



ICBSS Black Sea Monitor

Issue No. 7

April 2007

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- PROMOTING SYNERGIES ACROSS REGIONS, BY DIMITRIOS TRIANTAPHYLLOU, P.P. 2-3
- SPEECH BY BENITA FERRERO-WALDNER EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY ON "THE EUROPEAN UNION AND RUSSIA-FUTURE PROSPECTS" (SALZBURG, 6 APRIL 2008), P.P. 4-7
- COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY IN 2007 [COM (2008)164] (BRUSSELS, 3 APRIL 2008), P.P. 7-14
- NATO BUCHAREST SUMMIT DECLARATION (BUCHAREST, 3 APRIL 2008), P. 15
- STATEMENT OF THE HEADS OF CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATIONS OF THE BSEC MEMBER STATES (KYIV, 18 MARCH 2008), P.P. 15-16
- EU-UKRAINE COOPERATION COUNCIL TWELFTH MEETING, EU PRESS RELEASE (BRUSSELS, 11 MARCH 2008), P.P. 16-17
- EU COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY (BRUSSELS, 18 FEBRUARY 2008), P.P. 17-19
- EU COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON RELATIONS WITH THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA (BRUSSELS, 18 FEBRUARY 2008), P.P. 19-20
- JOINT STATEMENT OF THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND OF THE WIDER BLACK SEA AREA (KYIV, 14 FEBRUARY 2008), P.P. 20-21
- DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE MEMBER STATES OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION ON A BSEC-EU ENHANCED RELATIONSHIP (KYIV, 14 FEBRUARY 2008), P.P. 21-22
- SPEECH BY BENITA FERRERO-WALDNER EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY ON "BLACK SEA SYNERGY: THE EU'S APPROACH TO THE BLACK SEA REGION" AT THE BLACK SEA SYNERGY MINISTERIAL MEETING (KYIV, 14 FEBRUARY 2008), P.P. 22-24
- EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION ON A BLACK SEA REGIONAL POLICY APPROACH (BRUSSELS, 17 JANUARY 2008), P.P. 24-30
- EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION ON A MORE EFFECTIVE EU POLICY FOR THE SOUTH CAUCASUS: FROM PROMISES TO ACTIONS (BRUSSELS, 17 JANUARY 2008), P.P. 30-41
- RECENT PUBLICATIONS BY THE ICBSS, P. 42
- OTHER RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON THE BLACK SEA REGION, P.P. 42-45
- NEWS AND EVENTS, P.P. 45-48
- ICBSS BLACK SEA MONITOR INDEX, P. 49

THE BLACK SEA MONITOR

The ICBSS has identified the need for a special circular on developments in and around the Black Sea region that goes beyond the mere news brief format. Therefore, the Centre has set up a quarterly electronic review focused particularly on the Black Sea region, aiming to provide stakeholders and other interested parties around the globe with an exclusive information service. The Monitor offers brief commentaries and refers key documents, publications and events of interest that impact on the wider Black Sea region.

PROMOTING SYNERGIES ACROSS REGIONS

This year the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) is celebrating its tenth year of existence. As a result, apart from the usual pause for reflection (something that is almost impossible to do) regarding its achievements over the last decade, the ICBSS has been working hard planning a number of activities for 2008.

In fact, two events have already taken place. Within the context of its security and stability programme, a third meeting of the Task Force on a Common Black Sea Strategy took place in Kyiv on 28-29 March in cooperation with the Foreign Policy Research Institute of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Regional Bureau and the Open Ukraine Foundation. Also in its capacity as a BSEC Related Body and as Coordinator of the BSEC ad hoc Group of Experts on BSEC-EU Interaction, the ICBSS hosted the first meeting of the Group in Athens on 4 April, thereby effectively launching the process for a more tangible, coherent and coordinated symbiosis between the BSEC and the European Union.

As we are preparing our forthcoming activities, we have come to define our *raison d'être* as ***Promoting Synergies Across Regions***. The list of planned activities below clearly suggests that the ICBSS' contribution to the study of the wider Black Sea area is one (and has always been one) which contributes to enhancing interaction between peoples, projects, disciplines and regions.

From here on, our planned activities (whether primarily organised by the ICBSS or by other partner institutions with which the ICBSS cooperates) to date (until September) are as follows:

- International Seminar on “Europe and the Mediterranean: Migration Policy, Security and Defence”, organised by the University of Zaragoza in cooperation with the ICBSS, to be held in Zaragoza, Spain on 5 May.

- 28th Meeting of the ICBSS Board of Directors to be held in Athens on 14-15 May.
- Restricted Brainstorming with BSEC Senior Officials on the “Future of the BSEC”, to be held in Kavouri, Greece on 16-17 May.
- Conference on “The Wider Black Sea Area in a Transatlantic Perspective” organised by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars with the ICBSS and John’s Hopkins Center for Transatlantic Relations, to be held in Washington D.C. on 10 June.
- Seminar on “The Wider Black Sea Area and the Transatlantic Alliance” organised by the Warsaw-based Center for International Relations, in cooperation with the ICBSS, to be held in Kyiv on 13-14 June.
- International Conference on “Regional Development Challenges of EU and Border Regions in the Context of the Interaction between the EU and Countries of its Immediate ‘Neighbourhood’”, co-organised by the University of Tartu Institute of Politics and Government, Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation, University of Tartu Eurocollege and Estonian Foreign Policy Institute in cooperation with the ICBSS, to be held in Tartu, Estonia on 16-17 June.
- ICBSS Annual Conference on “The Wider Black Sea Area and the Great Energy Game” to be held in Athens on 25 June.
- First [ICBSS International Symposium](#) on “The Wider Black Sea Area in Perspective” in cooperation with the EU-Russia Centre, the Harvard Black Sea Security Program, the International Policy Research Institute of the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV|IPRI), NATO Public Diplomacy Division, The New Eurasia Foundation (FNE) and the University of the Aegean, to be held on the island of Kalymnos, Greece on 1–6 July.
- Regional Summer School on Security Studies organised by Tirana-based Institute for Democracy and Mediation, in cooperation with the ICBSS and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, to be held in Durres, Albania on 8-19 September.

Forthcoming publications include research by Russian, Turkish, Bulgarian, American and Greek scholars. The ICBSS is also actively involved in producing policy-studies on interparliamentary dialogue and on visa restrictions whose results should become public by the end of the year. Finally, the ICBSS is actively involved in the field of science and technology through the “S&T International Cooperation Network for Eastern European and Central Asian countries” ([IncoNet EECA](#)) which is coordinated by the ICBSS and co-funded through the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development of the European Community (FP7). The IncoNet EECA which was launched on 1 January 2008 with duration of four years is made up of a large international consortium of 23 prominent institutes from 21 EU and EECA countries.

Taking stock of the above, a quick assessment is that we are “doomed” to keep doing more for the region. With the BSEC committed to enhancing its relations with the European Union and the EU having officially launched the Black Sea Synergy initiative, the ICBSS’ agenda remains filled for a long time to come.

DIMITRIOS TRIANTAPHYLLOU

Speech by Benita Ferrero-Waldner
European Commissioner for External
Relations and European
Neighbourhood Policy on
"The European Union and Russia-
future prospects"
(Salzburg, 6 April 2008)

Dear Vice-President Mortimer,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's good to be back at Schloß Leopoldskron. I would like to thank you for your invitation to share some ideas about the development of the European Union's relations with our **great neighbour: Russia**. Sometimes vilified, sometimes glorified, but rarely understood properly.

The challenge of **getting our relationship with Russia right** and of exploiting our joint potential has turned into a major test of EU foreign policy and coherence. Nor is the EU alone in this exercise. Other international partners too are looking at the resurgent Russia and considering how best to adjust policy in the light of changing circumstances.

Generally, it is considered wise for politicians and diplomats to **stay away from crystal balls** and futurology. As Mark Twain said, *"The art of prophecy is very difficult, especially with respect to the future"*.

So I will base my remarks on how I see the EU's relations with Russia developing in the short- and medium-term.

From what we have seen and heard so far, President-elect Medvedev stands for **continuity, at least initially**. It is true that many said the same about Vladimir Putin when he took over as President in 2000. But the scenario in 2008 differs in an important way: where Boris Yeltsin retired from political life, Vladimir Putin stays, and is likely to be confirmed as Prime Minister next month. When we discuss the future development of our relations with Russia, it is important to note the **constructive mood** that was visible at the NATO Summit in Bucharest and the US-Russia Summit in

Sochi. Mutual confidence is being built, for instance regarding NATO's missile defence plans. Also, I believe the Alliance's decision on Ukraine's and Georgia's NATO membership aspirations was a wise compromise.

Of course, how the Medvedev-Putin-tandem will work out in practice remains to be seen, but Dmitry Medvedev does bring a **change of style**. In his public pronouncements, he has placed the emphasis on the **rule of law**, on modernizing the economy, and on reducing the State's role in the economy. You will also recall his statement on the risks of "legal nihilism" in Russia.

All of this is very welcome, but ultimately the world will assess Mr Medvedev on **his deeds, not just on his words**. The next EU-Russia **Summit**, in June, will be a **first opportunity** for us to see how his policies will affect Russia's relations with the European Union.

By then, we should have reached an agreement *inside* the EU on the mandate for the Commission to negotiate the **New Agreement** with Russia that will take over from the current Partnership and Co-operation Agreement, negotiated in the early 1990s. These new negotiations offer the **best opportunity of engaging constructively** with Russia over a wide range of policy areas, with a view to promoting the EU's interests and values, and indeed our many *common* interests.

Let me **touch on four areas** of our relationship: the EU's **values**; the **energy** relationship; **regulatory** convergence and human capital; and last but not least **foreign policy**.

1) *The EU's values*

In promoting the EU's fundamental values **Mr Medvedev's emphasis on the rule of law** may help. The development of a properly functioning independent judiciary will be particularly important to developing a true state of law.

On the other hand, the Duma and Presidential elections have shown that our views on what constitutes democracy do not

entirely converge. It is therefore not always easy to speak about “**common values**”.

What we *do* share, however, are **international legal commitments** to a number of principles and instruments in the area of human rights and democracy: at the United Nations, and particularly in the OSCE, and the Council of Europe. We should lose no opportunity to remind Russia of the need to respect the commitments she has entered into – but in a constructive tone, without “megaphone diplomacy”. I think we need a **more realistic approach to Russia** that is based on facts.

Human rights are already part and parcel of our discussions on expanding our co-operation in the area of **freedom, security, and justice**. Good progress has been made here, in particular regarding the Visa Facilitation Agreement (by the way, the first of its kind agreed by the EU) and the readmission agreement that came into force in parallel. There are other areas where progress has been solid: in expanding co-operation in civil and criminal justice, in the fight against illegal immigration, and in tackling drugs and human trafficking.

As we co-operate to improve the security of our citizens, and to crack down on crime, we must ensure that this co-operation fully respects civil liberties and human rights. Our **human rights consultations**, which happen twice a year, have developed into a useful confidence-building measure. In these consultations, there are no taboos, despite the sensitivity of the topic - a sensitivity which is by the way not limited to Russia. This is a **two-way street**: Russia also raises many concerns with the EU, notably with regard to the Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltic States.

2) Energy

Energy continues to dominate the economic aspects of our relationship. True: A bit less than 40% of the EU’s gas imports depend on one monopoly alone: Gazprom. But vice versa, over 60% of Russian oil and gas exports flow to the EU. Russia’s pipelines are largely directed towards the West. The Russian oil and gas sector badly needs more

investment all the way along the production chain, and international investors are keen to invest, in spite of the well-known difficulties of operating on the Russian market. And finally, Russian companies are keen to expand their presence on the European market.

Therefore, there is **great interest on both sides** in negotiating arrangements that allow for an expansion of a Russian and EU-presence in each other’s markets. This should be done inside the New Agreement, of which energy policy will be an important part. Today, the EU market is more open than Russia’s, and in the interest of increasing leverage, it is important that we continue to move forward on the **internal energy market**, and **speak with one voice** on the **external** aspects of energy policy.

Our **interdependence** allows for a **win-win situation** to be created; with improved access possibilities *upstream* in Russia and *downstream* in the EU. **Transparency, reciprocity and non-discrimination** (both for production, trade and transit of energy products) are the key elements we need to secure to conclude a legally binding agreement that will lead to a level playing field in this sector.

3) Regulatory Convergence and Human Capital

Beyond the energy sector, the negotiations on the New Agreement will continue to build on the advances that have been made over the past few years towards **regulatory convergence**. This will be particularly relevant after Russia completes its **WTO accession** process. After that takes place, we will be able to begin negotiations on a deep and comprehensive **Free Trade Area as an integral part** of the New Agreement.

High energy prices have contributed to a slowing of reforms in Russia, and protectionist voices inside Russia counsel against pursuing WTO accession. Yet it is in **Russia’s long-term interest** to pursue its integration into the global economy. In fact, Russia’s leaders know they need us, that it is the EU which will be Russia’s main partner in modernizing the Russian economy and

diversifying it away from its current over-dependence on hydrocarbons.

Investment in **human capital**, in the social and education sectors, will be an important element of Russia's economic reforms. Vladimir Putin's approval last year of a law introducing key elements of the Bologna Process into **the Russian education system** – a rather unknown fact – is a positive sign, and the EU will continue to fund exchange programmes for both students and academics.

Russia also needs to mobilize its potential for innovation. There will therefore be scope for pursuing co-operation in **Research and Development**, notably through Russia's possible association to the EU's Seventh Framework Programme.

Investment in human capital also means addressing health and social issues. Russian **demographic and health indicators** are, frankly, worrying. A study by one of Russia's leading demographers recently highlighted forecasts of a continuing slide in average life expectancy among Russian men (from an average of 59 now to possibly just over 50 over the next 40 years). Cases of HIV/AIDS and TB are also on the rise, putting further strains on the Russian healthcare system, and also having an impact on the Russian economy and Russian security more broadly.

4) Foreign Policy

Foreign policy was a major factor in both the Duma and Presidential election campaigns. Russia's more robust stance on international issues has gone down well with the Russian public, and there is likely to be a strong element of continuity under the Medvedev Presidency, in substance if not in tone. Much of the foreign policy discourse coming out of Russia has had a **strong element of grandstanding** to a domestic constituency, and it has proved more difficult for us to find concrete ways to co-operate on the resolution of conflicts around the world and specifically in our common neighbourhood.

The EU's primary goal will be to advance the case that greater **stability is in Russia's best interests**. This applies to our common neighbourhood, seen by some in Russia as its

"sphere of influence", and where it is important to maintain our commitment to promoting the rule of law, human rights and democracy; to the Balkans; or farther afield. The EU will also be arguing strongly in favour of multilateral engagement in international issues. These elements will be present whether we are discussing Kosovo, the frozen conflicts in our neighbourhood, the Middle East, or other international flashpoints.

The Russian moratorium on participation in the CFE, its hard line at the UN over Kosovo and the unilateral withdrawal from the CIS-ban on trade links with Abkhazia are all evidence of a **trend towards greater unilateralism** in Russian foreign and security policy. This is a challenge to which must find a response.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is of course, another dimension to all this: That is the **stance the EU itself adopts** towards Russia.

