

SANTA MARIA DA FEIRA EUROPEAN COUNCIL 19 AND 20 JUNE 2000

CONCLUSIONS OF THE PRESIDENCY

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1. The European Council met in Santa Maria da Feira on 19 and 20 June. At the start of proceedings, the European Council and the President of the European Parliament, Mrs Nicole Fontaine, exchanged views on the main items under discussion.

I. PREPARING THE FUTURE

2. Against the backdrop of renewed public debate about and interest in the future of the European Union, the European Council has taken a number of important steps aimed at addressing the challenges confronting it in the immediate future.

A. Intergovernmental Conference on institutional reform

3. The European Council notes and welcomes the Presidency report on the Intergovernmental Conference. The Presidency's report demonstrates the significant headway which has been achieved by the Conference in considering Treaty changes which will ensure that the Union continues to have properly functioning, efficient and legitimate institutions after enlargement. The European Council considers in particular that the provisions on closer cooperation introduced into the Treaty of Amsterdam should form part of the Conference's future work, while respecting the need for coherence and solidarity in an enlarged Union. The Conference can move forward on a sound footing so that an overall agreement can be reached in December in line with the timetable laid down by the Cologne and Helsinki European Councils.

B. Charter of Fundamental Rights

4. The European Council extended its heartfelt sympathy to Mr Roman Herzog and expressed its appreciation for his invaluable personal contribution to the Convention's work. Mr. Ignacio Mendez de Vigo, Vice-Chair of the Convention entrusted with drawing up a draft Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union, briefed the European Council on work in hand.

5. The Convention is urged to continue its work in accordance with the timetable laid down in the mandate from the Cologne European Council so that a draft document is presented in advance of the European Council in October 2000.

C. Common European Security and Defence Policy

6. The European Council reaffirms its commitment to building a Common European Security and Defence Policy capable of reinforcing the Union's external action through the development of a military crisis management capability as well as a civilian one, in full respect of the principles of the United Nations Charter.

7. The European Council welcomes the Presidency report endorsed by the Council on "Strengthening the Common European Policy on Security and Defence" and associated documents (*cf.* [Annex I](#)). Satisfactory progress has been made in fulfilment of the Helsinki mandate on both the military and the civilian aspects of crisis management. In this context, the European Council notes the progressive development of the interim Political and Security Committee and the interim military bodies established at Helsinki.

8. Improving European military capabilities remains central to the credibility and effectiveness of the Common European Security and Defence Policy. The European Council is determined to meet the Headline Goal targets in 2003 as agreed in Helsinki. In this context, it looks forward to the Capabilities Commitment Conference later this year, where Member States will make initial national commitments, and to the creation of a review mechanism for measuring progress towards the achievement of those targets. The necessary transparency and dialogue between the Union and NATO will be ensured and NATO expertise will be sought on capability goal requirements.

9. Principles and modalities for arrangements have been identified to allow non-EU European NATO members and other EU accession candidates to contribute to EU military crisis management. Principles for consultation with NATO on military issues and modalities for developing EU-NATO relations have also been identified in four areas covering security issues, capability goals, the modalities for EU access to NATO assets, and the definition of permanent consultation arrangements.

10. Contributions are invited from all partner third states to the improvement of European capabilities. The European Council welcomes the offers made by Turkey, Norway, Poland and the Czech Republic, which will expand the range of capabilities available for EU-led operations.

11. The European Council welcomes the setting-up and first meeting of the committee for civilian aspects of crisis management, as well as the identification of priority areas for targets in civilian aspects of crisis management and of specific targets for civilian police capabilities. In this respect Member States, cooperating voluntarily, have undertaken that by 2003 they will to be able to provide up to 5,000 police officers for international missions across the range of conflict prevention and crisis management operations. Member States have also undertaken to be able to identify and deploy up to 1,000 police officers within 30 days. The European Council also welcomes the willingness of the Commission to contribute to civilian crisis management within its spheres of action.

12. The European Council underlines the Union's determination in its approach to conflict prevention and crisis management to assume fully its Petersberg task responsibilities as referred to in Helsinki. It invites the incoming Presidency together with the Secretary General/High Representative to carry work forward within the General Affairs Council, in accordance with the mandates referred to in the Presidency report, and to submit an overall

Presidency report to the European Council in Nice. The permanent political and military structures should be put in place as soon as possible after Nice.

