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EU-NATO concerted approach to the Western Balkans

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In the light of the experience being gained with Operation *Concordia*, the EU and NATO deepened their cooperation and dialogue on crisis management in the Western Balkans region. Already in 2002, at any rate, the Union had manifested its interest in taking over from NATO – within the framework of the ‘Berlin-plus’ arrangements – the follow-on operation to SFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

FRAMEWORK FOR AN ENHANCED NATO-EU DIALOGUE AND A CONCERTED APPROACH ON SECURITY AND STABILITY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

I. From conflict prevention to consolidating stability

1. NATO and the EU share a common vision for the future of the Western Balkans: self-sustaining stability based on democratic and effective government structures and a viable free market economy, leading to further rapprochement towards European and Euro-Atlantic structures.
2. Over many years the policy of the International Community towards the Western Balkans has been one of conflict prevention and enhancing stability. The strategic partnership between the EU and NATO in crisis management and the close co-operation with other international organisations, *inter alia* the UN, OSCE and CoE, has been key to bringing an end to conflict and stabilising the region. Peace has been brokered, refugees are returning and life for many has returned to normal. Democratic governments are in place and free and fair elections are becoming the norm throughout the region.
3. While much progress has been made, the task is not yet complete. The Western Balkans are still characterised by inter-ethnic tensions including cross-border effects. Economies are only slowly recovering and the pace of reforms needs to be accelerated. Organised crime and corruption bedevil governments and communities. Despite significant recent successes, some prominent indicted war criminals are still at liberty supported by criminal networks. The EU and NATO stress the obligation of full co-operation with ICTY, which remains an essential element for progress towards the EU and NATO. The political scene and state structures are still marred by the self-serving aspirations of criminals and extremists, as the assassination of late Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic depressingly illustrated. Whereas the responsibility remains with these countries, the EU and NATO are determined, within their respective framework, to continue assisting them in their own efforts to overcome these problems.

4. There is still much to be done before the countries of the region can realise their ambition of integration into the EU and NATO. Local ownership is key in this respect, as the necessary decisions towards this end can only be taken by the countries themselves.

5. The changes in the political and security situation in the region have consequences for activities led by the EU and NATO, causing both organisations to adapt within their respective frameworks. In addition to its ongoing peace-support operations, NATO's comprehensive outreach will continue to include, but need not be limited to, the Partnership for Peace Programme, the Membership Action Plan and the provision of assistance in the field of defence reforms. The EU has a fully integrated approach through the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) and will continue to play a key role in areas related, but not limited, to security, *inter alia* through the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).

II. A framework for an enhanced dialogue

6. The EU and NATO partnership has been key to bringing an end to conflict and stabilizing the region. NATO's effective military presence and the EU's increased engagement have contributed to strengthening regional security and continue to do so. NATO and EU activities are mutually reinforcing as illustrated by the close co-operation of both organisations over the last few years. The smooth transition from NATO's Operation "Allied Harmony" in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to Operation "Concordia", the first EU-led military operation with recourse to NATO assets and capabilities, is the latest illustration of the closeness of that co-operation, further consolidating the concerted approach between NATO and the EU.

7. Regional co-operation is a key element of the Stabilisation and Association Process, of Partnership for Peace and of the Stability Pact and will further enhance rapprochement with the European Union and NATO within their respective frameworks.

III. Core areas for a concerted approach on security and stability in the region

Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management

8. Despite the successes of the international community in addressing recent crisis situations such as Southern Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, unresolved issues and the need to further consolidate stability mean that there will still be a requirement for the presence of a military crisis management capability able to both pre-

vent and contain future crises. Some returning IDPs will still need security protection, particularly in Kosovo. A safe environment in support of local efforts to put in place the appropriate conditions for returns is crucial.

9. The EU and NATO will continue to consult closely on the situation in the Western Balkans and, when crises develop, will work together to resolve the situation and restore stability. In those cases where crises continue, NATO and the EU will exchange relevant information and keep each other regularly informed at all levels, including with regard to possible military options, in accordance with the agreements reached between the two organisations.

Defence and Security Sector Reform

10. Defence and security sector reform remains a key component for the countries of the region to move closer towards the EU and NATO. The EU's work in this field, notably on police reform and governance issues, on one hand, and NATO's work in this field, notably Partnership for Peace and Membership Action Plan activities, on the other, have already changed the security climate for the better and this work will continue to evolve. NATO and the EU will continue to work together in developing relevant new activities to meet the region's needs.

Strengthening Rule of Law

11. There is an urgent need for the countries of the region to focus more on Justice and Home Affairs issues, notably strengthening the rule of law and the judicial system with a particular focus on combating organised crime, corruption, illegal migration and trafficking in human beings, as well as building an effective and accountable police force and a robust and independent judiciary. Full co-operation with ICTY is also essential for the consolidation of well-functioning democratic institutions. Work on tackling organised crime is intensifying and commitments subscribed to in the framework of the Areas for Priority Action (APAs) outlined at the London Conference on Organised Crime need to be urgently implemented. Appropriate instruments must be in place to tackle crime and corruption at the very highest levels in society.

The Threat of Terrorism

12. Both NATO and the EU should help the countries of the region prevent any potential threat of terrorism in the region and enhance consultations on that matter. This will

involve assisting the countries in developing appropriate legislation, combating the financing of terrorist organisations, and developing police capacity to deter and combat terrorism.

Border Security and Management

13. Our goal is to ensure secure borders to European Union standards and close co-operation between border control police in the region, as well as with the military during the transitional period in specific parts of the region. The EU, NATO, the OSCE and the Stability Pact have been working jointly, particularly in the context of the May 2003 Ohrid Conference, to develop a coherent and concerted approach to border security and management in the Western Balkans, especially in the parts of the region where in exceptional cases and for temporary reasons military units are deployed.

Arms Control and Removal of Small Arms

14. Arms control is an essential instrument of stabilising the region. Small arms are widely available and the focus should continue on locating illegal weapons caches, removing weapons from circulation and disrupting their trafficking throughout the region. NATO and the EU will continue to consider mutually reinforcing measures and targeted programmes in this field, including by other international organisations.

IV. Ensuring close co-operation

15. The EU and NATO will continue to meet regularly at all levels, including making optimal use of existing consultation mechanisms (NAC/PSC, MC/EUMC, PCG/PMG) and, where appropriate, exchange documents. Security matters in the Western Balkans, including their respective advisory roles, should be a subject of regular information exchange and mutual briefings by both organisations. Meetings could also involve other organisations (e.g. the UN, the OSCE and the Stability Pact) when appropriate. Visits to the region, in particular by NATO SG Lord Robertson and HR/SG Dr Solana, should be concerted where possible. Joint statements by both Secretary-Generals on current security developments could also be considered.

Within this framework, NATO and the EU will continue to explore the scope for further initiatives.