The EU and Russia are not always evenly matched: Take our energy relationship, where Russia has been extremely effective in pursuing its interests coherently and strategically. Can the same be said of the EU?

We all know the EU needs to speak with **one voice** and that where has done so it has been infinitely more effective in pursuing its interests. The united EU stance at the 2007 Samara Summit took Russia somewhat by surprise, and the development of a more coherent EU line towards Russia can only help put the relationship on a more even keel.

The arrival of a new Russian President is an opportunity for the EU to **address these imbalances**. We need to adjust the tone of our discourse to **better reflect the reality** of two economic powerhouses cooperating as equals.

We must **treat Russia with respect**, as the strong economic power it is today. Yet we must also **be more confident** about identifying and coherently pursuing our **own European interests**. And we must be more confident in using our considerable

economic leverage and attraction for Russia as she seeks to implement her modernization agenda.

That confidence should also **extend to the past**. History has shaped and will continue to shape the way in which we view each other. But the actions of the past should not be used as an obstacle to the development of our future relations.

Dear friends,

Geographic realities, the great expansion in trade and business opportunities, shared histories, and cultures that have mirrored and borrowed from each other down the centuries mean that **Russia and the European Union will always be close**, and that we will remain **strategic partners**.

This is not to say that we can always see eye-to-eye on everything. It would be odd if we did. Russia has seen **dramatic changes** since the events of 1991. The Russia of today is scarcely recognizable from the days of the Soviet Union. The rapid transition of the 1990s has given way to greater stability that is much appreciated by Russian society, for many of whom the Putin years brought rises in personal incomes and a greater belief in a brighter future.

But greater economic freedom has somewhat come at the expense of the greater political freedom that Russian citizens enjoyed in the 1990s. So when we talk to Russia, we should be sure to **talk to Russia as it is**, rather than with Russia as we would like it to be.

Communication from the Commission to the Parliament and the Council on the Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2007
[COM (2008) 164]
(Brussels, 3 April 2008)

1. CONTEXT

Over the last few years, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) has enabled the EU and its partners to make clear

progress in deepening their cooperation and in targeting it better at the needs and ambitions of partners. The ENP is gradually establishing itself as a mutually beneficial partnership for reform and development, helping our neighbours to come closer to the EU, bringing new benefits to their and our citizens and promoting regional integration beyond the borders of the Union. The present Communication provides an overview of developments in the EU's relations with the neighbours that are encompassed by the ENP¹. It covers the period since November 2006². The Commission Communication of December 2007³ identified the areas where the EU side needs to do more, notably on trade and economic integration, mobility, or addressing regional conflicts.

The structures and instruments, in the frame of which dialogue and cooperation takes place, are now well developed. These are discussed in section 2. More importantly, the relations between the EU and its partners are increasingly intensive, supporting a broad agenda for the adoption and implementation of EU-oriented reforms in many countries and across a wide range of sectors. Section 3 provides a summary of the substantial progress made by partner countries, as well as the areas where further efforts are required. More detailed information can be found in the country-specific Progress Reports and the Sectoral Progress Report which are attached as staff working documents. In the light of the political, economic, social and cultural diversity among ENP partners, and because there are variations in the sequencing and prioritisation of their reforms, these reports are not directly comparable. The analysis of progress on governance contained in the present Communication and its annexes will be the basis for the decision on the 2008 Governance Facility allocations. Section 4

¹ Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Libya, Lebanon, Republic of Moldova, Morocco, occupied Palestinian territory, Syria, Tunisia, and Ukraine. For reasons of brevity the term "partner countries" will be used hereafter to include also the occupied Palestinian territory.

² COM(2006) 726.

³ COM(2007) 774.

addresses multilateral developments concerning the EU and its partners. Conclusions regarding the further development of bilateral EU relations with partner countries are drawn in Section 5.

2. THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Contractual relations: With the countries covered by the ENP, except Belarus, Libya and Syria, Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (in the East) and Association Agreements (in the South) have been concluded.

Building on the strong progress achieved previously, in March 2007 the EU and Ukraine opened negotiations on a new Enhanced Agreement (NEA) aiming to draw Ukraine significantly closer by supporting further internal reforms, integrating the Ukrainian economy progressively in the internal market and going beyond the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and the EU-Ukraine Action Plan wherever possible. Since then seven rounds of negotiations have taken place and both sides are heavily involved in developing a new ambitious framework for their growing relationship. Following the finalisation of Ukraine's WTO accession process in February 2008, negotiations were launched in the same month on a deep and comprehensive free trade area as a core element of the NEA.

In October 2007, the Council adopted new conclusions on Libya requesting the Commission to submit draft negotiating directives with a view to a future EU-Libya framework agreement. The Commission presented these in February 2008. The EU offers a full partnership with Belarus provided that Belarus takes concrete and convincing steps towards democratisation, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Steps by the Belarusian authorities to address the country's democratic governance shortcomings remain limited, and it has so far not been possible to make progress towards such a partnership. At the same time, contacts at the technical level on issues of mutual interest are being encouraged. EU-Syria relations are governed by a 1977 Co-

operation Agreement pending the signature of the draft Association Agreement.


Action Plans: Following the adoption of action plans with Armenia (November 2006), Azerbaijan (November 2006), Georgia (November 2006), Lebanon (January 2007), and Egypt (March 2007), a total of twelve countries have now chosen to develop their relations with the EU using this tool to accompany domestic reforms and the strengthening of bilateral and regional cooperation. As regards Algeria, a policy dialogue has been taken up in numerous working groups and sub-Committees on the basis of its Association Agreement. At the Association Council of March 2008 it was decided to establish a joint work programme to set priorities for the implementation of the Association Agreement.

The first Action Plans entered into force in early 2005. Three of them (Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Israel) had an initial time horizon of three years. As these countries have made significant advances and their relations with the EU are currently under review, with a view to substantially deepening them, cooperation continues, at present and for pragmatic reasons, on the basis of these Action Plans.

3. THE DOMESTIC REFORM AGENDA IN PARTNER COUNTRIES

Political dialogue and reform

The political reform processes, while sharing important core principles, are different in the various countries under the ENP, reflecting the commitments that they have made in this respect. In the east, all ENP partners that have agreed Action Plans are members of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, which contributes to a particular reform agenda aiming at close approximation to the fundamental standards prevailing in the EU. The implementation of reforms in most countries of the region also took place against a background of economic growth and relative stability. In the south, the reform agenda is based on the agreed values enshrined in the Barcelona Declaration and takes these and UN commitments as benchmarks. In many countries that have yet




to meet these standards fully, political reform is slow-moving. In the case of Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territory, the political context has as yet not allowed Action Plan objectives to be meaningfully addressed, despite noticeable efforts. More generally, the political dialogue and reform agenda of the ENP partners is highly differentiated and the following remarks need to be considered with reference to the individual Action Plans and progress reports.

A number of countries, in particular the Republic of Moldova and Armenia are introducing reforms to strengthen their *democratic institutions*. This includes, in the case of the Republic of Moldova, legislative measures related to parliamentary reform and local self-government, and, in the case of Armenia, the separation of powers, including increased powers for the National Assembly and improved local self-government. Morocco has become a member of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe. It made progress on the judicial accountability of members of the government and on local self-government reform. Egypt introduced a package of Constitutional amendments with a view, among other things, to ending the State of Emergency by July 2008. Jordan adopted a new Municipalities law that foresees the direct election of municipal council members and mayors (except in Amman) and thus made progress in promoting local democracy. Relations between parliaments can play an important role in further developing parliamentary culture. The European Parliament's intentions, as expressed in its November 2007 report on ENP, to strengthen its cooperation with partner country parliaments will be a major factor in this regard.

Elections, whether presidential, legislative, or local, were held in a number of partner countries. These have provided important signals regarding the development of democracy. In the Republic of Moldova, local elections in June 2007 were generally well administered and offered voters a genuine choice, although some shortcomings were noted, in particular in respect of equitable access to the media for all

candidates. Following the elections to Egypt's upper chamber, the EU Presidency issued a statement expressing certain concerns about their conduct. In the September 2007 legislative elections, Morocco made progress on the transparency of the electoral process and on allowing political contestants access to media. In Ukraine, despite the controversy surrounding the calling of pre-term parliamentary elections, a consolidation of the democratic process was achieved in 2007. The elections were assessed to have taken place mostly in line with international standards for democratic elections. Jordan's parliamentary elections in November 2007 were held under legislation that falls short of some international standards. Jordan did not accept international electoral observers. In Georgia, the proposal to delay the Presidential elections to the autumn of 2008 led to civil unrest and the imposition of a state of emergency. In response to the concerns that these events raised, Presidential elections were held in January 2008. These revealed a number of deficiencies in the electoral process, including unbalanced media exposure of candidates, use of state resources for campaign purposes, reported acts of voters' intimidation, and irregularities in the counting and tabulation. They will need to be addressed if Georgia is to achieve the Action Plan objectives in the area of political reform. In Armenia the Presidential elections in February 2008 were conducted mostly in line with international standards. However, the lack of a clear separation between state and party functions and the need for equal access of the candidates to the media were mentioned as concerns to be tackled. There were also concerns regarding the state of emergency that was introduced in the aftermath of the elections.

Voter turnout can in some cases be an indicator of the level of confidence among citizens that they can exercise influence through the ballot box. In the elections referred to above the rates of participation were: Republic of Moldova – 52%, Egypt – 31%, Ukraine – 63%, Morocco – 37%, Jordan – 54%, Georgia – 56% and Armenia – 69%.




Several countries (notably Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Morocco) introduced measures to strengthen the independence and transparency of the *judiciary*, a key element of political reform. The overall level of *corruption* remains worrying in most partner countries. Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Morocco and Ukraine adopted countermeasures such as anti-corruption screening of legislation before its adoption, obligatory assets declarations for high officials, or awareness raising. Limited steps toward the establishment of a transparent, accountable and effective public administration were taken in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon, the occupied Palestinian territory and Ukraine.

As concerns *human rights and fundamental freedoms*, Jordan (December 2006) acceded to the Optional Protocol (OP) on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Egypt (in February 2007) and Jordan (in May 2007) acceded to the OP on Children in Armed Conflicts of the same Convention. Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Morocco and Ukraine also made progress toward the ratification of a number of international conventions. Measures to strengthen institutions responsible for monitoring and defending human rights were taken by a number of countries: the role of the Ombudsperson was strengthened in Armenia and Azerbaijan; a National Preventive Mechanism under the OP to the Convention against Torture is being established in the Republic of Moldova; in Egypt, the National Council for Human Rights adopted a national plan of action for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Ukraine (July 2007) acceded to the second OP (Abolition of the Death Penalty) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. A number of countries maintained their *de facto* moratoria on *capital punishment*, and Jordan also reduced the number of crimes that carry capital punishment. Cases of *torture and ill-treatment* continue to be reported in most partner countries, although with very

different levels of frequency and severity. Incidents often occur in pre-trial detention and prison facilities. There was some progress in the prevention of torture and ill-treatment, for instance in Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Tunisia and Morocco made some progress in the prosecution of perpetrators. There are concerns about the independence of the media and *freedom of expression* in many ENP partner countries. Armenia made progress in improving the freedom of the media. Progress has been made on *gender issues* in a number of countries: in Egypt, Female Genital Mutilation has been formally prohibited; in Morocco, an amendment to the Nationality Code allows the transmission of nationality through the mother; and in Tunisia, the procedure to ratify the OP of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has been initiated. The participation of women in political life has advanced in Jordan, the Republic of Moldova and Morocco. Steps to improve the conditions of national *minorities* were taken in Georgia, through the implementation of a civic integration programme, in the Republic of Moldova, with the adoption of an Action Plan to support the Roma population, and in Ukraine, which ratified the European Convention on Nationality. Regarding core *labour rights*, the ratification and implementation of ILO conventions remains problematic in a number of partner countries.

As concerns the *settlement of regional conflicts*, the EU maintains an open dialogue with all partner countries. The Republic of Moldova and Ukraine cooperated closely with the EU on questions related to the Transnistria settlement efforts. The mandate of the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) was extended until end-November 2009. In the occupied Palestinian territory, the police training mission EU POL COPPS was reactivated and EU Ministers indicated their readiness to redeploy the border monitoring mission EU BAM Rafah as soon as conditions allow. In Georgia, the implementation of a package of confidence-building measures in



Abkhazia and South Ossetia began in autumn 2007; however results on the path to the settlement of these conflicts are very limited. Despite an informal meeting between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in June 2007, progress on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is also limited. Egypt and Jordan played an important role in the re-launching of the Arab Peace Initiative, including through their participation in the Arab League's follow up committee and at the Annapolis meeting in November 2007. Negotiations on the status of the Western Sahara were recently re-launched, but so far there has been little progress. Finally, most ENP partner countries are giving increased attention to improving the management of their migratory flows and to deepen the cooperation with the EU on this important policy.

Socio-economic reform

Regarding *macroeconomic developments*, most ENP partner countries registered high economic growth in 2007. In the Republic of Moldova, growth slowed down somewhat due to the consequences of a serious drought. In Morocco agricultural output was also affected by drought. In Lebanon political instability damaged the economy. Countries with important energy-sector revenues, notably Azerbaijan, experienced the highest growth rates. Government budget deficits and overall indebtedness generally remained manageable. Inflation rose in most countries, largely owing to global commodity price increases, but the rate of monetary expansion is a concern in some cases. Bilateral trade between the EU and ENP partners increased substantially, thus strengthening our relations, while the trade balances and the current account deficits of most partner countries deteriorated. Increased foreign direct investment is financing the deficits in a number of cases. Israel and Jordan saw improvements in their trade balance. In the case of Jordan, the large trade deficit with the EU nevertheless requires continued attention. Azerbaijan and Algeria recorded budget and trade surpluses. Israel sustained its substantial growth rate, significantly reduced its public debt and brought the government deficit close to balance. The

EU's position as the principal trading partner of ENP countries was further consolidated in 2007, notably with the accession of Bulgaria and Romania.


Armenia, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, and Tunisia made progress in improving their *business* environment, through measures such as the simplification of company registration procedures, reduction of licensing fees, or the introduction of "one-stop shops". The Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Enterprise to which most of the Southern partner countries have acceded has underpinned this process. However, this has not yet led to increased foreign direct investment in all cases, particularly among some Mediterranean ENP partners. In Egypt, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, foreign direct investment reached record levels in 2007.

Most ENP countries have substantial informal economies, and economic governance generally needs to be improved. Despite relatively high rates of economic growth most ENP partners have been contending with high rates of *unemployment*, particularly among the young in the Mediterranean ENP countries. Israel and Ukraine saw a gradual reduction of unemployment. A key challenge is the promotion of decent working conditions. Despite efforts in some countries, the role of women in social and economic life has not improved significantly.

The Commission will publish its *Economic Review of EU Neighbour Countries* in June 2008.

