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OUR EUROPE

Sharing the Future in a Community of Values

The Priorities of the Greek Presidency 2003

► Introduction

- The Greek Presidency's message
- The five major priorities
- The situation in Europe and worldwide

► Priorities

- Enlargement: the Accession Treaty and the day after
- The Lisbon Process: competitiveness, cohesion and sustainability
- Immigration/Asylum: joint responsibility, comprehensive immigration policy
- The Future of Europe; The Outcome of the Convention
- External relations: the new Europe as an international motor for peace and cooperation

► The main issues in the context of Community Policies

- Economy/Budget
- Employment, social policy, health and consumers
- Competitiveness (internal market, entrepreneurship, industry, research and tourism)
- Transport, communications, energy
- Agriculture, fisheries and food safety
- Environment
- Education, Youth and Culture
- Single area of justice, security, freedom
- External relations – ESDP
- General Affairs

► Epilogue

MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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1. Introduction

1. The Presidency Message: “Our Europe. *Sharing the future in a Community of Values*”.

Our message reflects our objective of promoting a community of values: which recognises the citizen's right to security, democracy and a better quality of life; which will create institutions able to guarantee participation and equality; and which will make the European citizen sense that his or her voice is heard, that he or she belongs to a new single family, to Our Europe.

Our Europe belongs to all European peoples without exceptions or exclusions. Everybody has a stake in such a *future*. Enlargement brings this vision much closer. *Our Europe* welcomes the new member states, confident of achieving a new synthesis and a new dynamism; the sort of dynamism that these states have shown during their rapid social, political and economic transition. It is up to us all to make enlargement a catalyst for accelerating European integration; a force which will ensure that Europe is able to face the challenges of a new era in world affairs.

2. The Five Major Priorities

The greatest enlargement in the history of the EU, an enlargement that will erase the artificial division of Europe and unify societies and economies that operated for decades under completely different systems, represents a challenge that will not disappear once negotiations have been completed and the decision on accession has been made. The Greek Presidency will do its utmost to keep to the timetable and facilitate the gradual integration of the new member states into the Community process.

The further implementation of the Lisbon Strategy and the Spring Summit in 2003 will take place within a new political and economic context, bringing major challenges as well as opportunities. The political and economic uncertainties, with regard to growth and stability in Europe and the world, will be offset by a European currency, which has proved to be one of the world's strongest, and by the prospect of the EU's enlargement. Within such a context, it should be clear that we remain determined to achieve the goal of making the European economy the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy, capable of promoting sustainable growth with more and better jobs and stronger social cohesion. This will require, however, significant reforms to enable faster growth, employment, prosperity and improved quality of living.

The Union's policy on immigration, asylum and the management of external borders, is one of the most important priorities of the Greek Presidency. Community policies in this area have so far not matched the magnitude of the immigration phenomenon that we are facing. The operation of the single market, including the free movement of workers, means that we have common responsibilities. At Seville we adopted decisions that will have to be implemented before the European Council in Thessaloniki. Over and above questions related to illegal immigration, joint border management and asylum, our approach should be more global, covering aspects of the economic and social integration of immigrants. The Presidency will take specific initiatives in order to arrive at common goals and a single set of uniform practices, thus ensuring a balanced and long-term management of the immigration phenomenon.

At the European Council in Thessaloniki, we plan to have the first in-depth debate about the Future of Europe, based on the proposals of the Convention. The questions that were raised in Laeken concern both the future of the institutions and the future of the enlarged Union's policies. On that basis, the discussion should reflect the degree of consensus achieved and the points on which the Intergovernmental Conference should focus when it is convened during the Italian Presidency.

In the field of external relations, the Presidency will concentrate its efforts on regions of immediate proximity, without of course disregarding the Union's commitments towards other areas of the world. The Balkans, the Mediterranean area and the Middle East, Russia and the countries of the Black Sea demand our constant attention in the interests of safeguarding peace and democracy. They offer, at the same time, major opportunities for mutual benefits in the economic sector. The handling of the Iraq crisis constitutes a particular challenge in terms of maintaining the cohesion of the CFSP and enhancing the role of the Union in the international arena. Cooperation with the United States, in the context of the transatlantic dialogue, will benefit both sides by focusing on major issues that require a common approach.

