

EUROPEAN COUNCIL
Brussels, 20 March 2003

Statement on Iraq

With the beginning of the military conflict, we are faced with a new situation.

Our hope is that the conflict will end with the minimum loss of human life and suffering.

Our common challenges are:

As regards Iraq:

- The EU is committed to the territorial integrity, the sovereignty, the political stability and the full and effective disarmament of Iraq in all its territory, as well as to the respect for the rights of the Iraqi people, including all persons belonging to minorities.
- We believe that the UN must continue to play a central role during and after the current crisis. The UN system has a unique capacity and practical experience in coordinating assistance in post – conflict States. The Security Council should give the United Nation a strong mandate for this mission.
- We urgently need to address the major humanitarian needs that will arise from the conflict. The EU is committed to be actively involved in this field, in accordance with established principles. We support the UN Secretary General's proposal that the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people can continue to be met through the "Oil Food" programme.
- We want to effectively contribute to the conditions allowing all Iraqis to live in freedom, dignity and prosperity under a representative government that will be at peace with its neighbours and an active member of the international community. The Council invites the Commission and the High Representative to explore the means by which the EU might help the Iraqi people to achieve these objectives.

On the regional front:

- We express solidarity with and stand ready to assist those countries that are faced with problems and risks as a result of the conflict, including possible refugee flows. The EU actively engage in supporting regional stability.
- We call on all countries of the region to refrain from actions that could lead to further instability.
- The countries of the region have also a particular responsibility to prevent acts terrorism.

- We will continue to work actively towards the reinvigoration of the Middle East Peace Process, through the immediate publication and implementation of the roadmap as endorsed by the Quartet.
- We will deepen our dialogue and cooperation in all fields with the Arab and the Islamic worlds. We hope that it will soon be possible to use the considerable opportunities offered by the Barcelona Process to good account.

In the international field:

- We reiterate our commitment to the fundamental role of the United Nations in the international system and to the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and stability.
- We are determined to strengthen the capacity of the European Union in the context of the CFSP and the ESDP.
- We remain convinced that we need to strengthen the transatlantic partnership, which remains a fundamental strategic priority for the European Union to this effect, a sustained dialogue on the new regional and global challenges is necessary.
- We will continue to contribute to the further strengthening of the international coalition against terrorism.
- We will also intensify work for a comprehensive, coherent and effective multilateral policy of the international community to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The above objectives are interrelated and complementary. They should be pursued in parallel, through coordinated action of all main international players. In this spirit, the restoration of the unity of the international community is an absolute imperative.