Sectoral reform

An overview of progress in other policy areas of the ENP Action Plans, as well as some governance and economic indicators, can be found in the Sectoral Progress Report in annex. Generally, ENP partner countries made further progress in the transformation of their sectoral policies, adopting strategies and taking steps on their path of reform and modernisation and their integration with the EU economy and market. They introduced new legislation and strengthened their institutional capacities. Secondary legislation



and the administrative capacity to implement the reforms continue to be the main challenge. Progress varied in speed and depth both between countries and between sectors. In several ENP partner countries an increasing commitment to adapt national legislation to EU law can be observed, in varying degrees and depending on the sector. Moreover, EC financial assistance has increasingly become policy-driven and focused on the reform priorities agreed in the ENP Action Plans.

In a number of policy areas, progress can only be made over time; therefore, the progress report regularly points to ongoing measures as well as to accomplished modernisation steps. In all areas, the policy dialogue between the EC and ENP partner countries was further intensified.

Sectoral policy dialogue is a crucial platform for the “partnership-for-reform” that the ENP entails. The process of creating a public administration that responds to the needs and rights of citizens – providing one-stop-shop business registration; citizen-oriented and corruptionfree police or customs services; effective port management facilitating commerce and transport; or access to environmental information; to give but a few examples – represents, if it is sustained, a strong political contribution to good governance and the rule of law.


4. MULTILATERAL DEVELOPMENTS

In November 2005 the Barcelona Summit adopted a five-year work programme and in November 2006, at the Ministerial Meeting held in Tampere, Euro-Mediterranean partners adopted a work programme for 2007. During 2007, the work done in the four chapters of cooperation was considerable and the bilateral policy dialogue conducted within the framework of the ENP continued to contribute to fostering progress towards regional cooperation in many areas. Most of the 21 initiatives agreed in Tampere were implemented by the end of 2007. A new set of initiatives for 2008 was agreed at the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial held in Lisbon in November 2007. The political and security dialogue focused on a regular review of the political situation in the Middle East,

the implementation of the Code of Conduct on countering terrorism, the deepening of the dialogue on ESDP and security issues, the launching of a regional dialogue on joint cooperation in the area of elections and initiatives related to civil society, human rights and democracy. In the area of economic cooperation, progress was made on financial cooperation in the framework of the Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership (FEMIP), the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean network of public finance experts, negotiations on services and the right of establishment and the setting up of a group of High Officials to further work on the objective of a Free Trade Area by 2010 and beyond. Dialogue was also pursued in a broad range of sectors, including environmental challenges facing Mediterranean partners. In the field of energy, the Euro-Mediterranean Energy Ministerial endorsed a priority action plan for 2008-2013 in December 2007. Regarding the cultural and human dimension, a greater involvement of civil society was pursued. Dialogue focused on issues such as the role of women in society, higher education and scientific research, and the information society. The political dialogue with ENP partners was also strengthened following the Africa-EU Summit in Lisbon in December 2007, which adopted a joint African-EU Strategy and a first Action Plan and will create further synergies in relations between the EU and African partner countries respectively.

In March 2008, the European Council approved the principle of a Union for the Mediterranean which will include the Member States of the EU and the non-EU Mediterranean coastal states. It invited the Commission to present to the Council the necessary proposals for defining the modalities of what will be called "Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean" with a view to the Summit which will take place in Paris on 13 July 2008. The Commission will table these proposals swiftly and in this process also carry out consultations with the Southern neighbours.

In a Communication of April 2007 the Commission spelled out the Black Sea



Synergy initiative as a response to challenges and opportunities requiring the enhancement of Black Sea regional cooperation. This initiative takes advantage of the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU and Turkey's accession process, and it is complementary to the mainly bilateral efforts under the ENP and the other policies applied in the region. It offers a new regional cooperation platform involving the EU, Turkey, all Eastern ENP partners with agreed Action Plans and the Russian Federation. Following the endorsement of the Black Sea Synergy by the Council, the Commission began implementing a series of concrete measures, mainly in the fields of energy, transport, environment, fishery, migration and the development of civil society. The Commission acquired observer status in, and developed working links with, the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). A meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the EU and of Black Sea Synergy partners took place in Kyiv on 14 February 2008. The meeting adopted a Joint Statement, launching the Black Sea Synergy as a common, long-term endeavour. In June 2008 the Commission will present a review to the Council on the first year of the Black Sea Synergy.

5. FURTHER EVOLUTION OF EU RELATIONS WITH PARTNER COUNTRIES

Further evolution in Action Plans

In its February 2008 Conclusions, the Council underlined the central role of Action Plans in advancing the objectives of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The progress reported on in the present Communication amply supports this assessment. Action Plans have been central in giving operational substance to the contractual relations between the EU and its partners and are also becoming important reference points for the donor community. As these relations deepen and as some objectives are achieved while new ones are agreed upon, it will be necessary to adapt these tools accordingly. The Action Plans themselves make provision for this adaptation, which will allow the increased ambitions of the parties to be reflected in a

document that serves to organise their joint work. The Commission considers that such tools, whatever they may be called, will also continue to be useful in the context of new contractual agreements to be concluded with ENP partners.

The experience gained so far during the implementation of the first generation of Action Plans suggests that future adaptations should lead to documents that are more closely calibrated to the partner countries' specific ambitions and capacities, reflecting the differentiated relations of the EU with its partners, whilst also promoting achievable steps towards regulatory convergence with EU legislation and standards. This differentiation will also lead to greater ownership on the part of the partner countries.

The principal features of Action Plans, namely that they are relatively specific, time-bound and action-oriented, need to be preserved and improved. A clearer sequencing of the measures taken in the pursuit of Action Plan objectives would also be useful. In general, the scope of the Action Plans (i.e. the number of sectors addressed) should be maintained, as this represents the richness of the relations the EU is developing with its partners. A realistic stock-taking of the extent of Action Plan implementation should be carried out.

Future developments in the relations with partners

The ENP is thus gradually gaining ground as a vehicle for the development of more intense and fruitful relations between the EU and its partners. The EU must now continue its approach of 1) intensifying the policy and its delivery so that it brings clearer benefits, 2) pursuing a gradualist, performance-based and differentiated course and 3) showing willingness to deepen relations with select partners where this is warranted and sought by the countries concerned.

With four countries, joint work on implementing the Action Plans has intensified in such a way that a particular deepening of relations with the EU is warranted. This will be taken forward in



each case in a manner tailored to the specific circumstances, consistent with the overall philosophy of the ENP, including the principle of agreed benchmarks. With **Ukraine**, an ambitious new framework is being laid for this partnership through negotiations on a new Enhanced Agreement, which are progressing rapidly and will include provisions for a deep and comprehensive free trade area. The **Republic of Moldova** has made good progress in implementing its ENP Action Plan and shown strong political will to advance further. As the Council concluded in February 2008, the EU is ready, on the basis of sustained progress, to start a reflection on a new agreement, adapted to the Republic of Moldova's interests and going beyond the PCA. Discussions are also progressing with **Morocco** on concrete ways to achieve an "advanced status" which could be a broad package including significant measures on the mobility of people parallel to progress on readmission. With **Israel**, a reflection group is considering areas where relations with the EU might be upgraded to a special status; this should include both a deepening of political dialogue and involving Israel more closely in the EU economy and market and in a number of key EU policies.

Joint work will continue over a broad range of sectoral policy areas with **Jordan** and **Tunisia**, in support of the countries' respective reform agendas.

With other countries, implementation of ENP Action Plans began only relatively recently. Progress with **Armenia**, **Egypt** and **Georgia** will build upon the promising start already made, in each case taking account of the specific circumstances and ambitions of the countries. Work is also progressing with **Azerbaijan** in a number of sectors, including cooperation on energy.

In the case of **Lebanon** and the occupied **Palestinian** territory, the ENP Action Plans will provide a solid anchor for reform once conditions permit greater progress. In the meantime, contacts continue at many levels to build confidence and capacity. A meeting of the Joint Committee with the Palestinian Authority scheduled for the second quarter

of 2008 is meant to re-launch the joint implementation of its Action Plan.

With four countries covered by the ENP, no Action Plans have been agreed, but in several cases advances in taking relations forward have nevertheless been possible. With **Algeria**, implementation of the Association Agreement is progressing well; relations are deepening rapidly in areas ranging from energy to migration. With **Libya**, relations have tangibly improved; the Commission proposes the negotiation of an ambitious and wide-ranging agreement with this important country. With **Syria**, relations could be enhanced on the basis of the draft Association Agreement when political circumstances allow. While relations with **Belarus** at ministerial level remain constrained due to the internal situation in the country, at the same time, technical-level contacts are being developed. The opening of an EC Delegation in Minsk will make it possible to strengthen these contacts as well as links with Belarus' civil society.

A more visible policy

The December 2006 Commission Communication noted the need for an increased visibility of the European Neighbourhood Policy to advance ownership of the reform process, and to underpin the EU's support for its neighbours as they come closer to the Union. Alongside the conference held in Brussels in September 2007, bringing together ministers and civil society from the EU and partner countries, 2007 saw a marked increase in the general public's awareness in many partner countries of Action Plan commitments and in the focus of civil society organisations on the ENP. Within the EU, the importance of strengthening relations with our neighbours has moved closer to the centre of the policy debate. The Commission will build on these achievements, in cooperation with the other Institutions, the Member States and partner countries.

**NATO Bucharest Summit Declaration
(Bucharest, 3 April 2008)**

[...]

36. We reaffirm the continued importance of the Black Sea region for Euro Atlantic security. In this regard, we welcome the progress in consolidation of regional ownership, through effective use of existing initiatives and mechanisms. The Alliance will continue to support, as appropriate, these efforts guided by regional priorities and based on transparency, complementarity and inclusiveness, in order to develop dialogue and cooperation among the Black Sea states and with the Alliance.

[...]

43. We are concerned with the persistence of regional conflicts in the South Caucasus and the Republic of Moldova. Our nations support the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. We will continue to support efforts towards a peaceful settlement of these regional conflicts, taking into account these principles.

[...]

**Statement of the Heads of Customs
Administrations of the BSEC Member States
(Kyiv, 18 March 2008)**

We, the High Representatives of the Customs Administrations of the Member States of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) met in Kyiv on 18 March 2008, within the framework of the Ukrainian BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office, and;

Bearing in mind that BSEC, throughout its fifteen years of existence, has endeavoured to bring its Members together guided by common ideas, goals and principles;

Taking into account that the BSEC region, with its unique geographical location, possesses a strategic importance in connecting Europe and Asia;

Believing that after fifteen years of experience, BSEC shall take concrete steps and achieve tangible results in the areas of cross-border cooperation and trade facilitation, which in turn will open up the potential of the region;

Being determined to make every effort for progress in cooperation between customs administrations and to create a favourable environment for initiating joint projects and programmes of common interest;

Taking into consideration the continuously growing trade turnover in the BSEC region;

Recognizing that the role of customs administrations should evolve to take into account the changes which have occurred during recent years, including the increasing importance of securing the international trade supply chain;

Being conscious that it is necessary to ensure a correct balance between trade facilitation and the fight against fraud and other customs offences;

Emphasizing the need to conduct a target-oriented evaluation of various plans and studies pertaining to the border-crossing procedures in the BSEC Member States, including in joint cooperation with international and regional organizations and initiatives;

Acknowledging the necessity to intensify efforts for the facilitation of movements of goods within the BSEC region by simplifying customs formalities and reducing waiting times at the border crossing points;

Stressing the need and the importance of the implementation of the provisions of the Declarations of the BSEC Heads of State and/or Government and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States, as well as the Resolutions and Decisions adopted by the BSEC Councils;

Have agreed upon:


1. **Intensifying** joint efforts to promote cooperation among customs administrations of the BSEC Member States, in order to help to reduce regional disparities and to give an impetus to the regional trade;
2. **Strengthening** cooperation with relevant international organizations and structures in order to coordinate the activities in customs matters, while fully reflecting the interests of the Member States, through devising joint action plans and instituting appropriate coordination mechanisms with international organizations which would yield fruitful results for the region;
3. **Taking** appropriate measures to explore the possibilities for feasible and practical approach to further trade facilitation, eventually through concluding legal instruments that would lead to the gradual harmonization of customs procedures in the BSEC region;
4. **Strengthening** and further enhancing the cooperation of customs administrations, including through the assigning the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Cooperation in Customs Services the status of a permanent subsidiary organ;
5. **Promoting** the organization of regional training seminars and conferences aimed at the exchange of experiences and best practices in the customs sphere among experts of the BSEC Member States, other states and international organizations;
6. **Enforcing** the correct application of the legislation regarding the international trade which aims to assist at combating criminal or terrorist threats, eliminating health and safety risks for consumers, environmental risks, as well as risks to public security;
7. **Encouraging** the BSEC Observers, Dialogue and Sectoral Dialogue Partners and other interested organizations and institutions to offer their contributions to the implementation of the agreed measures and arrangements regarding the simplification of the customs formalities in the region;
8. **Ensuring** the implementation of the provisions of the Resolutions and Decisions of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs related to facilitation and security of trade and cross-border cooperation;
9. **Encouraging** the continuation and further strengthening of BSEC cooperation with all relevant international organizations;
10. **Supporting and promoting** cross-border cooperation projects among the BSEC Member States wherever is possible to the benefit of the whole region.

The Participants expressed their gratitude to the Government and people of Ukraine for their warm hospitality and the outstanding organization of the Meeting.

**EU-Ukraine Cooperation Council
Twelfth Meeting
EU Press Release
(Brussels, 11 March 2008)**

At the twelfth EU-Ukraine Cooperation Council today, the EU welcomed the progress made in EU-Ukraine relations over the last year and called on the Ukrainian leadership to stabilise the country's political situation and continue on the path of ambitious political and economic reforms. The EU reiterated its commitment to support Ukraine's reform efforts.

The EU commended the conduct of the parliamentary elections of 30 September 2007, characterised by a lively campaign and genuine political competition, and the establishment of a new government in the



end of 2007. The EU recalled the key importance of constitutional reform, establishing a viable system of proper checks and balances between the main state organs and an independent Constitutional Court, as a necessary basis for political stability. Ukraine was encouraged to make use of the advice of the Venice Commission in its efforts to obtain a sustainable and well balanced Constitution.

The Cooperation Council confirmed the extension of the Action Plan for a period of maximum one year as a key tool for Ukraine's reform process, and took note of the joint evaluation report on the implementation of the EU – Ukraine Action Plan, including additional specific actions for 2008.

The Cooperation Council welcomed the substantive progress achieved in the first six rounds of negotiations on a new Enhanced Agreement and reconfirmed the strong commitment of both parties to the negotiations. The Cooperation Council also welcomed the start of negotiations on a deep and comprehensive Free Trade Area as a core element of the New Enhanced Agreement on 18 February. The EU congratulated Ukraine on the finalisation of the WTO accession process in Geneva and encouraged it to complete the internal ratification process quickly.

The Cooperation Council highlighted the importance of further strengthening of EU - Ukraine relations through concrete co-operation, focusing on key sectors including energy, transport, environment and health. The Cooperation Council welcomed the entry into force of the EC-Ukraine Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements and emphasised the importance of their full implementation.