3. The situation in Europe and worldwide

2003 will be a milestone year in the history of the EU. Ten new member states will be joining forces with the present fifteen, in one of the most courageous steps towards realising the goals set by the Union's founders, namely peace and prosperity through extensive European integration. A new era is dawning, which finds Europe stronger and ready to meet new challenges. In this context, we shall be implementing a new Treaty for the first time, the Treaty of Nice, while the discussion on the future of Europe is reaching its climax and we are about to draft a fundamental text, of constitutional character, that will enshrine the principles on which we have relied and the new objectives we are setting for Europe.

At the same time, the Greek Presidency is expected to unfold in a particularly volatile and unpredictable global environment. The emergence of new factors in shaping the international balance, the existence of international terrorism, organized crime and, more generally, the development of forces that are not subject to any institutional control or discipline, create a climate of marked uncertainty on the world scene. The Presidency needs to remain extremely vigilant in order to handle crises that may arise and must also be ready to tackle major challenges such as:

- Fighting international terrorism and organised crime. Recent experience has shown that the fight against international terrorism is a complex process with many dimensions: military, economic, political and cultural. A global strategy should aim at combating both the symptoms and causes of this phenomenon.
- Given the current economic slowdown, improving the climate of confidence and investment, increasing productivity, levels of employment and fiscal stability, are all objectives of critical importance.
- The challenge of “sustainable development” on a global scale, that can contribute to eradicating poverty and destitution and bridge growing socio-economic inequalities whilst, at the same time, protecting the environment and safeguarding ecosystems.
- Reaffirming the role of international law and international institutions and promoting a new, democratic governance model, in the light of globalisation.

This situation of uncertainty and the major challenges that we face make it imperative that we strengthen and restore the European citizen’s feeling of security, as our primary and overarching objective. Whether this involves fighting terrorism and organised crime, controlling the flow of immigration, protecting workers’ health and safety, ensuring the viability of pension schemes, or food safety and consumer protection, the European Union must re-establish a climate of security and confidence. This is precisely the aim that most of the action included in the Greek Presidency’s programme will strive to achieve.

II. Priorities

1. Enlargement: The Accession Treaty and the day after.

The first priority of the Greek Presidency will be to secure the timetable for the accession of the 10 candidate countries according to the Copenhagen decisions. After the completion of accession negotiations with Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia, the Union looks forward to welcoming these states as members from 1 May 2004.

The historic decision at Copenhagen foresees that the new Treaty will be signed in Athens in April 2003. Before that, the drafting of the new Treaty must be completed, the opinion of the Commission must be received and the assent of the European Parliament and the approval of the Council must also be given. Moreover, if the settlement of the political problem in Cyprus is achieved before completing the Accession Treaty, the Treaty will accommodate the agreed terms in line with the principles on which the EU is founded.

The 10 candidate countries will participate as active observers in Council proceedings from the signing of the Accession Treaty until full accession, i.e. after the new Treaty has been ratified by the 15 present and 10 new member states, in accordance with each country's constitutional requirements.

The present member states will continue to monitor the progress of applicant countries with respect to the adoption and implementation of the *acquis*, even after the completion of the negotiations and until accession. This monitoring process will, however, become more substantial during the second half of 2003 when, six months before the accession date, the Commission will be asked to present a report on the overall progress of candidate countries in this area.

The Greek Presidency will implement the new, enhanced pre-accession strategy for Bulgaria and Romania. The decisions of Brussels and Copenhagen include a specific timetable for closing the remaining chapters of the community *acquis*, provision for increased pre-accession aid and a target date of 2007 for the two countries' accession.

The pre-accession progress of Turkey will be enhanced by supporting her efforts to move towards the starting of accession negotiations according to the timetable set by Copenhagen. As stated in the Commission's annual report, there is a need for an analytical examination of the degree of implementation of the various legislative initiatives undertaken by Turkey to achieve the Copenhagen criteria. At the same time new methods will be sought for a better understanding of the Union's requirements and Accession Partnership priorities that must be fulfilled in the next two years. The preparation of a new Accession Partnership for Turkey is also expected during the Greek Presidency.

Finally, we consider enlargement as a leap towards European integration and under no circumstances should it be allowed to create new dividing lines. Our aim is that enlargement serves as a point of departure for building stronger relations in the wider European space from Russia to the Mediterranean, based on common values and economic interests.