D. Enlargement

13. The European Council reaffirms the priority for the Union of the enlargement process and notes with satisfaction the substantive progress in the negotiations since the Helsinki European Council (*cf.* [Annex II](#)). In particular, it welcomes the launching of accession negotiations with Malta, Romania, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria, and the first concrete results already achieved. The European Council considers that it should be feasible to open negotiations in all areas of the *acquis* with the most advanced of these candidates as early as possible in 2001.

14. The European Council furthermore welcomes that all areas of the *acquis*, except "Institutions", have now been opened for negotiations with Cyprus, Hungary, Poland, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Slovenia. It also notes that considerable progress has been made in several areas already under negotiation.

15. The European Council reiterates the commitment of the Union to maintain the momentum of the accession process. All candidates will continue to be judged on the basis of own merits. In line with the principle of differentiation, it is possible for candidates to catch up with those which started their negotiations earlier.

16. The European Council recalls that, in addition to finding solutions to the negotiating issues, progress in the negotiations depends on the incorporation by the candidate States of the *acquis* in their national legislation and especially on their capacity to effectively implement and enforce it. While progress has already been made, this calls for important efforts by the candidates to continue their domestic reforms, in particular strengthening their administrative and judicial structures. The Union will closely monitor the performance of the candidates. To this end, the Commission is invited to report to the Council on its findings. The European Council at Nice will review progress on enlargement and consider how to take forward the accession process.

17. With respect to Turkey, the European Council notes this candidate's initiatives to meet the accession criteria. In accordance with the Helsinki conclusions, the European Council looks forward to concrete progress, in particular on human rights, the rule of law and the judiciary. The Commission should report to the Council on progress in preparing the process of analytical examination of the *acquis* with Turkey. The Commission is also invited, in the light of the above, to present as soon as possible proposals for the single financial framework for assistance to Turkey as well as for the Accession Partnership.

18. The European Council stresses the importance of securing continuing support for enlargement and to that effect, the need to provide appropriate information for the general public in Member States and candidate countries alike.



II. EMPLOYMENT, ECONOMIC REFORMS AND SOCIAL COHESION - FOLLOW-UP TO THE LISBON EUROPEAN COUNCIL

19. The Lisbon strategy, which is now fully underway, underpins all Community action for jobs, innovation, economic reform and social cohesion. Substantial results are already being delivered on all areas covered by the strategy.

20. The High Level Forum bringing together the social partners, the Union's institutions, the European Central Bank and the European Investment Bank met in Brussels on 15 June. It confirmed that there was a high degree of consensus on the Lisbon strategy, identified the possible contributions of the various actors, each within its own sphere of action, and demonstrated the importance of broad political debate, social concertation and social dialogue. More particularly, the European Council welcomes the Joint Declaration presented by the social partners, which sets out constructive positions on temporary work, telework, lifelong learning and provisions for joint monitoring of industrial change.

21. Momentum in implementing the strategy must be sustained by fixing the next priority steps outlined below.

A. Preparing the transition to a competitive, dynamic and knowledge-based economy

eEurope Action Plan

22. The European Council endorses the comprehensive eEurope 2002 Action Plan and requests the institutions, the Member States and all other actors to ensure its full and timely implementation by 2002 and to prepare longer term perspectives for a knowledge-based economy encouraging info-inclusion and closing the numeracy gap. As a short term priority, the necessary steps should be taken to bring down the cost of accessing the Internet through the unbundling of the local loop. A report should be presented by the Commission to the European Council in Nice, and on a regular basis thereafter, on progress in achieving the Actions Plan's objectives. The European Council recalls the strategic importance of the Galileo project and of taking a decision on this matter by the end of 2000.

The creation of a European Research Area

23. The European Council welcomes the resolution by the Council (Research) and the commitment rapidly to develop a "European Research Area" in particular by drawing up criteria for benchmarking research policies; defining stages and deadlines for mapping scientific and technological excellence in Europe by 2001; undertaking to network national and European research programmes; and taking initiatives to interconnect at very high speed national electronic networks for research. Following the conclusions of the last US-EU Summit, the Commission is invited to pursue actively the dialogue with the US authorities to establish a broadband, permanent and equitable transatlantic link between European and US research and education centres.