The Cooperation Council welcomed strengthened cooperation in the area of foreign and security policy, in particular in the regional context. The EU expressed its appreciation for Ukraine's cooperation on the Transnistria settlement, including through the EUBAM, and for the fact that Ukraine continues to align itself with most EU declarations. The Cooperation Council


welcomed the recent ratification of the EU-Ukraine Agreement on the Participation of Ukraine in EU-led crisis management operations by the Ukrainian Parliament.

The EU was represented by Mr Rupel, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, Mr Mingarelli, Deputy Director General for the European Neighbourhood Policy and relations with Eastern Europe, and Mr Sellal, Permanent Representative of France to the EU. Prime Minister Tymoshenko led the Ukrainian delegation.

**EU Council Conclusions on
European Neighbourhood Policy
(Brussels, 18 February 2008)**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. "The Council recalls its Conclusions of 18/19 June 2007 on Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). It reiterates the key principles of partnership and joint ownership, as well as differentiation and tailor-made assistance. The ENP is a single, inclusive, balanced and coherent policy framework. It remains distinct from the question of EU membership and does not prejudice any possible future developments of partner countries' relationship with the EU.
2. In light of the Council's invitation in June 2007 for successive Presidencies and the Commission to take the work forward on strengthening the ENP, the Council welcomes the Commission Communication on "A Strong European Neighbourhood Policy" and takes note of the progress made so far. The Communication provides a useful basis for further reflection by the Council on making the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) more effective and more attractive to our ENP partners, with the aim of making full use of the ENP's potential.
3. Deepened economic integration must remain an essential building block of our



relations with our neighbours. The scope of existing free trade agreements with ENP partners should be deepened where possible. Deep and comprehensive free trade agreements (DFTAs) should be considered with ENP partners having acceded to the WTO and following a thorough economic analysis. In this context, the EU welcomes the start of negotiations on a DFTA with Ukraine.

As for the possible start of negotiations on DFTAs with Georgia and Armenia, the Council will decide on the basis of the Commission's recommendations that will include, inter alia, the results of the ongoing feasibility studies. The Council emphasises the importance of concluding agreements with the ENP partner countries of the Mediterranean region on the liberalisation of services, trade in agricultural products and the right of establishment. In this context, the Council welcomes the creation of the Euromediterranean Senior Officials Group as a way to stimulate the economic integration process and with a view to establishing a Euromediterranean Free Trade Area by 2010. The Council encourages Mediterranean countries to accelerate the negotiation and entry into force of FTAs with one another so as to strengthen south-south regional integration.

4. The Council underlines the importance of people-to-people contacts and the role of civil society in the context of ENP, in particular in the fields of education, science, culture and business, for promoting shared principles, enhancing EU visibility in the ENP region and strengthening local civil societies. In order to increase mobility, legitimate short-term travel by nationals from ENP countries to the EU should be facilitated, on the basis of a country-by-country approach, by a more flexible use of existing possibilities to simplify visa procedures, as well as inter alia through the consideration of Common Application Centres and the rapid conclusion by Member States of bilateral agreements relating to local border traffic, particularly with those partner countries bordering the Schengen area. The implementation of the 2003 Council Conclusions concerning flexibility in issuing

visas to participants in Euro- Mediterranean meetings should be extended to include all ENP partners when participating in ENP-related meetings.

5. The ENP has already proven to be an important tool for promoting reform in the ENP countries. The EU reiterates its willingness and determination to continue to assist its neighbours in sectoral reform and modernisation, in line with the ENP Action Plans, as an important step towards prosperity and stability in our neighbourhood, based on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The EU, through Community assistance and support, combined and coordinated with bilateral assistance of EU Member States, stands ready to work with ENP partners to help implement ENP Action Plans, in particular in the areas of energy security, climate change, environment, transport, research, information society, education and training, employment and social development, health, maritime policy, agriculture, fisheries and regional policy.

6. In the area of financial cooperation with ENP partners, considerable progress has already been achieved. The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument has led to an increase in financial assistance to ENP partners. The Governance Facility has been established, encouraging partner countries in carrying out the reforms agreed in their ENP Action Plans. The Council looks forward to the Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF) starting to make more financial resources available for ENP partners this year, once the modalities for the NIF have been finalised. The NIF will provide considerable additional funding in ENP countries, including for infrastructure projects such as in the energy, environment and transport sectors, while ensuring coordination among partners and avoiding any overlapping with existing facilities.

7. The Council recognises the importance of cooperation with ENP partner countries and international organisations and other actors towards the prevention and resolution of conflicts, including through confidence-building measures, in the EU's

neighbourhood, while taking into account agreed negotiating processes. The Council and Commission will continue to seek ways of using the relevant policy tools in a concerted fashion, so as to strengthen regional stability and security.

8. The Council considers that regional cooperation represents an important tool for deepening the EU's relations with its neighbours and their interaction with each other, as well as for encouraging joint ownership of ENP. The Council also recalls the European Council conclusions of 14 December 2007 regarding the invitation to upcoming Presidencies to develop both the eastern and southern dimensions of the ENP in bilateral and multilateral formats on the basis of the relevant Commission communications and proposals.

9. The Council notes that the established regional organisations and processes can play an important role and underlines that the strengthening of contacts with them would benefit the whole neighbourhood area. In this context, the Council welcomes the Joint Statement made at the Black Sea Synergy Ministerial meeting held on 14 February 2008 in Kiev and looks forward to the Commission's review of the development of the Black Sea Synergy Initiative.

10. The Council underlines the importance of implementation by ENP partner countries of their ENP Action Plans, which will bring partner countries closer to the EU, in line with the principle of differentiation. The Council looks forward to the Commission's Progress Reports foreseen in April 2008 and reaffirms its willingness to deepen EU cooperation with ENP partners."

**EU Council Conclusions on
Relations with the Republic of Moldova
(Brussels, 18 February 2008)**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council notes the positive dynamics in EU-Republic of Moldova relations over the past 12 months, as witnessed by the entry

into force of the Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements on 1 January 2008, the opening of a Common Visa Application Centre in Chisinau in April 2007 and the initial contacts between the Commission and the Republic of Moldova with a view to exploring the possibilities for agreeing a pilot mobility partnership within the framework of the global approach to migration. The Council underlines EU efforts to contribute to the conflict settlement in Transnistria, and notes the effective engagement of the EUSR for Moldova in the region and the prolongation of the mandate of the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) for another two years from 1 December 2007. The Council welcomes the active alignment by the Republic of Moldova with CFSP Declarations and looks forward to the entry into force on 1 March 2008 of the Regulation on granting additional autonomous trade preferences for the Republic of Moldova.

The EU attaches great importance to further strengthening the relationship, and to ensuring the continuation of the process of political and economic reforms in the Republic of Moldova. The Council welcomes the progress made by the Republic of Moldova in the implementation of the ENP Action Plan over the last three years. However, further and continuous efforts are needed in order to strengthen democracy and the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of the media, inter alia in the run-up to the parliamentary elections, and to reinforce the fight against corruption, as well as to improve the investment climate, in particular the transparency and predictability of the regulatory framework. In the light of the above, the full respect of the EU-Moldova Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and the ENP Action Plan, notably their investment-related provisions, are of utmost importance.

The Council looks forward to the Commission's Progress Report foreseen for April 2008, which will provide a good opportunity to further evaluate the situation. On the basis of sustained progress in Action Plan implementation, the EU is ready to start

reflection on a new agreement with the Republic of Moldova going beyond the PCA."

**Joint Statement of the Ministers of
Foreign Affairs of the Countries of the
European Union and of the
Wider Black Sea Area
(Kyiv, 14 February 2008)**

1. Foreign Ministers of the countries of the European Union and of the wider Black Sea area met in Kyiv to initiate the Black Sea Synergy cooperation. The Meeting was opened by H.E. Viktor Yushchenko, President of Ukraine.

2. Ministers identified significant challenges and opportunities in the wider Black Sea area, which may require coordinated action at the regional level. They agreed that greater involvement by the European Union can increase the potential of Black Sea regional cooperation. Ministers welcomed the Black Sea Synergy Initiative of the European Union as an important tool to achieve this goal.

3. Participants agreed that the primary task of the Black Sea Synergy is the development of cooperation within the Black Sea region and also between the region as a whole and the European Union. The different aspects of the Synergy will be discussed, agreed upon and implemented by the interested countries in a fully transparent and flexible manner, based on mutual interests.

4. The Black Sea Synergy will benefit from the European Neighbourhood Policy and other EU policies applied in the relationship with countries of the region. EU support to Black Sea regional cooperation is aimed at producing tangible results in a number of priority areas. This includes the development and interconnection of transport, energy and communication infrastructure, responding to increasing trade, investment, traffic and information flows as well as rapidly evolving transit needs. Ministers declared their intention to promote the dialogue between

energy producers, consumers and transit countries aimed at ensuring fair access to energy resources and markets, enhancing energy security and environmental sustainability. They will support regional transport cooperation with a view to improving efficiency, safety and security. Ministers agreed that the Black Sea Synergy offers a framework to improve coordination between relevant EU and regional policies as well as wide-ranging programmes such as the development of major Transnational transport axes, the Motorways of the Sea or the Black Sea Ring Highway.

5. The Synergy should contribute to better coordinating specific environmental programmes, notably those focusing on tasks relating to water quality. It should also invigorate the dialogue on Black Sea maritime policies and facilitate efforts to establish regional fisheries management cooperation in order to ensure sustainable use of Black Sea fishery resources. Black Sea regional cooperation should also provide a framework for building capabilities to cooperate in combating climate change and in preventing and managing natural and man-made disasters in the region. Black Sea countries and the European Union will develop region-wide activities to strengthen cooperation in the fields of migration, law enforcement and the fight against organised crime building on the activities of cooperation arrangements already in place, by ensuring added value and avoiding duplication. Increased EU engagement in Black Sea regional cooperation has the potential to bring benefits also in the fields of trade, science and technology, research, culture and education as well as employment and social affairs.

6. Ministers took note of the wish for a possible visa facilitation perspective and the role of enhanced mobility in promoting the development of trade and economic relations.

7. The Black Sea Synergy could benefit from Black Sea partnerships, involving various stakeholders from the EU and the wider Black Sea area.

8. Participants agreed that the Black Sea Synergy would be a useful means to strengthen the democracy and respect for human rights and to foster civil society.

9. Protracted conflicts impede cooperation activities. Therefore participants emphasized the need for their earliest peaceful settlement on the basis of the norms and principles of international law.

10. The Meeting took due regard of the importance of parliamentary activities in promoting regional cooperation.

11. Ministers welcomed the first steps of the Black Sea Cross-Border Cooperation Programme which supports civil society and local level cooperation in Black Sea coastal areas.

12. Participants stressed the need for proper funding of priority regional cooperation programmes. Co-financing should apply as a general rule. In this context, the regional activities of the International Financial Institutions, most notably the EBRD, the EIB and the BSTDB, could offer new possibilities along with financing coming from the EU and from countries of the Black Sea area.

13. The Ministers recognised the important role played by regional organisations and initiatives, particularly by the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). Ministers noted with satisfaction that the European Commission has obtained observer status in BSEC and has engaged in practical interaction with it in several fields. Black Sea Synergy will take due account of the work in BSEC and will at the same time remain open to all appropriate cooperation possibilities provided by other regional bodies and initiatives, including those in the Danube region, a key area to strengthen connections between the EU and the Black Sea countries.

14. Participants considered that this Black Sea Synergy Meeting is the beginning of a long-term regional cooperation endeavour offering new opportunities and increased stability and prosperity to citizens in the wider Black Sea area and the whole of Europe. Ministers expressed their gratitude

to Ukraine for the excellent preparation and organisation of the Meeting.

Kyiv, 14th February 2008

**Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign
Affairs of the Member States of the
Organization of the Black Sea Economic
Cooperation on a BSEC-EU
Enhanced Relationship
(Kyiv, 14 February 2008)**

We, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) – the Republic of Albania, the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Bulgaria, Georgia, the Hellenic Republic, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Serbia, the Republic of Turkey and Ukraine – met in Kyiv, on 14 February 2008. We discussed the perspectives for the development of a mutually beneficial cooperation between BSEC and the EU, respecting the interests of both sides.

Taking guidance from the political assessments and executive dispositions of the Declaration adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the BSEC Member States on the occasion of the BSEC Fifteenth Anniversary Summit held in Istanbul, on 25 June 2007, we reaffirm our commitment to the Organization and its Charter as an indispensable foundation for peace, stability, security and prosperity in the wider Black Sea area.

We consider BSEC-EU interaction as an integral part of overall European economic, scientific and environmental cooperation. Our aim is to achieve proper synergies by coordinating the efforts with various integration and cooperation formats, international organizations and institutions, in particular financial ones, acting in the BSEC area.

BSEC is an inclusive, treaty-based, full-fledged, project oriented regional economic organization, possessing mature institutional

structures, well established operational rules and procedures. We all share the conviction that our multilateral economic cooperation contributes to enhancing peace, stability, security and prosperity to the benefit of our region. The Organization has also contributed to developing a sense of regional ownership and identity among our peoples. We are committed to further consolidate its role as an active and reliable partner in international and regional affairs.

We believe that the earliest peaceful settlement of the existing protracted conflicts in the BSEC region, on the basis of the norms and principles of international law will contribute to the enhancement of regional cooperation.

The BSEC-EU interaction is a forward-looking and promising framework, which can contribute to shaping the foundations of an enhanced regional relationship.

BSEC continues to be committed to develop new legal instruments and mechanisms for multilateral economic cooperation in a regional format, which can effectively benefit the citizens of the area.

We believe that interaction between BSEC and the EU should further be institutionalized and result-oriented, through the identification of common tools and the development of synergies. It is necessary to undertake joint efforts to support development and cooperation in the wider Black Sea area, through various cooperation programmes and partnerships.

We also believe that the joint BSEC-EU action in the wider Black Sea area should be comprehensive and inclusive, so that its benefits encompass all BSEC Member States.

BSEC is looking for closer cooperation and coordination with the EU in the areas of mutual interest, ensuring complementarity, synergies and avoiding duplication of work.

We also express the wish to establish a BSEC-EU enhanced relationship, within which Ministerial Meetings in different formats could be held.

We invite the EU to join the efforts of BSEC in particular in the priority areas of the

development and interconnection of transport infrastructure in the region (Black Sea Ring Highway and development of the Motorways of the Sea of the BSEC region), in enhancing energy security and environmental sustainability in the region, in combating all forms of organized crime, terrorism, in preventing and managing natural and man-made disasters, in upgrading communication and information technologies in the region and in facilitating the movement of peoples, including representatives of the business communities and lorry drivers, between the EU and BSEC countries. BSEC is interested in using the EU experience in promoting regional cooperation *inter alia* through the creation of clusters with the view to unite efforts of industry, universities and research centers. With this aim, BSEC suggests to develop together with the EU a respective “road map” for cooperation and establish special ad hoc joint working groups for practical implementation. BSEC is also interested in starting talks at an expert level, to identify means and ways of cooperation in the areas of common interest.