2. The Lisbon Process: Competitiveness, Cohesion, Sustainability

The Lisbon Process has achieved its initial goal of mobilising and supporting Europe's efforts towards economic and social reform. Three years after its adoption, one third of the way to the 2010 target date, much has been achieved, but there is still an implementation deficit in a number of areas. To better promote the objectives agreed in 2000, the Greek Presidency intends to focus on the following issues:

2.1 Entrepreneurship and Small Businesses

Europe suffers from a lack of entrepreneurship, especially in knowledge-intensive sectors. Young entrepreneurs and small businesses do not contribute as much as they could to employment, growth and regional cohesion. To overcome this problem, it is therefore necessary to eliminate barriers to market access, simplify administrative procedures, facilitate access to capital, support the creation of networks, enhance skill levels and the qualitative aspects of employment in small enterprises and encourage entrepreneurship through the education system. The Greek Presidency will work to ensure the adoption by the European Council of the Green Paper on Entrepreneurship, to accelerate the implementation of the European Charter for Small Businesses, to simplify the regulatory framework and to encourage the dissemination of best practices in corporate governance, so as to enhance market confidence.

2.2 The European Knowledge Economy

Economic growth in Europe will depend, in the medium-term, on the use of new development resources. The Greek Presidency will attempt to achieve concrete results on the development of research in cutting edge technologies, including defence-related research. It will also aim at increasing investment in research and technology (in particular by the business sector), the adoption of the Community Patent and, more generally, at ensuring that the Information Society will be accessible to all, through the use of open standards and inter-operability at the level of networks and services. In parallel, decisions on the financing of the e-Europe programme will be prepared as well as an effective contribution by the Union to the UN Summit on the Information Society. As human resources are essential for a knowledge-based economy, special emphasis will be given to the reform of education and training systems (particularly in basic skills and learning of foreign languages) and improved workforce mobility.

2.3 Interconnecting Europe

The EU today is becoming increasingly connected and interdependent; every possible effort should therefore be made to eliminate any barriers to this integration, particularly in the energy, transport and financial services markets. In the energy sector, the Presidency will be aiming at an agreement for full and operational liberalisation and a more limited role for the state, taking into account public interest commitments, supply security and the protection of vulnerable areas and populations. The Presidency will also seek to: promote the development of financial tools, with a view to expanding Trans-European Energy and Transport Networks (also including the new member countries); create a single European sky; progress the Action Plans on Financial Services and Business Capital; lay down the principles governing services of general economic interest; modernise legislation on competition rules; and promote a single market for services.

2.4 More and Better Jobs

The second Lisbon pillar concerns the modernization of the social model and is just as important as the economic aspects. The European Councils of Lisbon and Stockholm set ambitious objectives for increasing employment rates. For their attainment, it will be necessary to redefine policy tools, improve market operation and also introduce changes at the level of social and cultural patterns, in particular with regard to the participation of women, older people and immigrants in the labour market. The spring European Council in 2003 must therefore give strong encouragement to reforms, in order to ensure the reduction of the quantitative and qualitative employment deficit in Europe. The Greek Presidency is expected to focus in particular on: a) the synchronising of the main economic and social policy measures to achieve improved coordination and global supervision, b) the revision of the European Employment Strategy on the basis of the Barcelona decisions, and c) the improvement of the qualitative aspects of work, based on the Commission's Communication on Health and Safety.

2.5 Strengthening Social Cohesion

Stronger social cohesion can be achieved by the updating of policies on social protection and inclusion, as well as by a rational and fair approach to demographic changes and the effects of the ageing population. Member states should take specific steps in the matter of pensions, maintaining the systems' capacity to attain their social objectives, whilst safeguarding the stability and viability of public finance. The Greek Presidency will promote policies for the integration of groups suffering from social exclusion, also in view of the fact that 2003 is the Year for People with Disabilities. It also intends to draw appropriate conclusions from the examination of the joint report on pensions, to update the Regulation on the coordination of pension schemes and to consider the effects of ageing on health and welfare systems for senior citizens.

2.6 Safeguarding Future Prosperity Through Sustainability

Since 2001, when the environmental component was integrated in the Lisbon strategy at Göteborg, special emphasis has been given to the compatibility of environmental and economic policies. The spring European Council of 2003 will make it possible to define clearly the main directions of this strategic approach for balanced sustainable development and to set specific objectives, which will act as an incentive for further progress. In promoting the objective of sustainable development, the Greek Presidency will work towards the review of the EU strategy on sustainable development, based on the Göteborg mandate and on the 6th Action Plan for the Environment, aiming at decoupling economic development from the use of natural resources and environmental degradation, as well as at implementing the Johannesburg commitments. Emphasis will be placed on the ten-year framework of programmes for sustainable production and consumption (clean technologies, savings on materials and energy), as well as on the Water and Energy Initiatives through specific action in areas such as: increased participation of renewable energy sources, integration of the environmental dimension in the EU's external policy, the removal of obstacles to the development of environmental technology, and a global strategy for chemicals. The Greek Presidency will also work towards the adoption of the Regulation on the taxation of energy products for a more efficient use of energy, and on the advancement of the Framework Regulation on the pricing of infrastructure.