The European Charter for Small Enterprises and the new framework for enterprise policy

24. The European Council welcomes the recently adopted European Charter for Small Enterprises (*see Annex III*), and underlines the importance of small firms and entrepreneurs for growth, competitiveness and employment in the Union. It requests its full implementation as part of the comprehensive framework for enterprise policy under preparation. This comprehensive framework is advancing on the basis of the Commission's proposed Work Programme for Enterprise Policy 2000-2005, the proposals for benchmarking enterprise policy as well as the proposed Multiannual Programme for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship 2001-2005. First results of these exercises must be achieved by the end of 2000.

Completing the Internal Market

25. The European Council endorses the general orientation contained in the Commission's Communication on the Review of the Internal Market Strategy as a useful basis for planning work. A coherent framework is needed to develop the internal market by aligning future reviews of the Commission's Strategy with the Cardiff economic reform process so that the Spring European Councils can fully assess progress.

26. Significant steps towards completing the internal market have already been taken. Thus

- the directive on electronic commerce has been adopted, and agreement reached on harmonising certain aspects of copyright and related rights;
- under the Financial Services Action Plan, political agreement has been achieved on common positions on take-over bids, the winding-up and reorganisation of credit institutions and insurance undertakings; furthermore, the e-money directive has just been adopted;
- the Commission has presented proposals for new rules for public procurement and for the next stage of postal liberalisation; it will shortly present further proposals for reform of the telecoms sector and for a Community patent and the utility model.

27. Work now needs to be carried forward on other aspects. The Commission is accordingly:

- invited to present a report by March 2001 on the evolution of energy markets according to the Lisbon strategy;
- called on to continue the work of the High Level Group on a single European sky in order to present a final report in the first half of 2001 with a view to bringing forward appropriate proposals.

28. The European Council emphasised that the concerns and significance of public services of general interest must be taken into account in a dynamic single market. In this connection, it reiterated its request to the Commission to update its 1996 communication on public services of general interest. It expects that the updated communication will be submitted by its next meeting in Biarritz at the latest.

29. The Council and the European Parliament are invited to speed up work on the money laundering directive and the UCITS directive. The Commission is urged to present proposals for a single licence for issuers (prospectus directive), a new accounting strategy to enhance the comparability of listed companies' financial statements and measures to promote consumer confidence in the field of financial services, including distance marketing and e-commerce.

30. The European Council welcomes the rapid implementation of the "Innovation 2000 Initiative" by the European Investment Bank and its contribution to developing a knowledge-based economy and social cohesion. It calls on the Bank to pursue its efforts in cooperation with national and regional authorities, the financial community and the Commission.

31. The European Council stresses the role of public administrations, administrative action and better regulation in enhancing the competitiveness of the Union and of the Member States, thus contributing to economic growth and employment opportunities. The European Council encourages Member States to review the quality and performance of public administration in view of the definition of a European system of benchmarking and best practices.

B. Modernising the European social model by investing in people and building an active welfare state

Education and training for living and working in the knowledge society

32. The European Council welcomes the Commission's communication on e-learning and endorses the Council guidelines on future challenges and objectives of education systems in the learning society. These provide a framework for preparing the broader report on education to be presented in the European Council in Spring 2001, as well as a method for improving the contribution of education policies to the Luxembourg process.

33. Lifelong learning is an essential policy for the development of citizenship, social cohesion and employment. The Member States, the Council and the Commission are invited, within their areas of competence, to identify coherent strategies and practical measures with a view to fostering lifelong learning for all, to promote the involvement of social partners, to harness the full potential of public and private financing, and to make higher education more accessible to more people as part of a lifelong learning strategy.

Developing the active employment policy

34. The Union is enjoying substantially improved employment prospects. Efforts to further strengthen the European Employment Strategy through the mid-term review of the Luxembourg process should underpin the revision of the Employment Guidelines for 2001. In this context, the social partners are invited to play a more prominent role in defining, implementing and evaluating the employment guidelines which depend on them, focusing particularly on modernising work organisation, lifelong learning and increasing the employment rate, particularly for women.

Modernising social protection, promoting social inclusion

35. A number of priorities have already been identified in this area:

- as regards the future evolution of social protection, particular attention should be given to the sustainability of pension schemes through defining two action lines aimed at improved forecasting of future trends and at obtaining in-depth knowledge of recent, actual or expected national pension reform strategies;
- on promoting social inclusion, a framework with appropriate objectives should be defined to evaluate the impact of social policies applied in Member States and indicators should be

defined as common references in the fight against social exclusion and the eradication of poverty.

