# Former Yugoslavia: prospects for developping regional cooperation

1996/2076(COS) - 15/05/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Adopting the report by Mr Daniel COHN-BENDIT (V, D), the European Parliament voted in favour of a regional approach to relations between the European Union and the countries of south-eastern Europe. However, this approach needed to engulf the countries of the former Yugoslavia, Macedonia and all the bordering countries. The regional approach needed to be placed once again in a wider political context which took account of strategic interests and peace in the zone and called for the intervention of the CFSP. In particular, the European Parliament proposed: 1) a "Conference for peace, democracy, sustainable development and stability in south-eastern Europe" which would be convened every two years under the aegis of the European Union and would contribute towards stability in the region. Certain conditions would need to be met in order to attend: - observance of borders; - maintenance of good neighbourly relations; - respect for the freedom to worship, human rights and minorities; - free movement of persons; - guaranteed freedom of expression and fundamental democratic rights; - clarification of cases of litigation concerning ownership; - the reduction in arms to the lowest possible level; - joint responsibility for economic and ecological equilibrium in the region. In return, the European Union would implement an ambitious, long-term programme of economic intervention to promote the restoration of peace. Convinced that a multilateral framework is essential to political dialogue, the European Parliament planned to implement a "regional stability pact for peace and development"; 2) the consolidation of Bosnia as a sovereign state: Parliament considered that any regional initiative for the benefit of south-eastern Europe depended upon the restoration of this country as an independent state. In particular it felt that regional cooperation between zones of Bosnia- Herzegovina and neighbouring states should be stopped in areas which came within the sole jurisdiction of the state of Bosnia (e.g. foreign and customs policy). It therefore called for reconstruction programmes which were designed to unify the disparate elements of the state: - construction of a single telephone and telecommunications network for the whole of Bosnia; - construction of a rail/road link from Sarajevo to Zagreb via Banja Luka and from Sarajevo to Dubrovnik via etc.; - transformation of Bosnia into a free trade area with no internal frontiers; - creation of a national airspace between the main towns of Bosnia. At the same time, it called for the creation of a "Foundation for democracy" to help implement social, democratic, cultural and civil structures in Bosnia, mainly in the form of support for the independent media, training for journalists, support from NGOs, cooperation between universities, support for the economy, management training for SMEs and the development of multi-ethnic European schools which provided objective history lessons and separate religious instruction; 3) the definition of political conditions: reiterating its opinion that closer contractual relations between the European Union and Serbia-Montenegro, Croatia and Bosnia depended on compliance with the terms of the Dayton agreement, it objected to any foreign policy (be it international or European) which would cause ethnic tension to erupt into open conflict, which was why the regional approach recommended by the Commission in its document appeared to be in keeping with its wish to see peace restored. Supporting the Commission's proposal not to conclude any agreement with these countries which did not contain clauses on democracy and respect for human rights, it called for: - Serbia to resolve its problem with Kosovo; - Croatia to develop its internal democracy; - Bosnia to operate its institutions on a non-ethnic basis which guaranteed pluralism; - these states to hand wanted persons over to the international court in the Hague; - Macedonia to undertake to continue to respect the rights of minorities in the country, in particular by allowing the Albanian minority to teach and learn its language and preserve its culture. The main aim was to combat secessionist trends and to convince former warring factions to cooperate, the role of the European Union being to encourage them to do so, which is why the European Parliament reiterated its proposal to institute the delegations of the ECMM (European Community Monitoring Mission) in order to encourage reconciliation. This instrument could become an embryonic "European military and civilian peace corps" by enlarging it with qualified civilian staff; 4) a symbolic gesture towards the young people of Bosnia, by organizing a pop music festival during the summer of 1998. This concert would be funded

by the European Union under the aegis of the Presidents of the Parliament, the Commission and the Council and would bring young people of all ethnic origins together. Along the same lines, it hoped that new cross-border cooperation would be organized in the fields of culture and education and called for support for partnerships between towns and universities modelled on the "Conference of mayors of south-eastern Europe".