3. Immigration – Asylum: Joint Responsibility, Comprehensive Immigration Policy

The values of “justice, freedom and security”, as highlighted in the Amsterdam Treaty and the Tampere conclusions, reflect the steadfast wish of European citizens. As a result of globalisation, poverty and regional conflicts, immigration phenomena have assumed unprecedented proportions, creating new needs and obligations for the Union. At the same time, the enlargement of the European Union is linked to new challenges and opportunities in this sector, with regard to the shifting of the Union’s external frontiers, as well as the implementation of its policies within the context of 25 or more states.

The relationship between immigration and development, the social and economic integration of legal immigrants, and control of illegal immigration, will be areas of action for the Greek Presidency.

The decisions of Seville on economic and technical support to third countries will help them to establish social and economic conditions that allow economic immigrants to remain in their countries of origin. Taking into account the vast possibilities for better coordination of member states’ immigration policies, the Presidency will work towards a comprehensive immigration policy, worthy of the level of integration achieved in a Union without internal borders and proportionate to the scale of the challenges we are facing. Aware of the unquestionable benefits that planned legal immigration will have on the competitiveness of the European economy and the handling of demographic problems, such a policy will manage and utilise immigration flows and not simply provide for suppressive measures once the problem has occurred.

The Greek Presidency also wants to emphasise the fact that the control of illegal immigration is a collective problem for the Union and its resolution is a joint responsibility. The elimination of illegal trafficking of human beings requires close cooperation with the countries of origin and transit and the adoption of a cohesive framework for readmission and repatriation. With respect to joint frontier management and repatriation policies, the implementation of common actions, based on the Danish Presidency’s road map and expected European Commission proposals on fair burden sharing, represent an important priority of the Greek Presidency. The Presidency’s report to the European Council in Thessaloniki on the implementation of the guidelines of the Seville Conclusions is therefore critical.

In view of the above, for asylum issues, the promotion of measures for implementing effective procedures should be combined with corresponding progress in the area of common policies relating to legal immigration and the development of the joint frontier management system.

4. The Future of Europe: The Outcome of the Convention

The Future of the European Union, with the prospect of the forthcoming enlargement to 25 member states, is a question of fundamental interest for the Greek Presidency. Greece has always believed that the Union's enlargement should be linked to deepening European unification. The enlarged Union should evolve into an institutional system capable of making effective decisions with a democratic and social content.

For that reason, Greece as Presidency of the Council, attaches particular importance to the work of the Convention on the Future of Europe and welcomes the progress achieved so far during its proceedings. The contribution of all parties to the Convention has been highly significant as regards the generation of ideas, proposals and plans for the future architecture of the European Union. It is especially noteworthy that the Convention is now working on a draft constitutional treaty, based on the proposals that have been submitted by many sides.

In accordance with the conclusions of the Copenhagen European Council, Greece expects that the Convention will have completed its work before the European Council of Thessaloniki. This will enable the European Council to take the necessary action, as agreed at the European Councils of Nice and Laeken, to enable the completion of the procedure with the convening of the Intergovernmental Conference and the adoption of a new Constitutional Treaty. To this end, Greece will be working closely with all the parties involved in the Convention process, the member states and the countries that will be joining the Union and, in particular, the European Parliament and the European Commission.

The aim of the Greek Presidency is to establish all the conditions that will pave the way for a new political phase in the process of European integration, as we prepare to welcome our ten new partners in the European Union. In particular, our aim is to ensure:

Firstly, that the enlarged European Union will operate as a democratically organised system, close to the European citizen and society, based on the principles of democracy, the rule of law, respect for civil and minority rights, equality of all member states, solidarity and subsidiarity.

Secondly, that the Union will be effective, capable of making decisions, equipped with all the policies and resources that will enable it to resolve the problems of society and citizens, to promote economic and social cohesion and real convergence, effective management and reform of the European economy and sustainable development.