36. Development and systematic monitoring of work on these matters at Community level will be improved by the recent setting up the Social Protection Committee, regular debate on those issues and by encouraging cooperation between Member States through an open method of coordination combining national action plans with a Community programme to combat social exclusion. On this latter point, the Council is invited to adopt rapidly the Commission's recent proposal for this programme. Appropriate association of the social partners with the ongoing work should also be developed. The conclusions of the Lisbon European Council made a special appeal to companies' corporate sense of social responsibility. The European Council notes with satisfaction the ongoing follow up to this and welcomes the initiation of the process to establish a network for a European dialogue on encouraging companies' corporate sense of social responsibility. The European Council notes with satisfaction the recent political agreement reached in the Council on a directive establishing a legal framework for combating discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin.

The European Social Agenda

37. The draft European Social Agenda proposed by the Commission will provide a multi-annual framework for action in social matters. The Council is invited to examine the Agenda as a matter of urgency to enable it to be endorsed by the Nice European Council.

C. Improving working methods

38. Implementation, monitoring of progress and follow-up of the Lisbon strategy will take place within the existing institutional framework and will be consolidated by:

- improving coordination between the various Council formations and ensuring close cooperation between the Council Presidency and the Commission, under the overall guidance of the European Council, in line with the recommendations approved at the Helsinki European Council;
- developing and improving from a methodological point of view the open method of coordination where appropriate within the framework of the Council as one of the possible instruments in policy fields such as information society, research, innovation, enterprise policy, economic reforms, education, employment and social inclusion;
- the Commission presenting a report by the end of September on the proposed approach for indicators and benchmarks, both in specific policies and to be used in the synthesis report to the Spring European Council, to ensure the necessary coherence and standard presentation.

D. The Spring European Council

39. The European Council looks forward to holding its first regular Spring session on economic and social strategy and policies in Stockholm early in 2001 based on the annual synthesis report to be presented by the Commission and taking into account the contributions of the various Council formations. The social partners should also have the opportunity to address these issues before the European Council.



III. ECONOMIC, FINANCIAL AND MONETARY AFFAIRS

A. Broad Economic Policy Guidelines

40. The European Council welcomes the 2000 Broad Economic Policy Guidelines for the Community and the Member States. As reiterated at the Lisbon European Council, they are designed to maintain growth and stability-oriented macroeconomic policies, increase the growth potential of the Union, improve the quality and sustainability of public finances and move forward with far-reaching and comprehensive reforms of product, capital and labour markets. They build on the Lisbon strategy, thereby contributing to meeting, over time, the challenges of restoring full employment, promoting the transition to a knowledge-based economy, preparing for the consequences of ageing populations and improving social cohesion. They also improve the synergies between Cologne, Cardiff and Luxembourg processes.

41. The European Council invites the ECOFIN Council to implement its conclusions on practical steps forward to enhance the coordinating role of the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines in close cooperation with the other relevant Council formations and by addressing the link between structural and macroeconomic policies. Macroeconomic dialogue should also be improved.

B. Tax package

42. The European Council endorses the report on the tax package by the ECOFIN Council (*see [Annex IV](#)*), the statements included for the Council minutes and the agreement on its principles and guidelines. It endorses the timetable set out, which foresees a step-by-step development towards realisation of the exchange of information as the basis for the taxation of savings income of non-residents. The European Council requests the ECOFIN Council to pursue with determination work on all parts of the tax package so as to achieve full agreement on the adoption of the directives and the implementation of the tax package as a whole as soon as possible and no later than by the end of 2002.

C. Greece's entry into the Euro

43. The European Council congratulates Greece on the convergence achieved over recent years, based on sound economic and financial policies, and welcomes the decision that Greece will join the Euro area on 1 January 2001 which constitutes an additional positive step in the monetary integration of the Union.



IV. EUROPE AND THE CITIZEN

A. Public health and food safety

44. The European Council reaffirms the need to ensure a high level of protection of human health in the definition and implementation of all Union policies.

45. The European Council notes the Presidency's report on the discussions on the Commission White Paper on food safety. Food safety policy must apply to the entire animal and human food chain and be supported by an independent European Food Authority to complement preventive surveillance by the national authorities. The Council will examine forthwith the Commission proposals to implement the White Paper, so that food legislation meeting the most stringent public health criteria is in place by 2002 building on the results already achieved in the Member States. The first of these proposals, dealing with the establishment of a European Food Authority, is expected by September 2000 at the latest. In the meantime, the European Council invites the Commission to present proposals for harmonising maximum values for contaminants. The European Council also notes the Presidency's report on the progress achieved with regard to the Commission communication on the precautionary principle with a view to discussion at the Nice European Council.

