

SOFIA 15-4-98

JOINT STATEMENT

The Prime Minister of Greece Mr. Constantine Simitis paid an official visit to Sofia on 14 - 15 April 1998 upon invitation by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria Mr. Ivan Kostov. During the visit extensive talks have been held on the full range of bilateral relations as well as on regional issues.

In particular:

1. Both sides expressed satisfaction on the high level reached in their bilateral relations and they confirmed their commitment to further enhance and strengthen them. They also stressed that deepening of the Bulgarian-Greek relations, in a common European perspective, largely contributes to the consolidation of peace and stability in the Balkans, the Black-Sea area and in Europe. In this respect Greece fully supports the Bulgarian aspiration to join the EU and NATO. Both sides noted that stability in Europe depends to a large extent on the stability in the Balkans and they will continue working together in order to foster peace, stability and security in the region and to promote social and economic development to the benefit of the whole region and the prosperity of their peoples.

2. They also agreed to continue to closely working together for the realization of concrete programmes within the EAPC and PFP. They also agreed to further their co-operation in the field of Institution Building in the framework of the European Union.

3. They stressed the importance of the multilateral co-operation in South-eastern Europe as well as their satisfaction for the results achieved by the Crete Summit Meeting of the Heads of State or Government of countries of South Eastern Europe. They expressed their wish to see these meetings continuing on a regular basis.

4. They held a thorough discussion on the recent developments concerning the situation in Kosovo. They welcomed the progress made with regard to the education agreement and they expressed their support towards the decisions of the Contact Group of 9 March and 25 March 1998. They called for an immediate start of the dialogue between the authorities in Belgrade and the Kosovar Albanians and they agreed that the solution of the future status of Kosovo should be found on a mutually acceptable basis within the borders of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. They expressed a common view that any measures against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia should take into account the political and economic stability of South-eastern Europe and should not harm the interests of the states of the region.

5. They expressed satisfaction for the progress noted so far in the realization of the Burgas-Alexandroupolis pipeline project, which they fully support. In this respect they confirmed their willingness to speed up the necessary procedures to allow the early realization of this project.

6. They stressed the importance of the trilateral meetings between Bulgaria, Romania and Greece in fields of common interest. In this regard they stressed the importance of the construction of a new bridge over the Danube between Bulgaria and Romania and welcomed the agreement reached on a trilateral basis to establish a working group to study the perspectives and present proposals for the implementation of this project.

7. They underlined the need to forward proposals and ideas concerning land and sea trade routes linking the Danube and Central Europe with the Aegean, the Mediterranean, the Middle East and the Black Sea. In this context they stressed the importance of linking the Paneuropean Crete Corridors IV, VIII, IX with the Transeuropean Corridor of Egnatia.

8. They expressed their satisfaction for the prospects of further progress of the Agreement of the Opening of Three New Border Crossing Points and Linking Routes between Bulgaria and Greece and the Agreement of the Mesta/Nestos river waters, aiming at fostering the economic and social development of the whole region.

9. They agreed to increase co-operation between their respective police forces and relevant institutions for the combat of organized crime, terrorism, illegal drugs and arms trafficking. They supported the Bulgarian initiative to host a Regional Coordinating Center for Combating Illicit Drugs Trafficking.

10. Both sides expressed their readiness to facilitate contacts between their citizens and promote business and trade contacts within their international obligations. Greece welcomes the progress Bulgaria has achieved in harmonizing its visa and immigration policy with that of the EU and supports its efforts to be excluded from the list of countries whose citizens are required visas to enter the external borders of the Union. In the context of the mutual will to further their economic co-operation both sides agreed that in the process of privatization and the evaluation of investment programmes of each side they shall observe the same rules and procedures of transparency which are applied in the EU.

11. They noted with satisfaction the frequency and content of political contacts between officials of the two countries at all levels and their contribution to deepening the relations of the two countries and peoples.

Sofia, 15 April 1998