Thirdly, that the Union will be a strong player in the wider regional and international system, as a factor for peace, stability and cooperation, an active contributor to the process of building a better world, based on international law and institutions, and a promoter of good governance, environmental protection and the eradication of conflicts, organized crime and terrorism.

5. External Relations: the New Europe as an International Factor of Peace and Stability

The Greek Presidency will take place at a time of critical change in Europe and new challenges in the field of Security and Defence Cooperation, an area where the Union is trying to forge a new identity. In a period when the EU will be carrying through the greatest enlargement in its history, the Union will be called upon to reconsider the context of its relations with its new neighbours and promote policies reflecting the new situation in Europe. In this light, the promotion of the EU's relations with the Balkan countries will be a main priority for the Greek Presidency. The effective development and deepening of relations with Russia will also constitute an important parameter in the EU's efforts to consolidate peace, stability and cooperation in Europe. Relations with the Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, as well as the Caucasus region, acquire a special significance in this new European reality. At the same time, the strengthening of the EU's cooperation with Mediterranean countries will be a major task for the Greek Presidency.

The Greek Presidency will promote political dialogue with all groups of countries. It will give special emphasis to the respect of human rights and the rule of law. We will seek closer cooperation between the Union and the US in the fight against inequality, the proliferation of nuclear and chemical weapons, armaments control and conflict prevention. We will also aim at a more active participation of the EU in the international community's fight against terrorism, promoting the development of capabilities and policies and supporting multilateral cooperation with third countries and international organizations, with the aim of eradicating this scourge, which has developed into a major international problem following September 11, 2001. At the same time, we will strive for stronger policies for combating poverty, protecting the environment, preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, resolving regional conflicts and facing the problem of drug trafficking.

The Greek Presidency's immediate priorities include the strengthening of relations with the US and cooperation at all levels, so as to form a joint response to international challenges.

European citizens expect the Union to respond to its international responsibilities, by preventing international conflicts and managing crises when they occur. The Greek Presidency will endeavour to strengthen the EU's capacity for effective political intervention in conflict areas, by improving and further developing existing institutional instruments (common strategies and joint actions). At a time when the EU is trying to build new capabilities in the field of Security and Defence Cooperation, the Greek Presidency will pursue its efforts in order to reinforce the institutional framework of the CFSP, by creating the area of "Freedom, Security and Justice".

III. Main issues in the context of EU policies

	ECONOMY, BUDGET (ECOFIN)
<i>Macroeconomic policies and structural reforms: interconnection and complementarity</i>	<p>Interconnection and complementarity between macroeconomic policies and structural reforms is the key to the success of the Lisbon objectives. Macroeconomic stability is the essential prerequisite for structural changes to be implemented and achieve results. Likewise, structural reforms will have a positive impact on macroeconomic conditions. The observance of the Stability and Growth Pact is an essential condition for achieving macroeconomic stability as well as restoring a climate of trust. At the same time, more intensive efforts towards economic and social reforms and the increase of the European Union's production capacity will facilitate stricter compliance with the Pact.</p>
<i>More effective coordination of economic policies</i>	<p>In this context, it is a priority for the Greek Presidency to improve the coordination of fiscal policies and to achieve better synchronisation between economic and social policies by reinforcing the General Economic Policy Guidelines – for a three-year period from now – and aligning related processes (the Cardiff process for product and capital markets and the Luxemburg process for employment). During the Greek Presidency, the updated stability / convergence programmes of the 15 member states will be examined. For a better response to the need for policy synchronisation, more efforts should be made to align member states' obligations with regard to reports and statistics.</p>
<i>Improving statistics and analytical tools.</i>	<p>With the aim of developing a more cohesive and effective statistical system, capable of providing useful information for political decision making, as well as for the fuller analysis of the economic implications and progress of the Lisbon Strategy, an upgrading of statistics and analytical tools will be sought.</p>

Tax package

Regarding direct taxation, the Greek Presidency will proceed on the basis of the agreed timetable and examine, if necessary, new ways for promoting taxation of savings. Regarding indirect taxation, the work will focus, on the basis of the European Commission's proposals, mainly on the Travel Agencies Directive and the Regulation on Administrative Cooperation, while improving cooperation between the member states on direct and indirect taxation. Energy tax is one of the issues that will be pushed forward, together with a comprehensive energy package, before the spring Council.

Integration of the internal market for financial services

With the aim of further integration of financial markets, the Presidency will seek rapid progress on the Action Plan for Financial Services and the Action Plan on business capital, while in parallel promoting discussion on the Directive on Investment Services as well as on the legal framework and conditions for periodic information (on the basis of the new proposals of the Commission).

