



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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Quadripartite meeting, 10 March 2008 conclusions

The 26th Quadripartite meeting between the Council of Europe and the European Union was held in Brussels on 10 March 2008 at the invitation of the Slovak Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

It was attended, on the Council of Europe side, by Mr Ján Kubiš, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the Right Hon Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and on the European Union side, by Mr Dimitrij Rupel, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, President of the Council of the European Union and Mr Karel Kovanda, Deputy Director General in the External Relations Directorate General of the European Commission.

The participants expressed their satisfaction with the progress made in the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the two organisations. They underlined the importance of further promoting co-operation in the field of human rights, the rule of law and pluralist democracy, which are the shared values of both organisations.

P R E S S

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They also noted the importance of intercultural dialogue and encouraged further cooperation in this area, inter alia, in the framework of the current Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

The development of Europe as a free and fair election zone is an objective which should mobilise the energies of the Council of Europe and the European Union. In this context, the participants discussed electoral assistance and welcomed the close relationship established between the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in matters of election observation. Aware of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified by International Electoral Observation Missions in several recent elections, they invited the countries concerned to redress these problems. They expressed their willingness to further expand their co-operation at the level of pre-electoral assistance with a view to achieving the objective that all elections in Europe fully respect democratic norms and standards. In this context, they welcomed the recent conclusion of the CoE-EU Joint Programme on Free and Fair Elections in the South Caucasus and Moldova (2008-2009) as a good example of co-operation on pre-electoral assistance between the two institutions. They looked forward to the full implementation of this programme and to its possible expansion to other countries.

They expressed the hope that the forthcoming parliamentary elections in Belarus would constitute a positive step towards a democratic system of government for this country.

They underlined the need to ensure a sound electoral environment, in particular, by enhancing, through pre-electoral assistance, the capacities of the media to ensure a free, independent, balanced and unbiased coverage of the pre-election campaign and the elections themselves.

They also discussed cooperation in South-East Europe and emphasised their will to intensify it. They shared the view that both the Council of Europe and the EU should continue to play an important role in supporting a peaceful, democratic and multi-ethnic environment in the whole region, striving for the full respect of the European values, including democracy, the protection of human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, and the rule of law. In this respect, they outlined the importance of developing the flow of information between the European Union and the Council of Europe as regards the situation in the region and all progress made towards European prospects.

They noted that the Council of Europe provides valuable assistance, in particular, through its legal instruments, in these areas as well as in the fields of decentralisation and effective local government, intercultural dialogue, the protection of cultural and religious heritage, education, social protection, the rule of law, the reform of the judiciary and the fight against organised crime.

The participants also welcomed the ongoing co-operation in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy of the European Union; an illustration of that co-operation was provided by the meeting organised on 5 February 2008 on co-operation with the countries of the South-Caucasus, Ukraine and Moldova. They reiterated their support to Regional Co-operation as illustrated by the initiatives undertaken by both organisations in the Black Sea area.

Finally, they concluded their meeting with a common endeavour to further their efforts for the strengthening of European values all over the continent.