B. Environment and sustainable development

46. The European Council welcomes the agreement reached at Montreal and the signature in Nairobi of the Bio-safety Protocol. It underlines the importance of the initiative of the Community to promote sustainability at local level and to apply the Agenda 21, adopted at the UN Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, which sets up a framework for cooperation between the Commission and networks of cities organised at European level.

47. The European Council stresses the importance of relaunching the debate on urban environment and asks the Commission to consider this issue in the proposals to be introduced in the framework of the Sixth Environmental Action Programme to be presented by the end of 2000.

48. Following its conclusions at Helsinki, the European Council will undertake a comprehensive review of the process of integrating environment protection requirements and sustainable development into priority sectoral policies at its meeting in June 2001. It also intends to adopt at the same meeting a strategy for sustainable development on the basis of a Commission proposal.

C. Maritime safety

49. The European Council welcomes the Commission's intention to present a report on its proposed overall strategy on maritime safety to the Biarritz European Council in order to reach a decision by the end of the year.

D. Sport

50. The European Council requests the Commission and the Council to take account of the specific characteristics of sport in Europe and its social function in managing common policies.

E. Freedom, Security and Justice

51. The European Council reaffirms its commitment to forging an area of freedom, security and justice as defined at its Tampere meeting. Accordingly, it:

- endorses the EU Action Plan on Drugs as a crucial instrument for transposing the EU Drugs Strategy 2000—2004 into concrete actions which provide an effective integrated and multidisciplinary response to the drug problem. Member States, in cooperation with the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction are urged to enhance their efforts to provide reliable and comparable information on the key epidemiological indicators in order to better evaluate the impact of drug-related issues;
- approves the report on the European Union's external priorities in the field of justice and home affairs which must be incorporated in the Union's overall external strategy as a contribution towards the establishment of the area of freedom, security and justice. It requests that the report which will be submitted to it in December 2001, in accordance with the Tampere conclusions, contain a chapter on the implementation of this external dimension;
- expresses its abhorrence against the tragic incidents of terrorism in Europe, extends its profound sympathy to the families of the victims and most firmly reiterates its commitment to continue the fight against terrorism at national and European levels. To this end, the European Council expresses its determination to take full advantage of the possibilities offered by the Treaties in order to enhance and intensify, in a spirit of solidarity, the cooperation among Member States in this field.

52. The European Council expressed its shock at the tragic deaths of 58 foreign nationals arriving in the United Kingdom. It condemned the criminal acts of those who profit from such traffic in human beings and committed the European Union to intensified cooperation to defeat such cross-border crime, which has caused so many other deaths across Europe. It called on the incoming French Presidency and the Commission to take forward urgently the Tampere conclusions in this area, in particular close cooperation between Member States and Europol in detecting and dismantling the criminal networks involved in this trafficking and by adopting severe sanctions against those involved in this serious and despicable crime.

F. The outermost regions

53. The European Council took note of the Commission's work programme for carrying out the measures to implement Article 299(2) of the Treaty on the outermost regions. It calls upon the Commission to study the information provided or to be provided by the Member States with a view to taking the measures falling within its sphere of competence, and to submit the appropriate proposals, which must be adopted at the earliest opportunity, to the Council as quickly as possible. The European Council will examine progress achieved at its meeting in Nice in December 2000.

G. Statute for Members of the European Parliament

54. The European Council welcomes the results recently obtained on the establishment of a Statute for Members of the European Parliament which consolidates their role and lends greater transparency to the exercise of their functions. The European Council calls on the incoming Presidency to continue the work on this matter on the basis of the progress made with a view to reaching a final result as rapidly as possible.



V. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

A. Russia

55. A strong and healthy partnership must be maintained between the Union and Russia and must be based on common values, notably respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Welcoming the positive outcome of the EU-Russia summit of 29 May 2000, the European Council offers its support to the efforts being made by President Putin and the new Russian government to modernise and reform their country. Democratic institutions, the rule of law, a market-oriented economy with an effective regulatory framework and tax structures and accession to the WTO are the best means of building and sustaining the investor confidence necessary for the successful development of the Russian economy. In this context, the proposals made by Member States and the Commission are welcome. Independent media must be given a chance to play an important role in an open and democratic society.