Strengthening economic cooperation with new members

Finally, the ECOFIN council will enhance economic cooperation between the EU and new members to ensure that Enlargement will be a smooth process, whilst improving prospects for development and prosperity for all.

EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY, HEALTH AND CONSUMERS

More...

The European Employment strategy and the Lisbon strategy constitute the driving force for increasing employment and reducing unemployment, expanding the knowledge-based society and strengthening social cohesion. An essential prerequisite for attaining the objectives that have been set is to promote vigorously all major policies simultaneously, by means of an appropriate, coherent timetable. The Greek Presidency will prepare the interim review of the social policy agenda and promote the development of an enhanced employment strategy, by aligning the Luxemburg process with the wider Lisbon strategy. The synchronisation of economic and employment policies should be conducted in a way that improves the cohesion of guidelines (i.e. the General Economic Policy and Employment Guidelines) without affecting, however, the autonomy of each process. The main objectives will be to increase employment, ensure the social inclusion of weaker population groups, and promote participation, social dialogue and gender equality. Efforts will also be made to arrive at a political agreement on the directive that deals with the working conditions of temporary workers.

... and better jobs

A dynamic employment sector is directly related to job quality and security. The European Commission's review of the common strategy for health and safety at work will be useful in this context. As part of the modernization of social welfare, the whole question of the support given to national strategies for secure and viable pensions, as well as the health care and protection of senior citizens will be reviewed. In particular, with regard to pensions, the Greek Presidency will look for methods of applying a uniform process in this sector.

Mobility and skills

In order to balance job supply and demand in a constantly changing environment, the Greek Presidency will promote the upgrading of workforce skills, in addition to the coordination of social insurance schemes, the possibility of issuing a European social security card and the development of a Web site with information on professional and educational opportunities in the Union.

People with disabilities

On the occasion of the Year for People with Disabilities, initiatives aimed at increasing public awareness and promoting the social inclusion of this population category will be encouraged.

Health

In the health sector, special attention will be given to establishing quality and safety standards for the tissue and cell issue and the revision of legislation on pharmaceuticals, as well as arriving at a common position on tobacco issues.

Improving consumer protection

The Greek Presidency will work towards the improvement of the common level of consumer protection throughout the Union, the effective implementation of related rules and the participation of consumer organisations in European policies

COMPETITIVENESS (INTERNAL MARKET, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, INDUSTRY, RESEARCH, TOURISM)

An effective and functional internal market, for the benefit of undertakings...

To create an effective and functional internal market, the Greek Presidency will intensify efforts to eliminate the barriers that still prevent the full operation of the internal market, with the aim of achieving optimum results for the benefit of enterprises and consumers. To ensure equal participation of all the Union's regions in the single market, we look forward to the European Commission's communication on a comprehensive policy for the sustainable development of island regions.

The commitment to structural and economic reforms should be renewed by means of immediate and specific action. Reforms will involve the product and capital markets and especially the identification of key issues in relation to sustainable economic growth, i.e. competitiveness combined with increased employment, greater social cohesion and respect for the environment. In this same context, we will promote the simplification and improvement of legislation to the benefit of business ventures, particularly small enterprises, as well as the elimination of barriers to free provision of services. Special weight will be given to the modernisation of competition rules, the promotion of corporate governance issues and the completion of legislation on public procurement.

and consumers

The operation of the internal market should, however, safeguard consumer trust and ensure a high level of protection. The Greek Presidency will seek to advance the question of consumer credit, and pursue the debate on sales promotion practices in the internal market and on the expected framework directive on fair commercial practices. Emphasis will also be placed on the promotion of an administrative cooperation framework for implementing community legislation on consumer protection.

The set of legislative texts on public procurement will be completed as part of the effort to probe the internal market. We also intend to speed up examination of the consumer credit issue. European Commission proposals are also expected on company mergers, chemicals legislation and company law.

Food safety

A viable internal market system should provide consumer protection especially in the area of food chain safety. In this context, the White Paper has already initiated the implementation of the necessary action, which will be one of our priorities.

The competitiveness of enterprises

In view of the changes brought about by Enlargement and by globalisation, in particular, it is advisable to promote an integrated and strategic approach to ensuring the development and competitiveness of European enterprises. At the same time, we must respond to the challenges of environmental protection and social issues, as required by the European social model.

