

THE TIMES  
5/11/97 p. 19.

## Balkans leaders set sights on prosperity

FROM REUTERS  
IN AGIA PELAGIA, CRETE

BALKAN nations called yesterday for their bloodstained history to be put behind them and replaced by an era of peace and prosperity.

Greece, Turkey, Romania, Yugoslavia, Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria and Bosnia ended a two-day summit on Crete agreeing to create a framework for economic growth and political co-operation.

"We shall work together to create in our region conditions for the prosperity of our nations in a framework of peace, security, good-neighbourliness and stability," they said in a final declaration.

But the leaders did not have to look far to see how difficult a task they face. A bilateral meeting on Monday between Costas Simitis and Mesut Yilmaz, the Prime Ministers of Greece and Turkey, made scant progress in solving their problems over Cyprus and the Aegean.

Despite the failure, the Balkan nations all said they were determined to build closer regional ties — accepting that it would take time. "The road is still long. These countries, like us, have problems. But we hope that with time they will be able to face them," Mr Simitis said.

The leaders set up a framework for future links and promised to harmonise their laws, break down trade barriers, support the rule of law, and fight crime and drug smuggling across the region.