56. The Union stands ready to assist Russia in meeting these aspirations, objectives and commitments, and to develop cooperation with it on the basis of its Common Strategy and the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. To this end, the European Council invites the Council and the Commission to review the situation in July and to take the necessary decisions about TACIS and other instruments. The European Council noted with satisfaction the cooperation achieved with Russia on international issues, notably as regards the Western Balkans.

57. The European Council recalls that the Union's commitment to build a strong partnership with Russia implies the holding of an open dialogue based on trust. In this respect the European Council calls on Russia to meet its commitments and obligations concerning the continuing conflict in Chechnya. These include avoiding the excessive use of force and any spill-over of the conflict, pursuit of a political process including elected Chechen representatives, effective independent investigation into human rights abuses, cooperation with the Council of Europe, support for the OSCE Assistance Group in implementing its full mandate and assuring the safe delivery of humanitarian aid. Only a political solution can put an end to this crisis.

B. Common strategy on the Mediterranean

58. The European Council has decided on a Common Strategy of the European Union on the Mediterranean region (*see [Annex V](#)*). The Common Strategy will guide the policies and activities of the Union in developing the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership established by the Barcelona Declaration and its subsequent acquis, both in bilateral and regional components, as well as the consolidation of peace, stability and security in the Middle East following a comprehensive peace settlement. It thus expresses the Union's determination to actively pursue a coherent policy towards this region. The Union will continue supporting the efforts of the parties to conclude and implement peace agreements in the Middle East.

C. Middle East Peace Process

59. The European Council considers that a real opportunity exists to attain a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, based on the principles established within the framework of Madrid, Oslo and subsequent agreements and in accordance with relevant UN Resolutions.

60. The European Council appeals to Prime Minister Barak and to President Arafat to intensify their efforts with a view to concluding, within the agreed time-frame, a comprehensive agreement addressing all Permanent Status issues, thus bringing the conflict to an end and paving the way to reconciliation.

61. In this endeavour the personal engagement of the leaders of Israel and of the Palestinian Authority and their continued mutual confidence have the utmost importance. The European Council therefore stresses the need for full implementation of agreements entered into, such as the third further redeployment, and recalls the Council Declaration of 22 May.

62. The European Council also recalls its declaration 25 March 1999 in Berlin. It is particularly important in the discussion of Permanent Status issues now taking place that the viability of any resulting Palestinian State is fully taken into account.

63. At Helsinki the European Council welcomed the courageous decision of the late President Hafez al-Assad and Prime Minister Ehud Barak to resume Israeli-Syrian negotiations. The European Council urges the new Syrian leadership and the Israeli Government to pursue the strategic choice of peace.

64. The European Council welcomes the recent Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in accordance with Resolution 425 and the fact that it has satisfied the conditions laid down by the UN Secretary-General in his report of 22 May 2000. It appeals to all parties involved to cooperate with the UN and UNIFIL and to refrain from acts and declarations that might imperil their endeavours.

65. The European Council invites the Council to examine, on the basis of proposals from the Secretary-General/High Representative, assisted by the Special Envoy, and the Commission, how the European Union can assist and contribute to Lebanon's efforts towards reconciliation and rehabilitation.

D. Western Balkans

66. The European Council welcomes the report by the Secretary General/High Representative, under the authority of the Presidency and the Council, and in full association with the Commission, on the Western Balkans and strongly supports them in their efforts to ensure the impact, coherence and visibility of the Union's policies in the Western Balkans. It invites them actively to pursue the initiatives and implement the priorities identified in their report.

67. The European Council confirms that its objective remains the fullest possible integration of the countries of the region into the political and economic mainstream of Europe through the Stabilisation and Association process, political dialogue, liberalisation of trade and cooperation in Justice and Home Affairs. All the countries concerned are potential candidates for EU membership. The Union will support the Stabilisation and Association process through technical and economic assistance. The Commission has already presented proposals to the

Council to streamline and accelerate the procedures for disbursement of assistance and the early extension of asymmetrical industrial and agricultural trade benefits to the Balkan States.

68. The European Council encourages the States of the region to increase their regional cooperation including through regional trade arrangements. The EU is ready to intensify its cooperation with them, including in economic and financial assistance, political dialogue, free trade, approximation of EU legislation and cooperation in other policy areas.

