



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on the Western Balkans

*3023rd FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting
Luxembourg, 14 June 2010*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"THE SARAJEVO MEETING

The Council welcomes the outcome of the High Level Meeting on the Western Balkans, organised by the Council Presidency and chaired by the Foreign Minister of Spain, Mr Moratinos, which took place on 2 June 2010 in Sarajevo to mark the 10th anniversary of the Zagreb summit and appreciates the participation of all partners. The Council looks forward to appropriate follow up to the meeting.

Recalling its conclusions of 7/8 December 2009, the Council reaffirms the EU's unequivocal commitment to the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries in line with the Thessaloniki Agenda and in accordance with the renewed consensus on enlargement and looks forward to moving to the next stages of the process. The Council reiterates that each country's progress towards the European Union depends on its individual efforts to comply with the Copenhagen criteria and the conditionality of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

The Council welcomes the commitment of the Western Balkans to intensify the pace of reform in key areas. It stresses the importance of addressing the challenges ahead, in particular related to the rule of law, including the fight against corruption and organised crime.

The Council welcomes the commitment of the Western Balkans to further strengthen regional cooperation on the basis of the principles of inclusiveness and regional ownership. It welcomes recent commendable initiatives regarding reconciliation and encourages further efforts to this effect. The Council recalls the importance of regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations and encourages all parties concerned to address outstanding issues with neighbouring countries.

P R E S S

Recalling its previous conclusions according to which the EU strongly supports the goal of the abolishment of the visa regime for all the countries of the Western Balkans, as well as the joint statement of the European Parliament and the Council of 30 November 2009, the Council welcomes the progress achieved by Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina in reaching the criteria of visa liberalisation, as stressed in the Commission proposal of 27 May 2010 for a European Parliament and Council decision to amend Regulation 539/2001, as it applies to Member States. The Council and the European Parliament will take a decision as soon as the Commission assesses that all the outstanding benchmarks are met and in the light of such assessment.

SERBIA

Following the latest report of the Prosecutor of the ICTY, the Council notes that Serbia has maintained its cooperation with the Tribunal with a view to delivering further positive results.

The Council encourages Serbia to follow the recommendations of the Prosecutor.

Recalling the Council conclusions of 29 April 2008 and 7/8 December 2009, Ministers agreed to submit the Stabilisation and Association Agreement to their parliaments for ratification.

The Council underlines that full cooperation with the ICTY remains an essential element of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement.

The Council took note that Serbia applied for membership of the European Union on 22 December 2009 and welcomed Serbia's commitment to EU integration. The Council decided to return to the membership application.

ALBANIA

The Council continues to be concerned about the political situation in Albania following the general elections on 28 June 2009. It welcomes the return of the opposition to the parliament in connection with the facilitation initiative by MEPs Daul and Schulz, on behalf of their political groups, which was supported by the High Representative and by Commissioner Füle. It is high time to find a solution to the current crisis on a basis which will stand the test of time.

The Council regrets, however, that the facilitation initiative has not yet found sufficient support to enable the Albanian Government and the opposition to overcome their differences. The Council reiterates that it is the responsibility of the Government of Albania together with the opposition to promptly find, in a transparent manner and in full respect of the Albanian constitution, solutions and ways forward which will be required for the country on its EU path.

The Council encourages Albania to actively continue with the necessary reforms for the smooth and timely implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, taking into account the European Partnership priorities, and it reiterates its support for the European perspective for the country.

The Council recalls that Albania's application for EU membership, submitted in April 2009, will be assessed according to the principles set out in the EU Treaty and the criteria defined by the Copenhagen European Council in 1993, as well as the December 2006 European Council conclusions on the renewed consensus for enlargement. The Council agrees to return to the matter when the Commission has presented its opinion."