We express our gratitude to the Government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the people of Ukraine for the warm hospitality and the excellent organization of this important Meeting, held back-to-back with the Ministerial Meeting for launching the Black Sea Synergy process.

**Speech by Benita Ferrero-Waldner
European Commissioner for External
Relations and European
Neighbourhood Policy on
“Black Sea Synergy: The EU’s
Approach to the Black Sea Region” at
the Black Sea Synergy
Ministerial Meeting
(Kyiv, 14 February 2008)**

Mr Chairman,

Ministers,

Dear Colleagues,



Ladies and Gentlemen,

First let me express my thanks to our Host and Co-chair of this launch meeting of the Black Sea Synergy. [President Yushchenko], I am grateful to you and your compatriots for your warm welcome and hospitality. Combined with the hard work of your officials over the last few months you have set the scene for what I am sure will be a productive meeting.

I have looked forward to this moment since the EU first adopted the proposal for Black Sea Synergy. We envisaged then a high level meeting of all of the political actors involved in shaping this region's future. So I am delighted that so many of its prominent politicians are gathered here, with your colleagues from the European Union, to set the Black Sea Synergy on its voyage.

With Bulgaria and Romania joining the EU just over one year ago, the EU is no longer an *external actor* in this region. Now we are irrevocably *part* of the region, with our future security and prosperity intimately bound up in its fortunes. It was a consciousness of our new presence on the shores of the Black Sea and our dual sense of responsibility and reliance which prompted us to propose the new co-operation we together launch today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The countries around the Black Sea's shores are all immensely rich in culture, history and artistic endeavour; as I have witnessed for myself on my travels. Only last week I was in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, and last year I visited Socchi, Istanbul and Sofia. I am certainly no stranger either to the beauty and cultural wealth of the region, or to its fractures and diversity.

That diversity can be a source of great strength – as the European Union has found. But only by cooperating together.

The EU will continue to develop its bilateral relations with countries through the European Neighbourhood Policy and other strategies. But nowadays countries face challenges which cannot be effectively tackled alone.

That is why the Black Sea Synergy sets out an agenda on issues of mutual concern: with the EU now fully engaged, we can work together to define joint projects and approaches for the future benefit of all.

That does not mean re-inventing the wheel: we do not want to duplicate what others are already doing, nor is there any desire to compete with ongoing initiatives. That is why we have turned to the Black Sea's regional organisations; particularly BSEC with its extensive membership and unique role in the region. Our objective is not to create new institutions but rather to build closer contacts with those already working in this area and see where our added value lies.

For that reason we have focused Black Sea Synergy on a number of areas, including:

Transport – with better coordination between Trans-European Networks and those across the Black Sea region;

Fisheries – looking at the sustainable use of Black Sea fishery resources;

The environment – with projects on climate change and water quality;

Cross-border cooperation – launching a programme with local authorities around the region;

And other areas like migration, law enforcement and the fight against organised crime.

I would like this meeting to highlight the priority fields where our work enjoys wide support and where coordinated action will bring tangible benefits to the citizens of every country in the region.

But we can be even more ambitious and I would like us also to consider **medium and long term targets** for future cooperation.

Black Sea Synergy would act as a flexible framework bringing together interested stakeholders to develop and implement activities linked to those targets. And there could be lead countries and /or regional organisations responsible for specific targets, guided, if necessary, by further Ministerial meetings on particular sectors.

We also look forward to other proposals like Black Sea Partnerships in specific sectors.

Dear friends,

Today's event will raise the profile of this region and focus political attention on the common challenges it shares. It will spur us to work together for the common good of all those living and working around the shores of the Black Sea. And it will, rightly, raise expectations among our citizens; which we must meet.

Let me thank you once again for your participation in this common endeavour and I look forward to working with you as we build this partnership together.

European Parliament Resolution on a Black Sea Regional Policy Approach (Brussels, 17 January 2008)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission's Communication entitled "Black Sea Synergy– A New Regional Cooperation Initiative" ([COM\(2007\)0160](#)),
- having regard to the Commission's Communication entitled "Regional cooperation in the Black Sea area: State of play, perspectives for EU action encouraging its further development" ([COM\(1997\)0597](#)),
- having regard to the Commission's Communication on strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy ([COM\(2006\)0726](#)),
- having regard to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Action Plans adopted with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, as well as to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) signed with those States and expiring in 2008 or 2009,
- having regard to the PCA establishing a partnership between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Russian Federation, of

the other part, which entered into force on 1 December 1997 and expired in 2007,

- having regard to Council Decision 2006/35/EC of 23 January 2006 on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the Accession Partnership with Turkey⁴ ("the Accession Partnership"),
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Turkey, Ukraine and the South Caucasus,
 - having regard to its resolution of 15 November 2007 on strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy⁵,
 - having regard to its resolution of 13 December 2007 on the shipping disasters in the Kerch Strait in the Black Sea and the subsequent oil pollution⁶,
 - having regard to its resolution of 17 January 2008 on a more effective EU policy for South Caucasus: from promises to actions⁷,
 - having regard to its resolution of 26 September 2007 entitled "Towards a common European foreign policy on energy"⁸,
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the opinions of the Committee on International Trade, the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, the Committee on Transport and Tourism and the Committee on Regional Development ([A6-0510/2007](#)),
- A. whereas the Black Sea region lies at the junction of Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East, characterised by close historical and cultural ties and great potential, but also immense diversities; whereas the region comprises EU Member States Bulgaria, Greece and Romania, the candidate country Turkey and ENP partners Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of


⁴ OJ L 22, 26.1.2006, p. 34.

⁵ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2007)0538.

⁶ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2007)0625

⁷ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0016

⁸ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2007)0413.



Moldova and Ukraine, as well as the Russian Federation, with whom the EU has agreed on a strategic partnership based on Four Common Spaces,

B. whereas, with the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU, the Black Sea has become, to some extent, the EU's internal sea and has therefore acquired a new dimension of strategic importance for the EU, leading to the multiplication of shared challenges and objectives, as well as to renewed opportunities for strengthened cooperation between the EU and the countries in the region, with a view to creating a genuine space of security, stability, democracy and prosperity,

C. whereas the options for cooperation in the development and management of synergies in the Black Sea region are to be defined against the background of a great number of existing policies, formats and approaches towards the region,

D. whereas the Commission proposed an initial strategy towards the Black Sea region in its above-mentioned 1997 communication on regional cooperation in the Black Sea area,

E. whereas the specific aspects of the EU's policy towards the South Caucasus area are covered in the above-mentioned resolution of 17 January 2008 on that subject,

1. Welcomes the Commission's Communication entitled "Black Sea Synergy – A New Regional Cooperation Initiative" and the aim of enhancing cooperation with and within the Black Sea region by supplementing the existing bilateral policies with a new regional approach; notes, in particular, that the energy security issues and the accession negotiations with Turkey, as well as the forthcoming expiry of the PCAs and the negotiations on their future, place regional cooperation in the Black Sea area among the top priorities of the Union's foreign policy agenda; considers that the future development of the Black Sea would benefit greatly from an independent Black Sea strategy in the long term;

2. Underlines that the Black Sea region needs a more coherent, sustainable and

strategic response, leading to the creation of a Black Sea policy, alongside the Northern Dimension Policy and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership;

3. Considers that, in order to adopt a coherent, effective and result-oriented regional policy approach, the Communication has to be followed by further consistent steps on the part of the EU to encourage a genuine regional dimension tailored to this area; is also concerned by the fact that the results of the Black Sea regional strategy pursued since 1997 have not been properly evaluated; calls on the Commission to prepare a thorough assessment of previous and ongoing activities and to present the results to Parliament;

4. Welcomes the intention of the Commission to provide for an initial evaluation of the Black Sea Synergy in 2008, and calls upon it to put forward concrete proposals for fostering regional cooperation and genuine partnership in the Black Sea area, based on the results of its evaluation and taking into account the recommendations contained in this and other relevant resolutions adopted by Parliament; encourages the Commission to use the experiences gained in the Northern Dimension when drafting any future review or extension of its Black Sea strategy;

5. Stresses that the Black Sea regional policy approach must be used neither to provide an alternative to EU membership nor to define the frontiers of the EU; considers, however, that the objectives specified herein should represent an integral and coherent part of the broader EU foreign policy towards the neighbouring countries and countries participating in the Black Sea regional strategy;

6. Believes that regional cooperation in the Black Sea region should involve the EU, ENP countries, candidate country Turkey and Russia as equal partners; believes that only by gradually creating a feeling among the Black Sea countries of shared responsibility for the region's common challenges, including security issues, will it be possible to fulfil the full potential of Europe's involvement in the region; calls on the

Council and the Commission to actively involve all Black Sea countries in the policy approach;

7. Considers that the new regional approach should be targeted at a number of priority areas for which the Commission should provide a detailed action plan envisaging concrete objectives, benchmarks and follow-up and constituting a basis for enhancing the EU's involvement in the region as well as intra-regional cooperation; underlines that the EU must concentrate on a limited set of priority objectives and avoid dispersion and duplication of efforts;

***Key priority fields of cooperation
Security challenges***

8. Underlines that the unresolved conflicts persisting in the Black Sea region constitute a major challenge to the stability and sustainable development of the region, as well as an important obstacle in the process of fostering regional cooperation; calls therefore for more active and comprehensive EU involvement in the ongoing efforts to resolve the conflicts, in accordance with international law and the principles of territorial integrity, and for a deeper engagement on the part of the EU in conflict management and peace-keeping operations; considers that the EU has a key role to play in contributing to the culture of understanding, dialogue and confidence-building in the region;

9. Takes note of the substantial military presence of Russia in the region, in the form of the Black Sea fleet, which is stationed in the Crimean port city of Sevastopol; points out that the 1997 agreement between Russia and Ukraine concerning the stationing of the Black Sea fleet expires in 2017; notes that this as yet unresolved matter has already created some friction between the Russian and Ukrainian governments; encourages the EU to engage in this strategically important issue and to work more closely with the governments of Russia and Ukraine;

10. Emphasises that the EU needs to define a stable set of priorities in the area of freedom, security and justice within the framework of the Black Sea Synergy, aimed at establishing

harmonisation and compatibility in entire policy areas;

11. Having regard to the high visa charges applied for some neighbouring countries, following the enlargement of the Schengen Area as of 21 December 2007, urges the Council and the Commission to review the visa fees and to lower them to an acceptable level for ordinary citizens of countries participating in the ENP or in a Strategic Partnership with the EU;

12. Recalls the need to address the challenges posed by transnational crime, trafficking and illegal migration, whilst fully respecting the non-refoulement principle; underlines that measures in this field must be coupled with appropriate measures to enhance mobility in order to stimulate people-to-people contacts and thereby spread European values of democracy, the rule of law and human rights; urges the Council and the Commission, therefore, to conclude visa-facilitation and readmission agreements with those Black Sea countries that do not yet enjoy them, as well as to promote mobility by all other possible means, including the signing of mobility partnerships with ENP countries; stresses, in particular, the need for efficient visa facilitation for local cross-border traffic and for specific population groups such as students, businessmen and civil society actors;

13. Stresses the importance of further developing cross-border and border management cooperation, with a view to attaining the objectives with regard to both security and fluidity of movement; considers that the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) provides important experience in tackling security challenges through multilateral cooperation, and believes that it should be further strengthened and applied as an example of border cooperation;

14. Stresses the need for in-depth analysis of the specific security situations and challenges in the various states in the Black Sea region; supports the proposal that Europol be given a mandate and resources to produce analytic work relating to the region, in particular in the field of migration;

Promotion of political stability and effective democracy

15. Considers that a new Black Sea policy approach cannot be limited to economic cooperation but should also aim at creating an area marked by sustainable democracy, good governance and the rule of law, and underlines, in particular, the importance of political and judicial reform and effective implementation of commitments; stresses that fostering respect for human rights, democracy and fundamental freedoms is one of the main pillars of the EU's external policy, and emphasises the need to mainstream those values respectively both in bilateral relations and in the regional approach, irrespective of the degree of willingness shown by partner governments; calls upon the European Union to address the issues of regional cooperation in these fields within the human rights dialogues and consultations with the Black Sea countries, as well as within multilateral fora; encourages the Commission to make full use of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and of the Black Sea Synergy in order to promote regional cooperation among civil societies;

16. Welcomes the initiative of creating a Black Sea Euroregion aimed at fostering regional cooperation through cooperation among regional and local actors; stresses the importance of bottom-up projects and of cross-border cooperation at local level in the process of building a genuine space of democracy and effective governance in the Black Sea area;

17. Stresses the crucial importance of establishing and developing good neighbourly relations among the countries of the Black Sea region and between those countries and their neighbours, based on mutual respect, territorial integrity, non-interference in each others' internal affairs and the prohibition of the use of force or threats to use force, as fundamental principles for fostering regional cooperation; underlines the significance of close dialogue with civil society and of intercultural dialogue in this field and calls upon the Commission to further promote such

dialogue, particularly in the context of the 2008 Year of Intercultural Dialogue, with a view to creating a culture of mutual tolerance, respect for diversity, and regional dialogue and cooperation;


Cooperation in the field of energy, transport and the environment

18. Notes the strategic importance of the Black Sea region as a production and transmission area for diversification and security of energy supply for the EU; calls on the Council and the Commission to urgently consider increasing their practical support for infrastructure projects of strategic importance; reiterates its support for the creation of new infrastructure and viable transport corridors diversifying both suppliers and routes, such as the trans-Caspian/trans-Black Sea energy corridor and the Nabucco, Constanța-Trieste and AMBO pipelines, as well as other planned gas and oil transit projects crossing the Black Sea and the INOGATE (Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe) and TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe - Caucasus - Asia) projects connecting the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions; calls for social and environmental impact assessments to analyse the impact of the construction of such new transit infrastructures;

19. Believes that the Black Sea Synergy should constitute an adequate framework for promoting market reforms in the region aimed at creating competitive, predictable and transparent energy markets;

20. Considers that regional coherence would greatly benefit from initiatives to enhance physical links between all Black Sea littoral states; believes that cooperation in the fields of transport and the environment should not be limited to energy issues but should provide a comprehensive approach taking into account the needs of the region; notes the plans to set up the Black Sea ring highway; stresses the importance of the Black Sea and of the Danube as strategic transportation routes in the region;

21. Emphasises the importance of the Danube as one of the main transport axes and economic arteries connecting the EU and the



Black Sea region; considers, therefore, that the sustainable development of the Danube and its economic potential to link the countries surrounding the Black Sea should be among the EU's priorities in the region; asks the Commission to come forward with a study exploring possible concrete initiatives in this respect, including environmental concerns; insists that, if full advantage is to be taken of the EU's access to the Black Sea, it will be vital to develop the harbour infrastructures at the EU's Black Sea ports (Burgas, Constanța, Mangalia and Varna) as well as those located at the Danube estuary, with a view to ensuring intermodal transport;

