14 – 20 February 2003

During the past week activities at the EU were dominated by the Iraq issue:

Joint position on Iraq adopted by the "15" – the "13" concur (18/2/2003)
The 15 EU heads of state and government reached a common position on the issue of Iraq at the extraordinary meeting of the European Council in Brussels on Monday, 17 February 2003. The 13 acceding and candidate countries concurred with the Council's conclusions. The 13 countries were briefed on Tuesday by the President of the Council, Prime Minister Costas Simitis, jointly with European Commission President Romano Prodi and the EU High Representative for the CFSP Javier Solana.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL
17 February, 2003

The European Council held an extraordinary meeting to discuss the crisis over Iraq. Its members also met with the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and the President of the European Parliament, Pat Cox. We reaffirm the conclusions of the GAERC of 27 January and the terms of the public demarche of 4 February 2003 to Iraq which remain valid.

The way the unfolding of the situation in Iraq will be handled will have an important impact on the world in the next decades. In particular, we are determined to deal effectively with the threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

We are committed to the United Nations remaining at the centre of the international order. We recognise that the primary responsibility for dealing with Iraqi disarmament lies with the Security Council. We pledge our full support to the Council in discharging its responsibilities.

The Union's objective for Iraq remains full and effective disarmament in accordance with the relevant UNSC resolutions, in particular resolution 1441. We want to achieve this peacefully. It is clear that this is what the people of Europe want.

War is not inevitable. Force should be used only as a last resort. It is for the Iraqi regime to end this crisis by complying with the demands of the Security Council.

We reiterate our full support for the ongoing work of the UN inspectors. They must be given the time and resources that the UN Security Council believes they need. However, inspections cannot continue indefinitely in the absence of full Iraqi cooperation. This must include the provision of all the additional and specific information on the issues that have been raised in the inspectors' reports.

Baghdad should have no illusions: it must disarm and cooperate immediately and fully. Iraq has a final opportunity to resolve the crisis peacefully. The Iraqi regime alone will be responsible for the consequences if it continues to flout the will of the international community and does not take this last chance.

We recognise that the unity and firmness of the international community, as expressed in the unanimous adoption of resolution 1441, and the military build-up have been essential in obtaining the return of the inspectors. These factors will remain essential if we are to achieve the full cooperation we seek.

We will work with the Arab countries and The League of Arab Nations. We will encourage them, separately and jointly, to bring home to Saddam Hussein the extreme danger of miscalculation of the situation and the need for full compliance with resolution 1441. We support Turkey's regional initiatives with the neighbours of Iraq and Egypt.

In this regional context, the European Union reiterates its firm belief in the need to invigorate the peace process in the Middle East and to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We continue to support early implementation of the roadmap endorsed by the Quartet. Terror and violence must end. So must settlement activity. Palestinian reforms must be speeded up and, in this respect, President Arafat's statement that he will appoint a Prime Minister is a welcome step in the right direction.

The unity of the international community is vital in dealing with these problems. We are committed to working with all our partners, especially the United States, for the disarmament of Iraq, for peace and stability in the region and for a decent future for all its people.

For more on this issue please refer to http://www.eu2003.gr/en/articles/2003/2/18/1973/, and for President Romano Prodi's press conference in Brussels, 17th February 2002, http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=SPEECH/03/83|0|RAPID&lg=EN;

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