

PC.DEL/821/08
16 October 2008

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

**STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE
735th MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

16 October 2008

**In response to the statement by Dr. Erhard Busek,
former Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for
South Eastern Europe**

The European Union welcomes Dr. Erhard Busek, former Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. We listened with great interest to his recommendations concerning the management of post-conflict situations and stabilization of the countries concerned. We believe, as he does, that now more than ever, the OSCE has a vital role to play with regard to early warning, conflict prevention and resolution, crisis management and post-conflict recovery.

Dr. Busek's presence at this Permanent Council meeting allows us to measure the distance we have travelled since the Sarajevo Summit in July 1999, when the Pact was launched to maximize the impact of international assistance and prevent any new conflict by furthering the strengthening of democracy, the promotion of peace, stability and economic prosperity, and the establishment of good-neighbourly relations. No one here has forgotten that the approach which guided the launching of this initiative was largely based on the OSCE's experience. Dr. Busek's being here also gives us an opportunity to mention the Pact's transformation into the Regional Co-operation Council, formalized in Sofia on 27 February 2008.

Mr. Chairman,

This development testifies to the determination of the international community, and of the European Union (EU) in particular, to move from an approach that consists of co-ordinating the actors in South Eastern Europe to one in which the countries in the region take back ownership of responsibility for their mutual co-operation. The EU Council, moreover, welcomed the move in June 2008 from the Stability Pact to the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC) and encouraged the region to take further steps to gain control over its destiny. From the Pact's inception, its philosophy was based on the principle of gradually delegating decision-making to the countries of South Eastern Europe. This has now been accomplished, and this objective was attained through the concerted efforts of the international community and the countries in the region.

This result could not have been achieved without the contribution of Dr. Busek, a person of great experience who is well known and highly appreciated in South Eastern

Europe. The search for consensus which continually motivates his efforts, and the quality of his personal contacts, have contributed substantially to the success of the Pact. Under his impetus, the Pact has unquestionably gained in visibility and credibility.

The Pact has shown that regional co-operation and good-neighbourly relations, which lie at the heart of the EU Stabilisation and Association Process, remain an essential requirement and a basic dimension of the South Eastern European countries' path towards EU membership. Nine years after the Pact's launching, the significant progress that these countries have made in the Stability Pact's three priority areas is indisputable.

Mr. Chairman,

The dissolution of the Pact does not mean the end of the EU's interest in the region — quite the contrary. The EU intends to assume its full responsibilities in the framework of the RCC, and to lend its support to its Secretary General, Mr. Hido Biščević, former State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Croatia. The EU is always ready to co-operate with the RCC, which it co-finances through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance. The six priorities set in the Sofia Declaration on the Establishment of the Regional Co-operation Council, which constitute the basis of the new Council's activities, are areas in which the EU has recognized expertise. It can provide this expertise to the members of the RCC, both in the framework of the European perspective that the countries of the Western Balkans are recognized as having, and in that of the European Neighbourhood Policy, from which the Republic of Moldova benefits.

The success of the RCC will, however, rest on a strong political commitment by the governments concerned, as they will have to allocate the financial and human resources necessary to ensure the viability of the projects. They will also have to see to the continuation and strengthening of regional co-operation. The RCC can play its role fully only if all the countries in the region take an active part in it.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate our thanks to Dr. Busek and wish him much success in his present and future endeavours.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Norway; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.