

ΠΡΩΤΟΛΕΙΟ ΣΗΜΕΙΩΝ ΒΑΣΕΙ ΟΠΟΙΩΝ ΜΠΟΡΕΙ ΕΞΕΥΡΕΘΕΙ
ΚΟΙΝΗ ΘΕΣΗ (επίσημη ή ανεπίσημη)

The European Union remains deeply concerned by the ongoing crisis on the issue of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

The European Union confirms its full support to the UNSC resolution 1441, which offered the best prospect of achieving what have been the Union's principal objectives all along: Iraq's compliance with its disarmament obligations and upholding the primary responsibility of the UNSC for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The EU takes note of the latest UN inspectors' report, according to which some progress has been made with regard to the Iraqi regime's cooperation. The Union hopes that there will be further major progress in the days to come and that Iraq will discharge its obligations under the UN Charter by fully, unconditionally and immediately complying with all relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

Inspections should continue as long as the Security Council considers that they serve a useful purpose. But they are not an end in themselves. The real question is whether Iraq is willing to cooperate actively with the inspectors. It remains clearly up to Iraq to produce evidence that it has destroyed its WMD, not for the inspectors to prove the contrary.

Iraq's disarmament is the key to peace. The Union is fully aware of the many dangers that would inevitably result from military conflict, in particular the large-scale loss of life, the human suffering and the risk of further destabilization of an already volatile region. Force should be used only as a last resort, when every other possibility has been tried and failed. But Baghdad should bear no illusion: it alone will carry the responsibility for all the consequences if it continues to flout the will of the international community and does not use this last chance to good account.

While the European Union, like all other members of the international community, is focusing on the current situation with regard to Iraq, it cannot ignore other pressing issues. It is concerned about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction around the world and, in

particular, North Korea's refusal to abide by its international obligations in this field. It also reiterates its firm belief in the need to invigorate the peace process in the Middle East and to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, on the basis of the considerable work already produced by the Quartet. The Union's relationship with the United States continues to be of fundamental importance, in order for the international community to effectively deal with the above, as well as with all other challenges of our times.