

**REGIONAL MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTS OF PARLIAMENTS OF THE REPUBLIC
OF AUSTRIA, THE CZECH REPUBLIC, THE REPUBLIC OF HUNGARY, THE
REPUBLIC OF POLAND, THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC, THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA**

AND

**GUEST PRESIDENTS OF PARLIAMENTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA, BOSNIA
AND HERZEGOVINA, THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA, THE REPUBLIC OF
MACEDONIA AND THE STATE COMMUNITY OF SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO**

Bled, 11 June 2005

JOINT STATEMENT

1. The fourth meeting of the Presidents of the Regional Partnership Parliaments of the Republic of Austria, The Czech Republic, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Poland, the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Slovenia was held in Bled on 10 and 11 June 2005, and was extended to the participation of Guest Presidents of Parliaments of the European Union candidate country the Republic of Croatia as well as of the Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Macedonia, and the State Community of Serbia and Montenegro.
2. The meeting provided the opportunity for a constructive interparliamentary exchange of opinions, actively involving the Presidents of Regional Partnership Parliaments and the Presidents of the Guest Parliaments.
3. The Presidents of Parliaments of Regional Partnership countries emphasized the European affiliation of the countries of Southeast Europe, and agreed that it was important such countries played an active role in the co-formulation of solutions to the problems of the Southeast European region.
4. The Presidents of the Regional Partnership Parliaments emphasized that the European Union accession negotiations with the Republic of Croatia should start as soon as possible.
5. A clearly defined plan and strategy of accession of the countries of Southeast Europe will contribute to greater security and stability in the region, as well as strengthening the global role of the European Union. The countries that wish to become members of the European Union need to come to terms with their past and the thereto related internal policy challenges, and take over the values upheld by the European Union.
6. The Presidents of Parliaments of the Regional Partnership countries are aware that prior to the accession to the European Union Southeast European countries need to make further effort to adopt and implement the *acquis communautaire*, and to take up other criteria that need to be fulfilled prior to European Union accession. Cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia needs to be continued.
7. Political support, parliamentary cooperation, and assistance to the Parliaments of Southeast Europe are very important. Bilateral and multilateral forms of cooperation as well as the exchanges of parliamentary expert staff are welcome.
8. The Presidents of the Parliaments of the Regional Partnership countries agree that individual negative results of the referendums on the Treaty establishing a

Constitution for Europe should not hinder the further enlargement of the European Union.

9. The further progress of Southeast European countries also depends on the capacity of each individual country to fulfill the set objectives and promote the values shared by the European Union.
10. The Presidents of the Parliaments of the Regional Partnership countries agree that in the process of European Union integration, Southeast European countries should be treated on their individual merits.
11. The Presidents of the Parliaments of the Regional Partnership call upon COSAC (Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union) to invite the parliaments of the countries of Southeast Europe as "Special Guest" whenever subjects of their interest are debated within COSAC.
12. Guest Presidents of Parliaments stressed that their countries wished to move closer to the European Union as soon as possible. They are in favour of a continued process of European Union integration. Should such process be delayed, Southeast European countries might lose their faith in the European Union.
13. Guest Presidents of Parliaments wish to obtain support from the Parliaments of European Union Member States as regards the exchange of experience concerning the transposition of the *acquis communautaire*, the transfer of knowledge, the organization of parliaments in relation to European Union affairs, and a stronger cooperation among parliamentary committees dealing with European Union affairs.
14. Guest Presidents of Parliaments emphasized some of the problems they shared on their path towards European Union integration, such as a weak economic situation, fragile security and stability in the region, and the scope of legal reforms in order to implement the *acquis communautaire*. They expressed their concern about the rigid European Union visa policy and insufficient financial assistance to implement integration programmes.
15. Guest Presidents of Parliaments stressed the importance of a joint approach to solving some of the problems faced by Southeast European countries, particularly through a stronger cross-border mutual cooperation.
16. Guest Presidents of Parliaments called upon the Presidents of the Parliaments of the Regional Partnership to provide political support to their integration to the European Union, and to support the solving of specific problems, as well as the liberalization of the visa policy and enhanced cooperation in free trade, energy and infrastructure policies.