Small and medium-size enterprises and entrepreneurship

The Greek Presidency will continue to give emphasis to the role of SMEs in development, competitiveness and employment in the Union. It will seek to create a more favourable environment, fostering entrepreneurship and competitiveness and to encourage small emerging enterprises, supporting their capacity to innovate. It will also facilitate the establishment of new, dynamic enterprises, which are a major source of new jobs.

At the same time, following a “think small first” approach, the Presidency will work to accelerate implementation of the European Charter for small enterprises and draw lessons from best practices, in accordance with the Barcelona directives.

	<p>In order to meet the Union's entrepreneurship deficit, mainly in the area of technology and knowledge, the Greek Presidency will promote public dialogue and the adoption of specific political initiatives in favour of entrepreneurship at the spring European Council.</p> <p>The Greek Presidency, in particular, will move forward the debate on the expected Green Paper on entrepreneurship, with the aim of implementing a European Action Plan on the issue. Similar emphasis will be given to the more profitable use of innovation by enterprises, especially SMEs.</p>
<i>European industrial policy</i>	<p>The Greek Presidency attaches special importance to the issue of industrial policy. Using the Commission's Communication and recommendations, it intends to initiate an in-depth discussion of this matter and the promotion of specific measures and actions.</p>
<i>Tourism – a source of development and employment</i>	<p>Tourism plays a major part in employment and in the development of the most remote and underprivileged regions of Europe; at the same time tourism represents an alternative economic activity from which the environment can benefit significantly. The Greek Presidency will work towards a common approach to the future of European Tourism and relevant guidelines adopted by the Council.</p> <p>In the research sector, emphasis will be given to the consideration of measures and policies, in order to increase expenditure for research and development and achieve the Barcelona objective.</p>
<i>Bringing a new momentum to research and innovation</i>	<p>A new momentum should be given to research and innovation in Europe by furthering appropriate action, such as the improved use of research facilities at European level, the "opening" of national research and technology programs, the application of article 169 of the Treaty, the establishment of a framework for European Research and Development Agencies, etc. The Greek Presidency will also deal with outstanding issues on the adoption of the EU patent in the course of 2003.</p> <p>The Greek Presidency is looking forward to the Commission's report on life sciences and biotechnology and will examine, in this context, appropriate measures for biotechnology, depending also on the progress made in the interim.</p>

TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATIONS, ENERGY

Transport

*Transport in an enlarged
Europe, trans-european
network*

The transport sector is an important aspect of the single market, in terms of free movement of people and goods and, in this respect, it represents a priority for an enlarged Europe. The Greek Presidency will deal, as a priority, with the revision of the guidelines for the trans-european networks and promote the question of tariffing infrastructure, in accordance with the Commission's relevant communication.

Modernising land transport

The issue of road safety, a daily concern for European citizens, we hope will lead to the adoption of guidelines for action to be taken by the EU within the next five years. We will pursue the examination of the 2nd railway package, which is expected to give new impetus to the rail market in Europe. The Greek Presidency is particularly interested in the urban transport sector, on which it will hold discussions.

*Strengthening Europe's role in
the global air transport market*

Negotiations for an agreement on the Single Transatlantic Aviation Area will bring a new dimension to the world air transport market. The Greek Presidency will deal with the pending issues of the package of proposals on the Single European Sky.

*Safety and competitiveness in
sea transport*

In the matter of sea transport, the Greek Presidency will give emphasis to improved ship safety and quality shipping, as well as training, employment and motivation of young people to work in this sector, in the context of action aimed at increasing the competitiveness of EU shipping. Moreover, proposals on the prevention and avoidance of terrorist acts against ports and ships in the European Union will be promoted.

Communications

*Communications for all, at the
heart of an enlarged Europe*

In the enlarged Europe, the development of communications and of the information society, will contribute significantly to reducing the digital divide and completing the integration of the enlarged community area, providing access to all, independent of geographical location, without any form of exclusion.

*Trans-european broadband
networks at the citizen's service*

At this level, the Greek Presidency, with the opportunity of the launching of the e-Europe Action Plan 2005, will support the further expansion of the data exchange network between administrations, as well as the participation of third countries in corresponding telematics programs. To build on available technological resources, transition to digital systems will be envisaged, in order to facilitate broadband access. The framework for the re-utilisation of public documents will be completed, with the aim of enhancing electronic entrepreneurship,

e-Europe and network security

As part of the e-Europe program, the application of statistical indicators will begin and the decision to extend the financial instrument for network security will be taken. For the purpose of guaranteeing the security of users of electronic media, it is advisable to promote the Regulation on the Network and Information Security Unit and prolong the duration of the Action Plan for safer use of the Internet. The Greek Presidency will hold discussions on e-governance and e-integration, with the aim of contributing to the wider debate on these issues.