22. Is deeply concerned about the environmental situation in the Black Sea region, in particular that of the Black Sea, affected by uncontrolled pollution and aggravated by numerous ecological accidents, as well as that of the Danube and its delta; underlines the need for enhanced implementation of multilateral environmental agreements in the region and for the inclusion of an environmental evaluation in all regional projects, and calls for increased cooperation between the EU and the Black Sea countries in order to tackle the whole range of environmental challenges in the region;

23. Is particularly concerned about uncontrolled oil pollution and its impact on wildlife; stresses the need for cooperation going beyond the support provided by the Commission via its Monitoring and Information Centre, particularly in the field of prevention of oil spills, with a special focus on the reinforcement of maritime transport safety for tankers;

24. Draws attention to the Danube delta, which hosts unique habitats for species of flora and fauna; stresses the strong need for an environmental impact assessment of infrastructures such as the Bistraya channel between Romania and Ukraine;

25. Calls on the Commission to apply the approach of the DABLAS Task Force (for the Danube and the Black Sea) in order to resolve the environmental problems,

focussing not only on the Danube but also on the Dniester and Dnieper river basins;

Trade and economic cooperation

26. Points out the uneven, albeit strong, economic growth in the entire region, but draws attention to the fact that growth is more sustained in the oil and gas exporting countries; points to the fragility of the private sector in many countries bordering the Black Sea; stresses the importance of building a space of economic opportunities and prosperity in the Black Sea region for its population and trading partners; underlines the need to improve the investment climate, for both local and international companies, in particular by stepping up the fight against corruption and fraud, and to promote market economy reforms aimed at increasing competitiveness and economic attractiveness, creating diversified economies, and providing for sustainable growth, as well as social justice and coherence; encourages harmonisation and further liberalisation measures and supports the creation of a free trade area in accordance with WTO principles; believes that the EU, as a major economic partner of the Black Sea countries, has a leading role to play in promoting the above-mentioned goals and in encouraging the region to take the necessary steps;

27. Takes into account the significant role of coastal and maritime tourism as a major catalyst for the development of the Black Sea region in terms of trade and economic growth; stresses the need to further develop tourism infrastructure and to encourage diversification of tourism products, thus protecting traditional means of livelihood, making better use of natural resources (e.g. geothermal resources, which offer important business opportunities) and providing for improvement of the quality of life in the region; stresses that facilitation of visa regimes in the neighbourhood will encourage mobility and foster trade and economic activity; believes that the Black Sea Synergy should constitute an adequate framework for promoting the development of tourism in the Black Sea region;

28. Notes inter-regional initiatives such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway project;

believes that this initiative opens the way for better economic and political integration of that part of the world into the European and international economy and that it will contribute to economic and trade development in the region; stresses, however, that the project bypasses the existing and fully operative rail line in Armenia; urges the South Caucasus republics and Turkey to pursue effectively policies of regional economic integration and to refrain from any short-sighted and politically motivated regional energy and transportation projects which violate ENP principles of sound development;

Education, training and research

29. Underlines the importance of enhancing intercultural dialogue and calls upon the Commission to further promote it;

30. Stresses the need to facilitate people-to-people contacts by promoting cooperation in the fields of education, training and research via existing and available EU programmes (Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, Seventh Research Framework Programme); invites the EU and the Black Sea countries to step up their cooperation in these fields;

31. Underlines the importance of attracting researchers from the Black Sea countries to the EU, by simplifying procedures related to the granting of work permits, *inter alia* through the blue card system;

Institutional and financial aspects

32. Favours a leading role for the EU Member States of the region in promoting enhanced cooperation with and within the region; considers that Romania, Bulgaria and Greece, as EU Member States in the Black Sea region, can and should lead the way in this respect; underlines the special role to be played by these Member States in the transfer of expertise and know-how through the Twinning, TAIEX and Sigma programmes; believes that full use should be made of the EU's experience in promoting regional cooperation in other adjacent external spaces, in particular within the Northern Dimension, in order to exchange practices and lessons learnt;

33. Underlines the importance of Russia's and Turkey's positions in the Black Sea region for the purposes of promoting regional cooperation; considers it important for the success of the Black Sea regional cooperation to involve these countries in a constructive way, alongside all the other rim States;

34. Recalls that a number of regional cooperation mechanisms are already in place in the Black Sea area; underlines, therefore, the need for the EU and the Black Sea countries to coordinate activities and prevent duplication of effort; considers that strengthening the various regional organisations and initiatives, such as the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), the Black Sea Forum for Partnership and Dialogue, the GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development and other sectoral organisations, according to their specific expertise, and strengthening cooperation with them, possibly in the framework of a new structure, could provide an appropriate framework for creating synergies; believes that the political dimension of the dialogue and cooperation with and within the Black Sea region should also be further developed;

35. Welcomes the fact that the Commission has recently obtained BSEC observer status and takes note of the existing relations between the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC; considers it important to further encourage the parliamentary dimension of the cooperation between the European Parliament and the parliaments of the Black Sea countries;

36. Stresses the need to develop cooperation in the Black Sea Region also at the non-governmental level; in this regard, calls on the Commission to support the setting-up of an NGO platform for the Black Sea with the aim of creating a framework for exchanges between the civil societies of the region, to enhance awareness of the common problems and to contribute to the implementation and monitoring of the EU's policies for the region;

37. Calls for a rational use of Community financial instruments through better coordination of the ENPI, the Structural Funds and the pre-accession funds available to the region; calls on the Commission, acting in cooperation with the beneficiary States, to lay down a general reporting system before the resources are disbursed, with a view to monitoring and assessing the extent to which the use of those resources is sustainable, efficient, and in accordance with general EU policy objectives;

38. Approves the doubling of the financial resources made available under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) for the funding of cross-border projects; calls for the principles governing the Structural Funds, in particular partnership, sustainability, efficiency, non-discrimination and decentralisation, to be applied to the use of these financial resources; calls on the Commission to inform Parliament of the implementation of these funds and of progress made, by means of short bi-annual reports;

39. Calls on the Commission to make the decentralised financial instrument Small Project Funds available for people-to-people projects in the area of cross-border cooperation and to make special efforts to encourage the use of that instrument;

40. Stresses the need to reinforce capacity-building among local and regional stakeholders in the Black Sea region as regards programming and project preparation and implementation, in order to ensure efficient management of Community financial instruments;

41. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, to the governments and parliaments of the Member States and to the governments and parliaments of all Black Sea countries.

European Parliament Resolution on a More Effective EU Policy for the South Caucasus: From Promises to Actions (Brussels, 17 January 2008)

The European Parliament ,

– having regard to its previous resolutions on the South Caucasus and, in particular, its resolution of 26 February 2004 with a European Parliament recommendation to the

Council on EU policy towards the South Caucasus⁽¹⁾ ,

– having regard to the Commission's communication entitled "Black Sea Synergy – A New Regional Cooperation Initiative" (COM(2007)0160),

– having regard to the Commission's Communication on strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy (COM(2006)0726),

– having regard to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Action Plans adopted with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia,

– having regard to the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), closely linked to the implementation of the jointly adopted Action Plans, which replaces technical assistance hitherto provided by TACIS and MEDA,

– having regard to the Commission's Communication entitled "An Energy Policy for Europe" (COM(2007)0001),

– having regard to the Commission's Conference on the European Neighbourhood Policy held on 3 September 2007,

– having regard to its resolution of 15 November 2007 on strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy⁽²⁾ ,

– having regard to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's Recommendation 1771 (2006) and Resolution 1525 (2006) on the establishment of a Stability Pact for the South Caucasus,

- having regard to its resolution of 26 September 2007 on towards a common European foreign policy on energy(3) ,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 January 2008 on a Black Sea Regional Policy Approach(4) ,
- having regard to the Presidency Conclusions of the European Councils of 14-15 December 2006 and 21-22 June 2007, and to the German Presidency Progress Report entitled "Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy" of 15 June 2007,
- having regard to the Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Security and Development of 19-20 November 2007 and the EU's commitment to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security,
- having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements concluded with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia,
- having regard to the Final Statement and Recommendations of the ninth meeting of the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee (PCC) of 30 January 2007,
- having regard to the Final Statement and Recommendations of the eighth meeting of the EU-Azerbaijan PCC of 12 September 2007,
- having regard to the Final Statement and Recommendations of the ninth meeting of the EU-Georgia PCC of 26 June 2007,
- having regard to the recent parliamentary elections in Armenia and Azerbaijan and to the OSCE/ODIHR observation reports,
- having regard to UN Security Council Resolution 1781 (2007) on the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict and extension of the mandate of the UN Observer Mission in Georgia,
- having regard to Council Presidency Declarations 14818/07 on the current situation in Georgia and 14809/07 on the conviction of Eynulla Fatullayev in Azerbaijan,

- having regard to the Baku Initiative for the development of energy cooperation and to the Memorandum of Understanding between the EU and Azerbaijan on strategic partnership in the energy field, signed in Brussels on 7 November 2006,
- having regard to the EU's commitment to promote the achievement of the UN's Millennium Development Goals and to the European Consensus on Development(5) ,
- having regard to the European Security Strategy entitled "A Secure Europe in a Better World", approved by the European Council on 12 December 2003,
- having regard to the monitoring reports of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe,
- having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the opinion of the Committee on International Trade (A6-0516/2007),

A. whereas at the General Affairs Council of 26 February 2001 the EU stated its willingness to play a more active political role in the South Caucasus region, to look for ways in which to support efforts aimed at the prevention and resolution of conflicts in the region and to participate in post-conflict rehabilitation,

B. whereas the launch of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway will open a new window between the South Caucasus region, Turkey and Western Europe but is also strengthening the isolation of Armenia and thus breaching the ENP objectives; whereas, nevertheless, the recommendations of the High-Level Group on Transport will be implemented and the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) axis remains the main trans-national axis for the Caucasus, connecting all the countries in the region,

C. whereas the extension of the ENP to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia marks an important step forward in the Union's engagement with the region, creating the necessary premises for proactive EU

involvement in the South Caucasus and providing the countries of the region with opportunities for closer cooperation with the EU; whereas more incentives are needed to motivate Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to advance on the path of reforms,

D. whereas the ENP is based on shared values and effective implementation of political, economic and institutional reforms, with the stated aim of creating an area of friendly neighbours with strong democracies based on functional market economies and the rule of law,

E. whereas the ENP needs to be developed in order to achieve a better and more efficient EU policy towards the region and to give the EU the role of security and stability actor that it could play; whereas the EU needs to develop a clear profile and a stronger presence in the region,

F. whereas the inclusion of the South Caucasus countries in the ENP entails increased responsibilities and commitments on the part of those countries also; whereas good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation are fundamental elements of the ENP,

G. whereas a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict – a conflict which exacerbates relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan –, and of Georgia's internal conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, is essential for stability in the EU neighbourhood, as well as for the economic and social development of the South Caucasus region,

H. whereas the question of the further internationalisation of the unresolved post-Soviet conflicts must be one of the key issues of EU-Russia relations, in order to deal more effectively with the problems of the common neighbouring countries,

I. whereas the significance of the region for the positive involvement of the EU is not only linked to its geographical position as a transit area for energy supplies from Central Asia to Europe but is also based on the mutual interest, shared by all concerned, in the development of the region with a view to enhancing democracy, prosperity and the

rule of law and thus creating a viable framework for regional and inter-regional development and cooperation in the South Caucasus area,

J. whereas the region has become an arena for competition between strategic interests of several big geopolitical players; whereas the Individual Partnership Action Plans which all three countries have with NATO make the alliance a new player in the region,

K. whereas dialogue and coordination between the EU, Russia and the United States could help to promote democracy, to enhance energy security and to strengthen regional security in the South Caucasus region,


L. whereas Georgia and Armenia have experienced strong economic growth in recent years and Azerbaijan ranks among the world's fastest growing economies, with a GNP increase of 34.5% in 2006, mainly due to its gas and oil reserves; whereas, regardless of these growth rates, the societies in the three countries are characterised by levels of poverty and unemployment which are still very high, limited access to basic social services, low income and the unequal distribution of that income,

M. whereas a destabilising arms race is under way in the South Caucasus, characterised by a build-up of military arsenals at an unprecedented rate, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in the framework of the ENP

1. Welcomes the inclusion of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in the ENP and the endorsement of bilateral ENP Action Plans by the relevant Cooperation Councils on 14

November 2006, and expresses its support for the ongoing efforts towards their implementation, which should include all stakeholders in the process;

2. Stresses that a policy approach towards the three countries of the South Caucasus should not ignore the three states' particular characteristics; supports the inbuilt differentiation in the application of the ENP policy towards the countries concerned and underlines the need to strengthen the EU's relations with those countries according to



their individual merits in the implementation of their relevant ENP Action Plans;

3. Highlights the geopolitical situation of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan in relation to Russia, Iran and Turkey and the growing interest of other economic powers, such as

Russia, the United States and China, in this area; considers it of the utmost importance, therefore, that cooperation with the South Caucasus be given the highest priority, not least in matters relating to energy;

4. Reaffirms that the principal objectives of the EU in the region are to encourage the development of the South Caucasus countries into open, peaceful, secure and stable states, able to contribute to good neighbourly relations in the region and to regional stability and ready to share European values and to develop institutional and legal interoperability among themselves and with the EU; in order to attain these objectives, calls on the EU to develop a regional policy for the South Caucasus to be implemented jointly with the countries in the region, complemented by individual bilateral policies;

5. Underlines the fact that the ENP was designed to transcend the dividing lines in Europe through gradual extension of the area of democracy, prosperity and security; calls on the EU and the countries of the South Caucasus to take advantage, by means of twinning, secondment and other available assistance programmes, of the extensive knowledge and experience gained by the new Member States in reforming their societies and economies in the EU integration process, in particular as regards strengthening the border guard and customs authorities and developing regional cooperation between them;

6. Stresses that the ENP reviews and funding must be used to promote institution building, respect for human rights, the rule of law, democratisation and regional cooperation; reaffirms the need for further firm steps on the part of the EU to encourage genuine regional cooperation and integration; calls on the Commission to report regularly on the

progress of the regional cooperation process and to adapt its policies and instruments accordingly; looks forward to increasingly constructive relations being developed between the EU and the different stakeholders, particularly civil society, in the partner countries, in order to make the ENP process more dynamic and transparent;

7. Notes that, due to the rapid and strong growth of its GNP, Azerbaijan has become a donor of aid, while international donors have noticeably reduced their activity in the country; proposes that the EU should focus on transfer of know-how and best practices within the framework of Twinning, TAIEX and Sigma programmes (under the ENPI);

8. Considers that trade policy is a key component in ensuring political stability and economic development leading to a reduction in poverty in the South Caucasus, and that it is crucial for further integration between the EU and the South Caucasus; stresses that, in respect of trade policy, the social dimension must be considered;

