South-Eastern Europe: stability pact, stabilisation and association agreements

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The Council presented a report examining the stabilisation and association process. This revealed in particular that: - the stabilisation and association process represented the European Union’s commitment to contribute to peace, democracy and prosperity in South-Eastern Europe; - the regional approach to the stabilisation and association process was based on certain elements including, according to the Council, the credible prospect of potential EU membership once the relevant conditions had been met and the need to re-establish normal mutual relations between border regions and adopt a flexible approach enabling each country to move ahead at its own pace. This flexibility would be balanced by a common set of political and economic conditions so as to maintain the integrity of the EU’s overall policy towards the region; - the stabilisation and association process represented an overall framework in which preferential trade concessions, an assistance programme and a new contractual relationship should assist each country to progress, at its own pace, towards the prospect of EU accession. This process was based on one essential condition which was respect for democracy, reconciliation and regional cooperation. Hence, conditionality, as a policy addressing the region as a whole, was the cement of the stabilisation and association process.