-FRY — a new beginning" underlining the EU's preparedness to give substantial assistance to a future democratic FRY.

On 6 December, with the aim of fostering democratic change in the FRY, the Council decided to intensify cooperation with democratic forces in the FRY, when appropriate, trilaterally with the United States, including at Ministerial level and in the form of task forces or other consultative mechanisms. The first such Ministerial meeting in trilateral format was held in Berlin on 17 December 1999.

FRY/Kosovo

The Council repeatedly urged the FRY authorities to end the violence in Kosovo and to seize the chance for a peaceful solution offered by the Rambouillet Accords. The Council expressed its strong and continuing support for maximum pressure on President Milosevic to stop the brutal campaign in Kosovo and accept the

international community's five demands. In the face of extreme and criminally irresponsible policies by President Milosevic and repeated violations of UNSC Resolutions, the 8 April extraordinary General Affairs Council stated that the use of the severest measures, including military action, had been both necessary and warranted. On 6 April, the Council agreed that the Common Position imposing a ban on the delivery of petroleum and petroleum products should enter into force before 30 April. Furthermore, the Council agreed to extend the existing EU sanctions regime (travel ban, freeze of funds, prohibition of export finance, investment ban, flight ban).

On 17 May, the Council supported President Ahtisaari's willingness to work on behalf of the Union, in cooperation with the Russian and US efforts, to ensure the implementation of the conditions of the international community to end the conflict in Kosovo. The European Council of Cologne heard a report by President Ahtisaari, mandated by the EU, on the mission he had undertaken to Belgrade together with Mr. Chernomyrdin and took note of the Yugoslav authorities' acceptance of the peace plan setting out and detailing the international community's demands.

On 21 June, the Council warmly welcomed the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1244, the withdrawal of all Serb security forces, the end of NATO's air campaign, the deployment of KFOR and the steps under way to establish the interim civil administration for Kosovo.

In July, the Council welcomed the rapid deployment of the fourth pillar of UNMIK, headed by the EU, tasked with reconstruction and economic rehabilitation. The Council adopted a Joint Action concerning the installation of the UNMIK component for which it has assumed responsibility. Since July, the prevailing climate of violence in Kosovo and UNMIK's financial needs were a recurring preoccupation of the Council.

On 15 November, the Council set up the European Agency for Reconstruction tasked with the implementation of programmes for reconstruction and assistance to returning refugees, initially in Kosovo.

FRY/Montenegro

The Council continued to support fully the democratically elected Government of Montenegro and condemned Belgrade's efforts to undermine its authority and destabilise the Republic. The EU provided substantial assistance to Montenegro to help address the problems resulting from the humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo. It stressed the need for a constructive dialogue between the Belgrade regime and Montenegro on the proposals made by the latter on the future of the FRY.

The Council regularly discussed possibilities for offering further assistance and financial support to Montenegro. In September the EU decided to exempt Montenegro from the oil embargo and the flight ban to the FRY. In November the Council asked the Commission to submit a proposal, when conditions are right, with a view to extending the Reconstruction Agency's remit to cover Montenegro. It also welcomed the expert talks on financial issues established between the EU and Montenegro.

(b) Bosnia and Herzegovina

Throughout this fourth year since the Dayton/Paris peace agreements, Bosnia and Herzegovina made some progress, under pressure from the international community, in particular regarding the consolidation of state authorities. Nevertheless, much remains to be done: the Council expressed its concern at the lack of implementation by the Joint Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina of the 15 November New York Declaration. It called for its early and comprehensive implementation in all its aspects.

The Council welcomed the appointment of Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch as the successor to High Representative Carlos Westendorp and pledged him its continued support in his task.

On 20 July, an informal political dialogue meeting at ministerial level took place in Brussels. Council stressed the importance of enhancing the work of the common institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina,

market economy reform and refugee return. It urged both entities to make progress in reducing military expenditure and to engage constructively in the regional arms control processes.

(c) Croatia

On 20 July, an informal political dialogue meeting at Ministerial level took place in Brussels.

The EU called on Croatia to meet its international obligations, including full cooperation with ICTY and to continue towards democratisation and the full realisation of human rights, including the issues of the election law, refugee return, media, and economic reform.

(d) Albania

During the political dialogue meeting at Ministerial level between Albania and the EU Troika on 27 April, the Council commended the manner in which Albania has dealt with the massive refugee influx from Kosovo and cooperated with the international community. The Council also welcomed the intention of the Commission to examine urgently the upgrading of contractual relations with Albania and to implement an assistance package for the Albanian government.

The Council welcomed the meeting of the "Friends of Albania" on 22 July in Brussels.

In November, the Council welcomed the fact that the change of government in Albania took place in accordance with constitutional procedures and called on the new government to concentrate on priority areas such as the fight against corruption and illegal activities and the promotion of democratic reforms.

(e) Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)

During the political dialogue meeting at Ministerial level on 27 April, the Troika commended the manner in which FYROM dealt with the massive refugee influx from Kosovo. The Council also welcomed the intention of the Commission to examine urgently the upgrading of contractual relations with FYROM and the speedy implementation of an assistance package for the FYROM government to deal with the effects of the refugee crisis.

In December, the Council discussed the situation that has arisen after the presidential elections in FYROM, including the re-runs in certain constituencies. It invited all political forces to respect the final results of the elections.

(f) Stability Pact

During a special General Affairs Council on 8 April with the countries neighbouring the FRY, the Council declared that a political solution to the Kosovo crisis must be embedded in a determined effort geared towards stabilising the region and South Eastern Europe (SEE) as a whole.

On 26 April, the Council agreed to start with the preparation of a Stability Pact for SEE, giving all countries in the Balkans region a concrete perspective of stability and integration into Euro-Atlantic structures.

On 17 May, the Council agreed the establishment of a Stability Pact and the adoption of a related Common Position, stipulating that the EU will play the leading role in establishing the Pact. The Council welcomed the intention of the Presidency to convene, in cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina, a Stability Pact Summit in Sarajevo on 30 July to launch the initiative and adopted a Joint Action on EU financing of the Summit. It also requested its competent bodies to prepare a Joint Action confirming the Coordinator of the Stability Pact, Bodo Hombach, as EU Special Representative and providing him with the necessary human and logistical resources to carry out this task.

In September, the Council took note of the work plan of the Special Coordinator and adopted guidelines for

EU participation in the activities of the Stability Pact and its bodies. In December the Council took note of a report on EU action in support of the Stability Pact and South Eastern Europe prepared by the Presidency and the Commission.

The Council welcomed the inaugural meetings of the Stability Pact's Working Tables and reconfirmed the EU's willingness to contribute actively to the success of the Stability Pact.

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