9. Supports the Commission's initiative to undertake a feasibility study to evaluate the possibility of a free-trade agreement with Georgia and Armenia; believes that such an agreement will benefit all parties; in the meantime, calls on the Commission and the Council to implement measures to ensure that Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan benefit as much as possible from the Generalized System of Preferences, while underlining the importance of Azerbaijani membership of the WTO for further enhancing bilateral trade relations; encourages the Azerbaijani authorities to tackle remaining impediments to its accession to the WTO, such as high customs tariffs, lack of transparency and failure to enforce commercial laws, corruption and failure to enforce intellectual property rights, and calls on the Commission to further support Azerbaijan in its process of accession to the WTO;

10. Notes that Georgia has been under massive pressure as a result of the Russian economic embargo, which was enforced over a year ago, closing traditional markets for Georgian goods and therefore depriving a

number of citizens of their livelihoods; stresses that the speedy conclusion of a free-trade agreement with Georgia is equally important in strengthening EU-Georgia relations and relieving the country of the consequences of the Russian embargo;

11. Stresses that all three states will have to continue their efforts to reduce poverty and adhere to the principle of sustainable development; suggests adopting efficient policies to reduce social polarisation, as well as to ensure access to social security systems; calls on the Commission to further support the three countries in strengthening their national capabilities to improve and implement poverty reduction policies;

12. Believes that the ENP provides an excellent framework for regional and sub-regional cooperation, with a view to creating a genuine space of security, democracy and stability both in the South Caucasus and in the Black Sea region; takes the view that a differentiated bilateral approach towards the three countries of the South Caucasus cannot do without a global multilateral dimension entailing the development of regional cooperation; therefore:

- attaches particular importance to the active participation and inclusion of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in the process for the implementation of the Black Sea Synergy and related regional projects;

- advocates the deepening of regular political dialogue between the EU and Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia;

- welcomes the fact that Georgia and Armenia align themselves with most of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy declarations and positions, and supports the decision to involve Azerbaijan in the same way;

- urges the three countries not to hinder or veto EU-funded cross-border programmes and projects aimed at resuming dialogue, building confidence between the parties and tackling regional problems;

- calls for more effective cooperation between the three countries within the


framework of the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus;

- calls for enhanced cooperation in the areas of freedom, security and justice, in particular in border management, migration and asylum, the fight against organised crime, trafficking in human beings and drugs, illegal immigration, terrorism and money laundering;

- calls on the Commission to coordinate and support actions of the Member States already involved in regional conflict resolution; Democracy, human rights and the rule of law

13. Commends the internal political and institutional reforms undertaken by Armenia following the constitutional reform and in the context of implementation of the ENP

Action Plan; encourages the Armenian authorities to continue on this path and to make further progress in strengthening democratic structures, the rule of law and protection of human rights; calls, in particular, for further efforts to be made in establishing an independent judiciary, in promoting reforms in the police, the civil service and local government, in fighting corruption and in creating a vibrant civil society; notes the statement of the International Election Observation Mission that the parliamentary elections held in May 2007 were largely in accordance with international commitments; trusts that the Armenian authorities will work closely with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe to address remaining issues in order to further improve the standards already attained and fully to guarantee the free and fair conduct of the presidential elections to be held on 19 February 2008; encourages, generally, the establishment of a constructive dialogue between the government and the opposition with a view to strengthening pluralism as the core element of democracy; further calls on the Armenian authorities to investigate allegations of violence and ill-treatment in police custody and penitentiary institutions and corruption and breaches of freedom of expression,




14. Reiterates its serious concern about the deterioration of the human rights situation and media freedom in Azerbaijan; calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to ensure freedom of the media; welcomes, in this regard, the presidential pardon of 28 December 2007 as a result of which six journalists have been released from prison, and calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to release immediately all journalists remaining in prison, to stop harassment of journalists, particularly in the form of abusive use of criminal libel laws, and to announce a moratorium on further use of criminal libel laws as steps in demonstrating their commitment to freedom of expression; expects the Azerbaijani authorities to follow the Council of Europe Venice Commission recommendations with a view to ensuring freedom of assembly and an absence of restrictions on the activities of the political parties with a view to the elections in 2008, and to ensure that OSCE standards are fully complied with; also calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to prevent police violence and to investigate all allegations of ill-treatment in custody; reiterates the EU's readiness to assist Azerbaijan in carrying out reforms related to respect for human rights and democracy;

15. Notes the wide-ranging reforms undertaken by the Georgian Government following the Rose Revolution; encourages further progress to be made in pluralistic governance and dialogue between the government and the opposition, the rule of law and compliance with human rights obligations, particularly as regards independence of the judiciary, zero-tolerance of police violence, criminal justice reforms and the improvement of detention conditions; calls on the Georgian authorities to respect property rights, freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, minority rights in compliance with the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and freedom of the media; expects Georgia to fulfil ENP Action Plan objectives and Council of Europe recommendations with a view to the long-term sustainability of democratic governance, with particular regard to respect for pluralism and opposition, built-in

mechanisms of checks and balances and institutional reform;

16. Reiterates its continuing support for Georgia's efforts to introduce political and economic reforms and to strengthen its democratic institutions, including the reform of the Electoral Code, thereby building a peaceful and prosperous Georgia that can contribute to stability both in the region and in the rest of Europe; expresses deep concern over the political developments in Georgia in November 2007, which escalated into a violent police crackdown on peaceful demonstrations, the closing-down of independent media outlets and the declaration of the state of emergency; expresses its satisfaction that the overall assessment by the International Election Observation Mission was that the presidential elections held on 5 January 2008 were in essence consistent with most OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards for democratic elections; considers that, although significant challenges were revealed which need to be addressed urgently, this election was the first genuinely competitive presidential election enabling the Georgian people to express their political choice; calls on all political forces in Georgia to strive for a democratic political culture, where political opponents are respected and where a constructive dialogue is aimed at supporting and consolidating Georgia's fragile democratic institutions; calls on the Georgian authorities to address the shortcomings noted in the preliminary report by the International Election Observation Mission before the parliamentary elections to be held in the spring of 2008;

17. Welcomes the peaceful conduct of the presidential elections on 5 January 2008 and regards this as another step forward on the road towards the further democratisation of Georgian society and the building and consolidating of democratic institutions in Georgia; expects the newly elected president to take the necessary steps for constructive dialogue with the opposition to this end; nevertheless, expresses its concern regarding the overall conduct of the election campaign, which took place in a highly polarised environment marked by a lack of trust and



pervasive allegations of violations and by the deliberate overlapping of the former president's state activities with his electoral campaign which contributed to an inequitable campaign environment; calls on the Georgia authorities to address adequately and urgently all the complaints about the electoral process; urges the Georgian authorities to take due account of the remarks of the international observers with a view to resolving all the problems pointed out, and to prepare adequately and thoroughly for the upcoming general elections; calls on the opposition forces to act responsibly, respecting the election results, and to engage constructively in the political debate in the Georgian democratic institutions;

18. Stresses that the clear commitment by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms is of paramount importance for determining their future relations with the EU; expects those countries to fulfil ENP Action Plan objectives and Council of Europe recommendations in this regard; asks the Commission to negotiate the setting-up of human rights sub-committees with all three countries;

19. Expects the authorities of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to ensure freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of the media ahead of their respective elections in 2008; underlines that the ability of those countries to allow fair and balanced access to both public and private media and to conduct their elections in accordance with international standards is vital to the further deepening of their relations with the EU;

20. Welcomes the decision to appoint Poland to mediate on behalf of the EU between the Georgian Government and opposition media in the run-up to the January 2008 elections; considers that the engagement of the new Member States, which have close cultural and historical ties in the region, is of great significance;

21. Underscores the importance of supporting and empowering civil society and developing people-to-people contacts in

promoting democracy and the rule of law; encourages the Commission to make full use of the opportunities offered by the European

Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights for, inter alia, monitoring the implementation of the ENP; stresses that the ENP process, and particularly the monitoring of its implementation, must be open to cooperation and consultation with civil society; urges the Commission to set an example by establishing concrete mechanisms for civil society consultation; underlines the importance of ensuring that the funds are distributed fairly without politically motivated state interference; calls on the Commission also to develop guidelines for local and regional authorities on their specific role in implementing the ENP Action Plans;

22. Stresses the importance of cooperation in the area of freedom of movement across the borders of the EU and its neighbours; calls on the Commission and the Council to make the EU-Georgia Subcommittee on Justice, Liberty and Security operational as soon as possible and to take the necessary steps for the launch of negotiations on readmission and visa facilitation agreements between the EU and Georgia and for the signature of a mobility partnership agreement with the EU, while underlining the negative effects of delay on the settlement of internal conflicts within Georgia and noting the difficulties caused by the decision of the Russian authorities to grant Russian passports to people living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia; supports the commencement of negotiations on the agreements with Armenia and Azerbaijan; encourages Member States to enhance cooperation in order to improve the efficiency of the consular services in the South Caucasus countries and to accelerate the creation of Common Visa Application Centres; supports the exploration of supplementary initiatives within the development of a global approach to migration in eastern and south-eastern Europe;

23. Calls on the Commission also to encourage from a financial standpoint the presence of European NGOs in Armenia,

Azerbaijan and Georgia, in order to spread their knowledge and experience in creating an organised civil society;

24. Calls on the Commission to make every effort in order to bring together NGOs and representatives of the civil societies of the three countries of the South Caucasus so as to facilitate dialogue, foster mutual understanding and deal thoroughly with the problems of the region; calls on the authorities of the relevant countries not to hinder any such initiative;

25. Underlines the fact that the facilitation of movement of persons is linked to secure borders, and welcomes the Commission's initiative to promote regional cooperation in the South Caucasus in the field of integrated border management; stresses the need to facilitate efficiently the visa requirements for local border traffic; realises that goodwill on both sides is a prerequisite for cooperation along the full length of Georgia's border with Russia; emphasises the importance of budget and revenues transparency in ensuring that government spending is accountable to ordinary citizens;

26. Calls on all three countries to step up their efforts in the fight against corruption and in the establishment of a favourable investment and business climate; stresses the importance of budget transparency aimed at guaranteeing the government's accountability for public expenditure; underlines that the development of property rights is fundamental to the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises and to sustainable economic development; encourages the promotion of market economy reforms aimed at increasing competitiveness and consolidating the private sector; supports harmonisation and further intensification of liberalisation measures in line with WTO principles; underlines the importance of ensuring that economic reforms are accompanied by adequate social measures;

27. Calls on the authorities of all three countries to ensure that measures taken in the fight against corruption are not used to political ends and that investigations,

prosecutions and trials are conducted in a fair and transparent manner;

28. Notes that the unresolved post-Soviet conflicts and the insecurity provoked by them have determined the increase in military spending in the states of the region, thereby negatively affecting their economic and social development; therefore, calls on the states in the region to stop the increase in their military spending; Peaceful resolution of conflicts

29. Considers that finding a peaceful solution to the unresolved post-Soviet conflicts is the key to achieving political stability and economic development in the South Caucasus, as well as in an extended regional context; underlines the fact that the EU has an important role to play in contributing to the culture of dialogue and understanding in the region and in ensuring the implementation of the above-mentioned UN Security Council

Resolution 1325 (2000); advocates the use of cross-border programmes and dialogue among civil societies as tools for conflict transformation and confidence-building across the division lines; welcomes especially the Commission's efforts to give aid and spread information to Abkhazia and South Ossetia; supports the initiative by the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus, Mr Peter Semneby, to open Information Offices in both regions; asks the Commission and Mr Semneby to extend the same kind of aid and information dissemination to Nagorno-Karabakh;

30. Rejects all attempts by foreign powers aimed at creating exclusive spheres of influence; calls for constructive engagement with all countries in the shared neighbourhood and urges Russia to not to oppose any engagement by the EU in conflict management and peace-keeping operations in the South Caucasus;

31. Notes that the contradiction between the principles of self-determination and territorial integrity contributes to the perpetuation of the unresolved post-Soviet conflicts in the South Caucasus region; considers that this problem can be overcome

only through negotiations on the basis of the principles enshrined in the UN Charter and in the Helsinki Final Act and within the framework of regional integration; notes that this process cannot take place without the support of the international community, and calls upon the EU to initiate measures to that end; considers, moreover, that the improvement in inter-ethnic relations, on the basis of European standards, and the enhancement of minorities' rights in such a way as to strengthen the civic cohesion of the states in the South Caucasus are essential in bringing about a negotiated solution to the conflicts in the region;

32. Reiterates its unconditional support for the territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognised borders of Georgia, and supports the continuous efforts made by the Georgian authorities to achieve a settlement of its internal conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia; regrets, however, the continuing aggressive rhetoric employed by the parties in respect of the disputes and supports the appeal by the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, for a redoubling of efforts to avoid action that could lead to a renewal of hostilities in Abkhazia; encourages the parties to make full use of dialogue and negotiation formats in order to achieve a final settlement of the conflict in South Ossetia; calls upon the de facto authorities to provide secure conditions for the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and to respect the inalienability of property rights in the conflict zones in accordance with the above-mentioned UN Security Council 1781

(2007); underscores that finding satisfactory solutions to the fundamental human rights issues, such as the return of IDPs and their property and the proper investigation by all sides of war crimes and cases of missing persons, will play a key role in the achievement of any lasting settlement; calls on all parties to return to the negotiating table; welcomes the first high-level meeting between the Georgian and Abkhaz officials, which took place recently after a long pause;


33. Takes the view that further delay in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

will not benefit either of the sides involved but will jeopardise regional stability and hamper regional and economic progress; reiterates its respect and support for the territorial integrity and internationally recognised borders of Azerbaijan, as well as for the right to self-determination, in accordance with the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act; urgently calls on Armenia and Azerbaijan to seize any opportunities for the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; reiterates its strong support for the OSCE Minsk Group but regrets the lack of any substantial progress in the negotiations; calls on the parties to apply the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, in particular allowing the return to their homes in safety and dignity of all refugees and IDPs; warns against any militant and provocative rhetoric that could undermine the negotiation process;

34. Regrets that efforts to bring the three countries of the region closer together are hampered by the persistence of unresolved post-Soviet conflicts caused by territorial claims and separatism; underlines that conflict zones are often used as safe havens for organised crime, money laundering, drug trafficking and weapons smuggling;

35. Reminds the authorities concerned that refugees and IDPs should not be used as tools in conflicts; calls for decisive action to improve the living conditions and social situation of IDPs before they are actually granted their human right to return home;

36. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to continue to provide financial support for the efforts of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to deal with the situation of refugees and displaced persons, by helping to renovate buildings and build roads, water and electricity supply infrastructure, hospitals and schools, so as to enable these communities to be more effectively integrated, while facilitating the development of the regions in which they live, without forgetting the local population, who are often likewise living below the poverty line; stresses the importance of tackling the problem of the numerous landmines resulting from the Nagorno-



Karabakh conflict, which are still injuring and, occasionally, killing people;

37. Calls on key actors in the region to play a constructive role in resolving unresolved post-Soviet conflicts in the region and to take steps to normalise its relations with neighbours; reiterates its call upon Turkey to engage in serious and intensive efforts for the resolution of outstanding disputes with all its neighbours, in accordance with the UN Charter, relevant UN Security Council resolutions and other relevant international conventions, and including a frank and open discussion on past events; reiterates its call on the Turkish and Armenian Governments to start the process of reconciliation for the present and the past, and calls on the Commission to facilitate this process while taking advantage of the regional cooperation realised within the ENP and Black Sea Synergy policy; calls on the Commission and the Council to address the opening of the Turkish border with Armenia with the authorities of those two countries;