69. The European Council invites the Secretary General/High Representative, under the authority of the Presidency and the Council, and in full association with the Commission, to pursue action on the basis of the Lisbon mandate, in particular intensified cooperation in the region in Justice and Home Affairs as well as in other areas.

70. The European Council reiterates its support for democratic and economic reform in Croatia and looks forward to the early start of negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement. It welcomes the progress made by FYROM in negotiations for a SAA and underlines the importance it attaches to the inviolability of frontiers, in particular to the territorial integrity of FYROM. The European Council urges the Albanian government to continue its efforts to respond to the issues raised in the Commission's feasibility study and notes the "roadmap" for Bosnia and Herzegovina outlining where further progress is needed in order to achieve the full benefits of Stabilisation and Association.

71. A democratic, cooperative FRY living in peace with its neighbours will be a welcome member of the European family of democratic nations. The European Council supports the civil society initiatives as well as the democratic forces in Serbia in their struggle to achieve this goal and urges them to stay united and reinforce their cooperation. The Union looks forward to the time when the FRY will be able to participate fully in the Stabilisation and Association process.

72. In the face of massive economic and political pressure exerted by Belgrade, the EU will continue to support Montenegro's efforts towards democratic and economic reform and applauds the Montenegrin government policies of ethnic tolerance and regional cooperation.

73. One year after the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1244, the European Council reiterates its support for its full implementation and for free and fair municipal elections in Kosovo later this year carefully prepared and properly monitored by the competent international bodies. Extremist violence will not be tolerated. Local leaders are strongly urged to live up to their responsibilities by actively contributing to the establishment of a multi-ethnic, tolerant society where refugees and displaced persons are able to return and in which all the people of Kosovo can live in safety.

74. Emphasising the need to further strengthen regional cooperation, the European Council reaffirmed the Union's determination to continue playing a leading role in the Stability Pact. It welcomed the adoption in Thessaloniki of the "Agenda for Stability" as a framework for future action. The Reconstruction Agency as an authority implementing the future CARDS Programme should be allowed to use its full potential in order to achieve the goals set out in Cologne.

75. The European Council welcomed the idea, proposed by France, of a summit meeting between the European Union and the countries of the Western Balkans which, although at

different stages, are most advanced in their democratic evolution. Such a summit would allow the countries of the region to be reassured of Europe's solidarity with them, and permit an examination with them of the means to accelerate the process of democratic and economic reform. The European Council invites the Council, assisted by the Secretary-General/High Representative, and the Commission, to begin work on preparing such a summit meeting.

E. Northern Dimension

76. The European Council endorsed the Action Plan for the Northern Dimension with external and cross-border policies of the European Union 2000-2003 as an important step towards implementing the Guidelines adopted in Cologne. It invited the Commission to take a leading role in implementing the Action Plan and to present appropriate follow-up proposals, including on the environment and nuclear safety, the fight against international crime and Kaliningrad. It welcomed the intention of the future Swedish Presidency to prepare, together with the Commission, a full report to the Council on Northern Dimension policies in preparation for the Göteborg European Council in June 2001.

F. Africa

77. Recalling the presence of President Mandela at its meeting in Cardiff, the European Council warmly welcomed the presence of the President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr. Thabo Mbeki, as a mark of the warm and growing relations between the EU and South Africa.

78. The European Council, following talks with the South African President, reaffirms its commitments given at the first Africa-Europe Summit, held on 3 and 4 April in Cairo, to build a global dialogue based on a strategic bi-regional partnership between Africa and Europe covering the many dimensions of their relationship. Both sides recalled that the follow-up to the Africa-Europe Summit will cover those dimensions, including questions related to debt relief, and that the appropriate mechanisms for the implementation of the decisions taken in Cairo will soon be put in place. The European Council welcomed Portugal's offer to host the next Europe-Africa Summit in Lisbon in 2003 during the Greek Presidency.

79. The European Council, agreeing that the challenges facing the African continent require extraordinary and sustained efforts by the countries of Africa helped by strong international engagement and cooperation, reaffirmed its willingness to continue to support measures aimed at rapid economic growth and sustainable development. This will only be possible in a proper environment of peace, democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

80. The European Council adopted the declaration on Ethiopia-Eritrea in [Annex VI](#).