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**SUMMIT OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT  
OF SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES  
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Mr. Prime Minister,      Dear Colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to be in Antalya at the Second Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of South East European Countries and to extend my thanks to our hosts for their gracious hospitality.

I am really delighted that, following our historic First Summit Meeting in Crete last November, the Summit of the Heads of State and Government of South East European Countries is now a permanent fixture on our Agenda.

The promotion of stability, prosperity and good neighbourliness in South Eastern Europe, to the benefit of the entire region, is one of the fundamental aims of Greece's foreign policy. Due to its geographical location, economic development and international affiliations, my country is able and willing to work together with its neighbours in order to support their European orientation.

Security in Europe as a whole cannot be guaranteed without sustained economic development and mature democratic institutions in South Eastern Europe. During the present transition phase, the complex political, economic and historical background of our region requires a novel and daring approach. Nation-states have been critically undermined by either ethnic strife or political crisis and by the absence of

civil society.

Ethnic and religious differences brought to the fore issues such as autonomy, self-determination and minorities rights, that were either ignored or suppressed by the previous regimes. The protracted war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and now the situation in Kosovo should have persuaded most of the people that violence, arbitrary partition and ethnic cleansing do not deliver lasting peace. On the contrary, they nourish hatred and conflict and impede coexistence and cooperation. Dialogue, respect for ethnic, religious and cultural communities, groups and minorities and protection of their rights, are the remedy.

A comprehensive stabilisation policy in our area should, thus, be based on certain fundamental principles: respect for the territorial integrity of states and the inviolability of existing borders, according to the UN Charter and the OSCE, non-interference in internal affairs, refraining from the threat or the use of force. Equally important is the peaceful settlement of disputes between countries in the region through constructive efforts, including recourse to the International Court of Justice, in accordance with the generally recognised norms of international relations, international law and relevant international practices. Finally, discouragement of nationalist and irredentist tendencies and the application of uniform criteria for the protection of all minorities on the basis of internationally accepted norms, must be an integral part of our policies.

Greece, the only country in South Eastern Europe, which is both a NATO and EU member, has a crucial role to play in promoting these noble goals. The successful integration of the South Eastern area into European and Euro-Atlantic structures is of strategic importance to Greece. Thus, Greece will be part of the same family of countries with all her northern neighbours, for the first time since the Second World War. Furthermore, economic integration of the South

East European states will greatly contribute to the well being and prosperity of the area and of Europe as a whole.

The development of good bilateral relations is essential but does not suffice for stability and good neighbourly relations in our sensitive area. Hence, Greece has, also, actively promoted multilateral cooperation. The Crete Summit gathered together around the same table all the leaders of South East European countries, with positive results. In addition, there are today a number of regional cooperation schemes and patterns, such as the European Union's Royaumont Process on Stability and Good-Neighbourliness, the US-sponsored South East European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. The existence of these numerous initiatives is a point of strength. Different interests and aims can be accommodated in an appropriate framework, featuring flexibility and efficiency, on a mutually beneficial basis.

However, we must not rest on these successes. On the contrary, we must work together to promote a climate of confidence and trust. We must convert our words into action. It is not enough to sign Joint Statements and depart with satisfaction from our meetings. We should endeavour to implement our decisions.

This applies to all fields. As far as the economy goes, to name one, we must build the necessary networks of energy, information, telecommunications, transportation, banking and finance, culture, natural and human resources. Regarding energy, South East Europe can and should become a major energy route from Russia and the Caucasus.

We should also enhance cross-border cooperation, using EU Programmes such as PHARE, and improve the necessary infrastructure by, for example, construction of the ten Pan-European Crete Corridors.

The modernisation of communication systems is a sine qua non for the development of our economies.

Readiness to work together in the field of banking and finance will help to thwart the underground economic activities. South East Europe cannot abstain from world capital markets. Nonetheless, the newly born free market economies can easily surrender to speculation and profiteering with catastrophic consequences. Therefore, sober and coherent policies, are imperative.

Environment is perhaps the most delicate and decisive issue for sustainable development in the region. We all know that natural resources are not inexhaustible. However, our policies do not always reflect this reality and the fact that environmental problems do not stop in front of state borders.

Last but not least, I should mention human resources, academic and scientific research which are among the most important factors in determining the future of our countries.

For all these reasons and purposes, regional cooperation is essential for the modernisation of countries in our area. At the same time, however, during our meetings, we, the leaders of countries of South East Europe must discuss the dangerous issues affecting our region. While, as I mentioned before, it is highly encouraging to meet and agree on further action in all fields, our efforts can only prove successful in the long run if we also tackle difficult problems which affect all of us.

I am referring specifically to Kosovo. The Ministerial meeting in Istanbul last June proved to be a frustrating experience. We should avoid its repetition today. The dangerous situation in Kosovo is on television every day for the whole world to watch. It threatens stability in the region and can destroy the fragile peace there. The humanitarian crisis would have



disastrous consequences for all our countries and put an abrupt end to economic development. We should not forget that our countries, Yugoslavia's immediate neighbours, are most affected both by the crisis in Kosovo and by any punitive measures of the international community. I use every opportunity to drive this point home to Greece's partners in the European Union and NATO.

The Antalya Summit provides an excellent venue for a significant step forward. This is the only multilateral forum where the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia fully participates on an equal footing with the other countries of the area. It should therefore use this forum to express its views, so that we can have

a substantial discussion on Kosovo and achieve progress.

I would like to stress that the countries of the region must search in common for solutions to grave problems in our area, affecting the whole of South East Europe. May I remind you that the process of uniting Europe could not have been possible if the states involved did not strive to overcome past differences and promote peace and reconciliation.

I further believe that European integration could not be complete without the participation of South East European countries, based on the very same principles that helped to establish and develop what is today the European Union.

Our region deserves a better future. We must not fail our peoples' expectations. In this spirit I would like to extend to you best wishes for a successful Summit.