38. Suggests the setting-up of a 3+3 Conference on security and cooperation in the South Caucasus, comprising on the one hand the three South Caucasus states and on the other hand the EU, the United States and Russia, to discuss the issue of security and regional cooperation in the South Caucasus, focusing attention on the creation of the proper context in which to resolve the unresolved post-Soviet conflicts in the region;

Energy and transport cooperation

39. Attaches great significance to the opening of the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, and stresses the importance of the Trans-Caspian energy corridor projects, which would contribute to economic and trade development in the region and would enhance the safety and security and diversification of energy supplies and transit systems from Azerbaijan and the Caspian basin to the EU market; however, strongly requests the countries involved and the Commission to include Armenia in the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline and in the Trans-Caspian energy corridor projects, in

compliance with the regional cooperation objective promoted by the ENP;

40. Stresses the importance of deepening the EU-Azerbaijani energy partnership as envisaged in the above-mentioned Memorandum of Understanding of 7 November 2006, and welcomes the readiness of the Azerbaijani and Georgian Governments to further play an active role in the promotion of market-based energy supply and transit diversification in the region, thus substantially contributing to European energy security;

41. Welcomes the Report of the above-mentioned High-Level Group on Transport, entitled "Network for Peace and Development", and the Communication from the Commission entitled "Extension of the major trans-European transport axes to the neighbouring countries" ([COM\(2007\)0032](#)); reiterates its support for the creation of new infrastructure and viable transport corridors diversifying both suppliers and routes, such as the Trans-Caspian/trans-Black Sea energy corridor and the Nabucco pipeline, as well as the INOGATE and TRACECA projects connecting the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions;

42. Takes note of the emergence of a new reality in which climate change and security of supply are elements of paramount importance; recognises that generating diversity of supply is vital and can only be attained through enhanced cooperation with neighbouring states, especially those in the South Caucasus and Central Asian regions, and encourages regional and inter-regional development; considers that the realisation of the energy diversification projects should be one of the priorities of the strengthened ENP and calls for enhanced support for improvement of the investment climate and the regulatory framework, based on the principles of the Energy Charter Treaty, in the energy sectors of the producer and transit countries;

43. Notes that Azerbaijan's gas and oil reserves are estimated to be exploitable for the next fifteen to twenty years; notes that, according to recent estimates, the oil fields under the Caspian Sea contain around 14

billion barrels and gas resources amount to around

850 to 1370 billion cubic metres; acknowledges that efforts must be made in order for the country to avoid the pitfalls of the "resource curse"; underlines, therefore, the importance of sustainable alternatives, from both a political and an economic standpoint; calls on the Azerbaijani Government to take the necessary steps to put in place the requisite legislative and operational framework in order to enable EU aid in the area of renewables and energy efficiency to be put to best use;

44. Welcomes with interest the Commission's proposal to draw up a viability study on a possible "Neighbourhood Energy Agreement" and, to that end, encourages the ENP partner countries to respect international law and the commitments entered into on the world markets;

45. Supports the efforts made by the Armenian Government towards the early decommissioning of the current unit of the Medzamor nuclear power plant and towards finding viable alternative solutions for energy supply, as requested by the EU, but expresses its concern about the government's decision to build a new unit in the same power plant, situated as it is in a seismic zone, and encourages the Armenian authorities to find alternative solutions for energy supply;

46. Recommends that energy cooperation should also take into consideration the countries' own energy needs and benefits, notably in terms of access to energy; calls on the Commission to ensure that energy projects financed by official development assistance under the ENPI have a direct impact on poverty reduction and benefit the local population; calls on the Commission to strengthen its support for the three countries' efforts to combat climate change and explore concrete solutions addressing inefficient energy production and consumption patterns, including through transfer of technologies;

47. Notes inter-regional initiatives such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway project;

believes that this initiative opens the way for a better economic and political integration of that part of the world into the European and international economy and that it will contribute to economic and trade development in the region; stresses, however, that the project bypasses the existing and fully operative rail line in Armenia; urges the South Caucasus republics and Turkey to pursue effectively policies of regional economic integration and to refrain from any short-sighted and politically motivated regional energy and transportation projects which violate ENP principles of sound development;

Other remarks


48. Reiterates its call for the regular reports by the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus, including the final comprehensive report presented at the end of the mission, to be made available to Parliament;

49. Welcomes the Commission decision of 10 May 2007 to upgrade its delegation in Yerevan and to open a delegation in Baku by the end of 2007; calls on the Commission to ensure that those delegations become operational without further delay;

50. Considers that strengthening the visibility of the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus is highly important in order to improve communication of the EU's approach to the respective countries and their citizens; considers that the active inclusion of civil society is of crucial importance in this respect;

51. Calls on the Commission and the Council, on the basis of the individual achievements of a particular country, to consider new enhanced agreements with the countries concerned;

52. Calls on the parliaments of the respective countries to strengthen the representation of the parliamentary opposition in their delegations to the PCCs, and supports an increase in regional parliamentary cooperation, including the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the South Caucasus Parliamentary Initiative;



53. Stresses the need to use existing multilateral organisations to strengthen interaction between the European Union and the South Caucasus countries;

54. Reaffirms the need for coordination of the EU institutions with other bilateral and multilateral actors, so as to ensure consistency between the Action Plans and the commitments made to the Council of Europe, the OSCE, NATO and the UN;

55. Underlines the importance of the South Caucasus region for the EU and the need for the implementation of the various ENP Action Plans to be closely followed by the Parliament;

56. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, to the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, to the governments of Turkey, the United States and the Russian Federation, and to the UN Secretary-General.

(1) OJ C 98 E, 23.4.2004, p. 193.

(2) Texts adopted, [P6_TA\(2007\)0538](#).

(3) Texts adopted, [P6_TA\(2007\)0413](#).

(4) Texts adopted, [P6_TA\(2008\)0017](#).

(5) OJ C 46, 24.2.2006, p. 1.

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NEWS and EVENTS

From the ICBSS



The Kick-off meeting of the EU co-funded project **"S&T International Cooperation Network for Eastern European and Central Asian countries"** (IncoNet EECA) was held in Athens on 16-18 January 2008.

The IncoNet EECA is a project coordinated by the ICBSS and funded through the 7th Framework Programme for Research of the European Community (FP7). The IncoNet EECA was launched on 1 January 2008 and its duration will be four years.

With a total budget of approximately 3.5 million €, the IncoNet EECA envisages several activities aiming at an enhanced policy dialogue and cooperation between EECA countries and the EU in science and technology and at an increased participation of researchers from these countries in FP7.

To ensure the international character of this project a large consortium of 23 prominent institutes from 21 EU and EECA countries has been formed.

For further information on the IncoNet EECA project please consult the project website <http://www.inco-eeca.net/> or contact George Bonas (IncoNet EECA coordinator) at gbonas@icbss.org and Dimitrios Filippidis (Project Manager) at dfilippidis@icbss.org

THIRD ICBSS ANNUAL CONFERENCE, ATHENS 2008

The Third ICBSS Annual Conference will take place in Athens on Wednesday, 25 June 2008 on the occasion of the BSEC Day. The Conference will focus on **"The Wider Black Sea Area and the Great Energy Game"**, an ever-present hot topic in the region and at global scale. Guest speakers will include high-ranking officials, scholars and professionals involved in the energy game, from the wider Black Sea region, the EU and the US inter alia.

For further information contact Panagiota Paraskevopoulou at paraskevopoulou@icbss.org
All additional information will be published on the [ICBSS' website](#)

2008 ICBSS INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

on

“The Wider Black Sea Area in Perspective”

Island of Kalymnos, Greece

1-6 July 2008

Who?

The International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) is a non-profit think tank promoting multilateral cooperation among the countries of the wider Black Sea region and with their international partners. With 10 years of research and advocacy experience the ICBSS has solid expertise in this area. Find out more at www.icbss.org

What?

Up to 50 participants will attend a four-day intensive course consisting of lectures and study groups, with related reading material provided. The participants will have the unique opportunity to gain insights into a wide range of issues related to Black Sea regional cooperation, such as security, energy, and economic development presented by prominent scholars, experts and policymakers. The language of the Symposium will be English. For detailed information on the programme see www.icbss.org

Why?

We have launched the International Symposium to provide a forum for study and dialogue in a multicultural and interdisciplinary environment for young professionals (22-35 years old), such as policy-makers, academics, journalists, diplomats, Members of Parliament and researchers (post docs and PhD candidates) primarily from the countries of the wider Black Sea area, EU member states, the United States and Central Asia.

Where?

On the island of Kalymnos, Dodecanese, Greece

When?

1-6 July 2008

How?

If you are a young professional fluent in English, we look forward to receiving your application. The registration fee is 200 Euro with some scholarships available. You will find all necessary information on www.icbss.org

REGISTRATION OPEN UNTIL 15 APRIL!!!

Applications and any queries should be sent by email to symposium@icbss.org or by fax to +30 210 324 2244

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AEGEAN

From the Black Sea Research Network

INITIATIVE FOR PEACEBUILDING (IfP)

In 2007 ELIAMEP joined the EU funded Initiative for Peacebuilding (IfP). This project aims at developing and promoting international knowledge and expertise in the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. IfP is a thematic project, exploring a number of cross-cutting issues and emphasizing the inclusion of those affected by conflict in influencing national and international policy debates and ensuring a stronger link between policy and practice.

For more information about this project, please consult the project website <http://www.initiativeforpeacebuilding.eu/> or contact Dr. Thanos Dokos (thanosdokos@eliamep.gr) and Dr. Ruby Gropas (ruby@eliamep.gr)

CLIMATE CHANGE AND HUMAN SECURITY (CCHS)

The Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in the context of Greece's presidency of the Human Security Network for 2007/8 took the initiative to appoint ELIAMEP in coordinating the development of four policy studies with regard to climate change effects in vulnerable groups. The studies were assigned in October 2007 to the following highly accredited organizations:

- a. The Institute for Environment and Human Security of the United Nations University (UNU-EHS) located in Bonn (Germany).
- b. The Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) settled in New York (US).
- c. The Innocenti Research Center of UNICEF based in Florence (Italy)
- d. The Climate Change Research Group (CCRG) of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

The findings of the studies are anticipated to provide institutional measures for the empowerment of administrative bodies, socio-economic tools for the enhancement of market driven approaches in small scaling level, promotion of funding mechanisms aiming at alleviating poverty and strengthening the information and assessments mainly for low income citizens.

ELIAMEP will receive the final studies until 15th April 2008 for the editing and binding of an integrated policy paper which will be presented in a major Conference held in Athens within the annual meeting of Human Security Network in May 2008. The policy paper will be presented to highly ranked officers, experts, NGO representatives and other relevant stakeholders as a useful guideline for the aiding of vulnerable groups with the appropriate instruments and measures.

Duration: 1 October 2007 - 31 June 2008.

Project Coordinator: Dr. Thanos Dokos, Director, ELIAMEP,

Contact

Dr. Thanos Dokos (thanosdokos@eliamep.gr), Director, ELIAMEP

Dr. Xenarios Stefanos (xenarios@eliamep.gr), Research Fellow, ELIAMEP

HALKI INTERNATIONAL SEMINARS 2008:

REGIONAL FLASHPOINTS AND TRANSATLANTIC POLICIES

Dodecanese island of Halki (next to Rhodes), 25-29 June 2008.

This year's Halki International Seminars will focus on the role of the transatlantic institutions in helping local stakeholders address security challenges in the Middle East, the Black Sea and Southeastern Europe.

Discussions will concentrate on assessing current transatlantic strategies and drafting future policies for the stabilization of turbulent regions and the resolution of conflicts. The seminar format, as is always the case with our annual Halki International Seminars, will be highly interactive and will include break-out working groups and roundtable discussions.

Call for Participants: Applications are welcome from policy-makers, academics, journalists, diplomats, members of parliament and young researchers (post-docs and PhD candidates).

Call for Papers: Papers are invited from researchers (particularly from post-docs and PhD candidates in an advanced stage of their research)

Deadline for applications: 18 April 2008

For more information please consult ELIAMEP's website
<http://www.eliamep.gr/eliamep/content/home.aspx>

THE EU AND ITS NEIGHBOURS

On 3-5 July 2008 the Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy and the Bertelsmann Foundation will organize an international conference on "The EU and its Neighbours". A group of around 40 leading thinkers and policy-makers from EU and non-EU countries will explore the deficiencies and future prospects of the European Union's relationship to the states and regions in its direct neighbourhood. Participation is upon invitation only.

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ICBSS BLACK SEA MONITOR INDEX

Issue 6, December 2007

- ¾ An Opportunity for Parliamentary Cooperation, by Dimitrios Triantaphyllou
- ¾ Communication from the Commission on a Strong European Neighbourhood Policy [COM (2007) 774 final] (Brussels, 5 December 2007)
- ¾ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the ECOSOC and the Committee of the Regions on an Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union [COM (2007) 575 final] (Brussels, 10 November 2007)
- ¾ Statement of the Ministers Responsible for Science and Technology of the BSEC Member States (Istanbul, 31 October 2007)
- ¾ 20th EU-Russia Summit Press Release (Mafra, 26 October 2007)
- ¾ Ankara Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (Ankara, 25 October 2007)
- ¾ EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Council 8th Meeting (Luxembourg, 16 October 2007)
- ¾ EU-Armenia Cooperation Council 8th Meeting (Luxembourg, 16 October 2007)
- ¾ EU-Georgia Cooperation Council 8th Meeting (Luxembourg, 16 October 2007)
- ¾ EU-Ukraine Summit, Joint Statement (Kyiv, 14 September 2007)
- ¾ Statement of the Participants of the Meeting of the Undersecretaries and the Heads of Delegations of the Ministries of Education of the BSEC Member States (Istanbul, 27-28 August 2007)

Issue 5, July 2007

- ¾ Energy Security and the Black Sea, by Dimitrios Triantaphyllou
- ¾ Joint Declaration on Cooperation in the Sphere of Transport in the BSEC Region on the Occasion of the 15th Anniversary of BSEC (Istanbul, 5 July 2007)
- ¾ Statement of the Ministers for Culture of the Member States of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) (Sounion, 4 July 2007)
- ¾ Agreement on Cooperation between the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (Istanbul, 28 June 2007)
- ¾ Declaration on the Occasion of the Fifteenth Anniversary Summit of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (Istanbul, 25 June 2007)
- ¾ Special Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States Resolutions (Istanbul, 25 June 2007)
- ¾ Council of the European Union, Presidency Conclusions (Brussels, 21-22 June 2007)
- ¾ General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) Council Conclusions on Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy (Brussels, 18-19 June 2007)
- ¾ General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC), Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy Presidency Progress Report (Brussels, 18-19 June 2007)
- ¾ General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC), The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership (Brussels, 18-19 June 2007)