



Tirana Declaration »

of the Third Parliamentary Conference

on the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe

“Enhancing Security and Political Stability through Economic Co-operation: Progress on the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe”

Tirana, 14-16 October 2002

1. The Third Parliamentary Conference on the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe was held in Tirana from 14 to 16 October 2002, at the kind invitation of the Albanian Parliament. Organised by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, currently chairing the Parliamentary Troika, with the participation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament, the Conference was devoted to the theme “Enhancing Security and Political Stability through Economic Co-operation: Progress on the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe”.
 2. The Conference reiterated its full support for the Stability Pact’s work on behalf of South-Eastern Europe and welcomed its renewed emphasis on concrete initiatives and projects capable of rapidly enhancing economic growth and regional co-operation and promoting security and political stability for all.
 3. The Conference welcomed the significant progress in the large majority of the countries of South-Eastern Europe - an achievement all the more remarkable considering the present more difficult economic climate at European and world level. Progress is reflected in high growth rates, enhanced regional co-operation and increased foreign investment in the region. Nevertheless, the Conference recalled the risks and challenges that the countries of South-Eastern Europe face today in their onward path towards stable democracies and honouring of European values. Major efforts continue to be undertaken by many of the countries concerned to reform their economies and institutions so as to bring them into greater conformity with European and worldwide standards. The move towards the establishment of the South East Europe Electricity Forum (SEEEF) and the conclusion of the Sava River Basin Treaty were welcomed as part of this process.
-

4. The Conference expressed its wholehearted support in favour of closer relations between the countries in the region and the European Union, via the Accession Process and the Stabilisation and Association Process, in view of a future accession to the European Union as soon as circumstances permit.

5. The Conference, emphasising the crucial importance of a strong parliamentary role for the Stability Pact's success, called for:

- a) the creation of a parliamentary structure involving the countries concerned;
- b) a continued push for the speediest possible completion of infrastructure projects, including in the transport, energy and water management sectors and simultaneously the systematic introduction in each sector of a strategic approach to infrastructure development in the region;
- c) the timely conclusion of the remaining 10 (out of the original 21) Regional Free Trade Agreements before the deadline of December 2002, followed by their rapid implementation;
- d) renewed efforts to develop, by appropriate agreements, the free movement of people, across the region;
- e) an intensified fight against corruption and organised crime, including trafficking in human beings, drugs and arms;
- f) creating conditions conducive to the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons and ensuring protection of minorities;
- g) UNMIK to provide conditions necessary to promote the participation of Kosovo in regional co-operation.

6. The Conference devoted special attention to corruption, economic and organised crime, which are particularly acute in South-Eastern Europe as it recovers from its difficult past. The Conference emphasised that the blame for corruption cannot be laid at any one door since it results from a social climate of generalised distrust, in which different actors – public officials, domestic and foreign companies as well as the general public – may be intentionally or unwittingly involved, calling therefore for a broader approach in order to combat this affliction. The Conference considered that success in this struggle is vital to ensure continued financial support for the region by the international community.

7. The Conference called for renewed parliamentary pressure for the establishment of intra-regional legal initiatives to fight corruption and economic and organised crime. In this context, it called on the countries in the region to make full use of the work of the Council of Europe's Agreement establishing the "Group of States against Corruption – GRECO", including the latter's Twenty Guiding Principles for the Fight against Corruption and its Model Code of Conduct for Public Officials, as well as existing Council of Europe conventions in this field.

8. Participants in this context recalled that the Stability Pact owed its existence in part to the tragic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. These conflicts also led to the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia. The Conference emphasised the need for universal and unreserved support for the newly-established International Criminal Court and for all European countries to resist any pressure or agreement weakening the Court's full effectiveness.

9. The Conference emphasised the need to take full advantage of the work performed by those institutions, such as the OSCE Missions in the region, which are working on the ground in close co-operation with the authorities and civic society.

10. The Conference welcomed the intention of the European Parliament to give special attention to the role of civil society in rebuilding democracy in South-Eastern Europe, when organising, in the course of its forthcoming chairmanship of the Parliamentary Troika in 2003, the Fourth Stability Pact Parliamentary Conference.

11. Finally, the Conference called on all parties concerned to consider the Stability Pact as the prime facilitator of economic assistance to South Eastern Europe, in order to avoid the current frequent dispersion of effort and overlap between the activities of the several actors involved.