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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**9th QUADRIpartite MEETING  
COUNCIL OF EUROPE/EUROPEAN UNION  
(Luxembourg, 28 April 1997)**

**Press Release**

1. The 9th European Union/Council of Europe Quadripartite meeting was held in Luxembourg on 28 April 1997, at the suggestion of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The meeting was attended:

- for the European Union, by Mr H. VAN MIERLO, President of the Council of the European Union, Mr J. SANTER, President of the European Commission and Mr H. VAN DEN BROEK, European Commissioner;
- for the Council of Europe, by Ms T. HALONEN, Chair of the Committee of Ministers, and Mr D. TARSCHYS, Secretary-General of the Council of Europe.

2. The Presidency of the European Union began by taking stock of progress at the Intergovernmental Conference for the revision of the Treaties. At the Noordwijk Conclave early in April, Ministers had started real negotiations, tackling institutional matters and questions relating to employment and the social dimension, which were – as everyone knew – among the most sensitive issues for the Conference. The Presidency restated its intention of pushing ahead with the discussions, in order to create favourable conditions for an agreement at the European Council in Amsterdam.
  
3. The representatives of the European Union highlighted the importance of the second Summit of the Council of Europe, which was to be held in Strasbourg on 10 and 11 October. Forty countries would have an opportunity of assessing what the Council of Europe had achieved in terms of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and the contribution it could make to finding answers to the difficult problems that faced the States of Europe as the century drew to its close.

The Presidency of the Union welcomed the enhanced dialogue between the Council of Europe and the OSCE. These two organizations, each of which had its specific function, were increasingly involved in the same areas. The Union did not think it desirable to establish a strict division of tasks. However, a continuous exchange of information and practical cooperation on the ground between the OSCE and the Council of Europe were essential.

4. The participants discussed in detail various aspects of the assistance to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. They looked in particular at the projects being carried out jointly and at the prospects for stepping up cooperation.

The participants expressed their intention of building up their cooperation on the basis of true partnership, to strengthen and stabilize democratic institutions and the rule of law in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe.

The participants also welcomed the signing of new agreements on common cooperation programmes with the Russian Federation and Ukraine. They hoped that similar agreements could be concluded for cooperation with Moldova and possibly with other New Independent States.

5. The participants were pleased to note that the negotiations for the establishment of a European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia would soon be completed. As stated in Article 8 of the Regulation establishing the Centre, a person appointed by the Council of Europe was to sit on the Centre's Management Board. The Commission, the European Parliament and the Member States of the Union would each appoint a member to the Board.

In addition, Article 7(3) of the Regulation provided for the Centre to coordinate its activities with those of the Council of Europe, particularly with regard to its work programme. To that end, the Community will enter into an agreement with the Council of Europe in order to establish close cooperation between the Council and the Centre.

6. The participants reiterated the importance they attached to compliance with the commitments entered into at the Council of Europe by its Member States.
7. At the request of the Council of Europe, participants held an exchange of views on public health. They felt it was very important to pursue active cooperation in this field at operational level. Particular attention should be given to cooperation and coordination in relation to human organs, tissues, blood and blood products and to examination by the European Commission of the new 1995 Technical Protocol to Agreement No 26 of the Council of Europe (on the Exchange of Therapeutic Substances of Human origin).

8. On culture and education, both parties were satisfied with the cooperation between the European Commission and the Council of Europe. An informal dialogue had been established between the relevant committees of the Council of the Union and the Council of Europe on these matters. This dialogue could prove very useful, if it encouraged the regular exchange of information, efforts to achieve complementary approaches, studies on coordinated projects and, lastly, analysis of the results obtained by each organization. It would be a good idea to consider applying similar procedures in respect of Youth Affairs.
9. As regards cooperation on justice and home affairs, an informal meeting between the Troika of the Article K.4 Committee of the Council of the Union and representatives of the Council of Europe was held on 25 March 1997. The cooperation begun in this field will be useful for both parties. It will be continued in future, in order to compare work programmes and avoid duplication of effort. The issue of trafficking in human beings was singled out for special mention.
10. The participants held an exchange of views on projects likely to be co-financed by the Community and the Council of Europe under the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. They noted that a project for funding a Euro-Mediterranean Conference with regard to international cooperation on criminal matters is to be finalized shortly.
11. The participants examined the prospects for cooperation on democratization, including media freedom, in the countries of South-Eastern Europe.

The participants also welcomed the possibilities to develop a common effort relating to the Advisory Mission in Albania. The role of the Council of Europe, in particular with regard to police assistance and training, was highlighted.

The representatives of the European Union pointed out that the report from the Union's fact-finding mission to Belarus had found a number of serious constitutional and political malfunctions in that country and that the Union had informed the authorities in Minsk of the mission's recommendations, particularly as regards the separation of powers, dialogue between the Presidential administration and the Supreme Council and freedom of the media.

In this connection, the European Union stressed the desirability of close cooperation between the Union, the Council of Europe and the OSCE to help Belarus undertake the necessary constitutional reforms and reforms in the areas of media freedom and respect for human rights.

Luxembourg, 28 April 1997

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