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### Council Conclusions - Kosovo

The Council is appalled by the human tragedy inflicted upon the population of Kosovo by the criminal and barbaric acts being perpetrated by the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbia.

In the face of extreme and criminally irresponsible policies and repeated violations of UNSC Resolutions, the use of severest measures including military action, has been both necessary and warranted. The North Atlantic Alliance is taking action against military targets in the FRY in order to put an end to the humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo. The EU emphasises that the responsibility for the armed conflict which is now taking place lies entirely with President Milosevic and his regime, who deliberately worked to destroy the chances of a diplomatic settlement which others strove so hard, and so exhaustively, to bring about. All those who planned, authorised and executed the brutal campaign of forced deportation, torture and murder should be held personally accountable and be brought to justice before the ICTY.

The Council recalled its conclusions of 25 January and 21 February, including on the strengthening of economic sanctions.

President Milosevic knows what he has to do:

- ensure a verifiable stop to all military action and the immediate ending of the killing;
- ensure the withdrawal from Kosovo of the military, police and paramilitary forces;
- agree to the stationing of an international military peacekeeping presence;
- agree to the unconditional return of all deportees and unhindered access to them by humanitarian aid organisations;
- provide credible assurance of his willingness to work on the basis of the Rambouillet agreement in the establishment of a political framework agreement for Kosovo in conformity with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The EU will not accept the success of a policy of deportation and destruction of a people for brutal nationalistic purposes.

The Council is deeply concerned about the conditions of displaced persons forced to live in the open within Kosovo. While they remain within the borders of the FRY their humanitarian needs are the responsibility of President Milosevic whom we hold to account for their survival. We deplore the recent closure of the FRY borders with Albania and Macedonia to the refugees. It is just as unacceptable to compel the refugees by force to remain in Kosovo as it is to deport them.

The European Union fully supports the regional refugee concept of the UNHCR as the lead agency to accommodate and assist deportees close to their home, allowing them to return to their places of origin as soon as possible. At the same time, it recognises the need to make the overwhelming task on the ground manageable by providing effective protection as extensively as possible within the region.

The Council recognises that it might also for humanitarian reasons and to avoid destabilising individual host countries in the region of origin, prove necessary in the future to afford displaced persons protection and assistance outside their region of origin on a temporary basis. Any such humanitarian evacuations out of neighbouring area must be based on the voluntary choice of the refugees to be temporarily relocated. In this context, the principle of family unity should also be applied.

In dealing with the consequences of the brutal and criminal deportation of hundreds of thousands of people, active regional solidarity and effective regional cooperation are paramount. In line with its solidarity and in addition to the substantial assistance already provided, the European Union will continue to assist the most affected countries of the region to counter the destabilising effects of the flow of deportees. The Council welcomes the communication by the Commission of 7 April to this effect and urges the speedy implementation of this assistance package for neighbouring governments, in particular in Albania, FYROM and Montenegro. This assistance amounting to up to 250 MEURO involves the mobilisation of the reserves of the Community budget for emergency assistance and includes up to 150 MEURO for the EU humanitarian effort for the victims of the Kosovo crisis and up to 100 MEURO in the form of refugee-related support. The Council welcomes the intention of the Commission to work in close coordination with other donors including IFIs to maximise the efficiency of this specific and conditional assistance.

The European Union and its Member States are working with the International Financial Institutions to alleviate the exceptional burdens of the countries most affected, inter alia through macro-economic support.

The European Union remains gravely concerned about the repercussions of the deportee exodus from Kosovo on the stability of the region as a whole.



A political solution to the Kosovo crisis must be embedded in a determined effort geared towards stabilising the region as a whole. South Eastern Europe needs a Stability Pact opening the door to a long term political and economic stabilisation process. Such a broad based strategy could take advantage of existing regional initiatives.

Taking account of the good progress made in the cooperation agreement context the Council invites the European Commission to report, in the context of the regional approach, on the upgrading of the EC's contractual relations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia including the option of an Association Agreement. The European Union welcomes the efforts of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to alleviate the plight of the deportees in the country and urges it to intensify these, to ensure humane conditions for all those suffering in this crisis. The EU stressed the obligation of all governments concerned to undertake such transfers of refugees or deportees only in full cooperation with the UNHCR.

The EU notes that the progress in stabilisation and development in Albania will contribute to the further enhancement of EU Albania relations, including programmes towards a future upgrading of contractual relations. The European Union warmly welcomes Albania's stated readiness to accept, in addition to the huge numbers already admitted, additional deportees currently in FYROM and at FYROM's borders. The European Union will give technical and financial advice and assistance to aid Albania as much as possible.

The European Union underlines its concern over the situation in the Republic of Montenegro. It reconfirms its full support for the democratically elected Government of President Milo Djukanovic, as well as its readiness to help Montenegro in coping with the flow of deportees. A part of the package is to be directed to Montenegro for humanitarian and budgetary aid. Any attempt by Belgrade to undermine the democratically elected government of Montenegro will have the most serious consequences.