

Brussels European Council (17–18 June 2004)

Presidency Conclusions

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Establishing new Partnership Initiatives

European Neighbourhood Policy

65. The European Council welcomes the Commission's proposals for a European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and endorses the GAERC Conclusions of 14 June. Enlargement has brought the Union closer to its neighbours to the east and to the south. The European Council reiterates the importance it attaches to strengthening cooperation with these neighbours, on the basis of partnership and joint ownership and building on shared values of democracy and respect for human rights.

66. The European Council welcomes enhanced dialogue with all ENP partners, east and south. It notes that the forthcoming Summit on 8 July will provide an opportunity to take stock of EU-Ukraine relations. It also welcomes the inclusion of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in the ENP. This gives the EU another important instrument to promote progress on the wider reform agenda in each of these countries. In this context, the European Council welcomes the very positive outcome of the international Donors Conference for Georgia held in Brussels on 16 June. It will also be possible to extend the full benefits of the ENP to Belarus when that country has established a democratic form of government, following free and fair elections; strengthened support for civil society in Belarus will help to build a more democratic, stable and prosperous country.

67. The European Council agrees that ENP action plans be developed with all Euro-Mediterranean partners that have association agreements in force. It invites the Council and the Commission to take the work forward. It notes that the Commission, with the contribution of the High Representative where appropriate, will present by July proposals for a first series of action plans with countries in the east and south, which have been prepared in consultation with the partner countries, for consideration by the Council.

Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East

68. The European Council endorsed the Report of the Presidency, SG/HR and Commission on the EU's Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East, which will establish a consistent basis for the EU's policies towards the countries concerned by setting out general principles and objectives.

69. The objective of this Strategic Partnership is to promote the development of a common zone of peace, prosperity and progress in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. It sets out a concrete policy agenda under which, through partnership and dialogue, and recognising diversities, the Union will seek to:

- promote political reform, good governance, democracy and human rights;
- stimulate trade and economic cooperation, economic liberalisation and people-to-people contacts;
- promote conflict prevention and resolution in the Mediterranean and the Middle East and measures to combat terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and illegal immigration.

70. The European Union reiterates its view that it will not be possible to fully build a common zone of peace, prosperity and progress unless a just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict is found. However, progress on the resolution of the conflict cannot be a precondition for confronting the urgent reform challenges facing our partners in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, nor vice versa.

71. The European Council recognises that the challenges identified cannot be addressed by maintaining the status quo. It welcomes the fact that this understanding is shared by the countries of the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Their commitment to reform has been expressed both in their consultations with the Union and through public statements, in particular the Tunis Declaration of the Arab League Summit of 22/23 May 2004 as well as the earlier Alexandria and Sana'a Declarations.

72. The European Union will pursue these goals with its partners primarily through existing structures and arrangements. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy will remain the cornerstone of the Union's framework for relations with the Mediterranean countries. The EU will also strengthen relations with members of the Gulf Cooperation Council and other countries of the Middle East. It will ensure that regional and bilateral assistance programmes under these instruments and frameworks reflect and contribute to the achievement of the objectives outlined above.

73. The European Council reaffirms the readiness of the EU to work with the US and other partners in cooperating with the countries concerned. It looks forward to reviewing the Middle East Peace Process and exploring the possibilities for coordinating our respective efforts to assist the reform process at the coming EU-US Summit on 26 June 2004.

74. The European Council will monitor development under the Strategic Partnership, and will review its progress and future direction in June 2005.

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