

**2nd CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PARLIAMENTARY  
COMMITTEES OF STATES PARTICIPATING IN THE STABILISATION AND  
ASSOCIATION PROCESS OF SOUTH-EAST EUROPE**

**Zagreb, 5 – 6 March 2006**

**JOINT STATEMENT**

The second Conference of the European Integration Parliamentary Committees of the States Participating in the Stabilisation and Association Process of the South East Europe (COSAP) was organised in Zagreb, upon the invitation of the Croatian Parliament whose President Vladimir Šeks addressed the participants. The meeting was attended by a number of special guests, notably deputies from the European Parliament, House of Lords of the British Parliament, the European Commission, the Stability Pact for South-East Europe, and the Assembly of Kosovo, as defined by the UNSC Resolution 1244.

All participants in the Stabilisation and Association Process have achieved considerable progress in their relations with the European Union since the first COSAP meeting held in Sarajevo, 16-18 June 2005. Croatia has started the accession negotiations. Macedonia has been granted a candidate status. Albania has initialled the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Serbia and Montenegro have started their respective negotiations on the Stabilisation and Association Agreements.

COSAP agreed that the continuation of the EU's enlargement process represents a historic responsibility for the unification of the continent. Despite the difficulties with the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty and taking into account the EU's absorption capacity, COSAP members reiterated that clear and unequivocal official policy decisions and statements on further enlargements coming from the EU institutions are indispensable for encouragement and motivation of all stakeholders in the SAP countries in moving their EU-oriented reforms agendas forward. COSAP estimates that the Commission's 2005 Enlargement Strategy paper is a step in the right direction and looks forward for further debate on keeping the EU perspective of the SAP Countries prior to the European Council in June 2006.

In line with the Thessaloniki Summit commitments in 2003, it was recalled that all SAP countries have a clear perspective of EU membership, which is the driving force for carrying out the demanding reform processes. This perspective should not be diminished or brought into question neither on the member states nor at the EU level. COSAP reiterated the need for adequate allocation of financial pre-accession assistance for the SAP countries in the context of the ongoing negotiations on the Inter-institutional Agreement regarding the Financial Perspective 2007-2013. Economic and social development of the SAP countries has been pointed out as a precondition for overall endeavours towards meeting the EU accession criteria. In that context, recent proposals for the EU Financial perspective 2007-2013 has been assessed as falling short of addressing development and harmonisation needs of the SAP countries.

The intensification of co-operation between COSAC and COSAP was identified as an important aspect of strengthening the role of National Parliaments, especially the

European Integration Committees, in the framework of the overall activities aimed towards the integration of countries of South East Europe into the EU. COSAP called for the establishment of regular dialogue and meetings with COSAC, including the issues of the future of Europe and developing common strategy on communicating the enlargement policy to citizens.

The co-operation of the National Parliaments of the SAP countries with the European Parliament through activities of the Joint Parliamentary Committees was assessed as highly valuable part of institutional dialogue for the continuous evaluation and scrutiny of the bilateral relations of each SAP country with the EU. Political and economic situation in each of the SAP countries was discussed as well as the general pace of the EU-oriented reforms.

The participants positively commented Commission's Communication "The Western Balkan on the road to the EU" in particular regarding the facilitation of visa requirements for the citizens of the SAP countries. The participants call upon EU member states to fulfil their commitments necessary for the more flexible visa regime with respect to three elements: liberalisation, expenses and developing dignified visa procedures. COSAP called all relevant government of the SAP countries to intensify their efforts and to take necessary measures in order to qualify for the Schengen – white list.

COSAP supported the idea of further strengthening of trade liberalisation in the region based on the agreements reached within the Stability Pact, that include enlarging and modifying the existing CEFTA Agreement, together with an immediate inclusion of all participants in the Pan-Euro-Mediterranean diagonal cumulating of origin. It also reaffirmed its attachment to further strengthening of regional co-operation.