Electronic democracy and e-government

As we are constantly looking for methods that will ensure more transparency and participation of European citizens in the critical choices and decisions that are made at EU level, we cannot disregard the huge possibilities which new information technologies can offer. On the Web site of the Greek Presidency, we will establish, on an experimental basis, an interactive dialogue between the Presidency and European citizens on a series of important issues that we will be asked to handle during the next six months. At an appropriate time, the Council will be informed about the results of this dialogue.

Moreover, e-governance will be the subject of a specially convened ministerial meeting. Methods to help reduce red tape, with the help of state of the art telematic technologies, could become a new field of cooperation and exchange of experience.

*Liberalisation of postal
services*

Regarding postal services, the Commission's first report on the liberalisation of this sector in member states is awaited with interest.

Development of a strong and competitive energy sector

Energy

A steady and sustainable development of European economics requires easy access, free from any technical or economic impediments to available energy sources for the production of goods and services. This makes it imperative to secure adequate supply of available energy sources and to carry through the liberalisation of the internal electricity and natural gas market whilst developing, at the same time, all essential energy connections, both within Europe and with the new developing energy production centres in the European periphery.

Sustainable development and energy

With a view to achieving a balanced development of the energy policy's social, environmental and competitive component, we will aim at ensuring wider integration of sustainable development in the Union's energy policies.

In the context of these objectives, the Greek Presidency will seek to secure oil and natural gas supplies, coupled with the deregulation of the internal electricity and natural gas market (by providing public service and consumer protection) and the development of trans-european networks.

In the context of sustainable development, the Greek Presidency will encourage the use of renewable energies, rational use and conservation of energy, the co-generation of heat and electricity and the establishment of common rules for the safety of nuclear plants and the handling of nuclear waste and fuel.

The international dimension of energy

With a view to ensuring the economic viability of EU energy policies, international cooperation in the energy sector should be promoted, in particular with Mediterranean partners, Russia and the countries of South-East Europe.

AGRICULTURE – FISHERIES - FOOD SAFETY

European Rural Model

Developments in agriculture, fisheries and food safety are an integral part of the changes that are taking place at the level of the European society and economy; they affect and are directly linked to the role which the European Union aspires to play on a global scale. The European Rural Model, a major aspect of European culture, is mainly founded on two pillars: farms on the one hand, which in most cases are family holdings, and the social fabric, on the other, made up of communities, small towns and villages throughout the EU's Rural Area.

The European Rural Model, directly or indirectly, preserves millions of jobs; it supports the economy of many regions, ensuring human presence and care in rural areas, with beneficial effects for the environment.

Common Agricultural Policy

For four decades, the CAP has been supporting our rural model. It guarantees the food sufficiency that Europe needs for strategic reasons in a particularly troubled and unpredictable world. It has proven to be a cornerstone of the structure of United Europe.

Sustainable Development

The contribution of the CAP and the Common Fisheries Policy to sustainable development, in economic, social and environmental terms is essential, not only for rural populations but also for food safety and the quality of life of all European citizens.

Interim CAP revision

The interim revision of the CAP will be a central issue for the Greek Presidency. The objective is to reach a good outcome in the negotiations. The regulation proposals that will be presented in January 2003 by the European Commission and the framework agreed at the Brussels Summit will be the main reference basis for discussions and negotiations.

European Agriculture and World Trade

2003 will be a very important year for WTO negotiations. The Greek Presidency will contribute to the preparation of a firm and clear EU stand at the WTO's Ministerial Session in Cancun that will be held later in the year. The aim will be to support the European rural model, sustainable development, the healthy growth of international trade and solidarity with developing and less developed countries.

Citizen's Safety

In the context of the wider issue of citizens' safety, be they producers, workers, or consumers, emphasis will be given to the promotion of legislation in the following sectors: food health and safety, safe practice of agriculture and other related activities, veterinary science, animal welfare and nutrition, genetically modified organisms, safe use of pesticides and the control of their waste.

Fisheries Policy

In the Fisheries Sector, we will aim to complete a large portion of the Common Fisheries Policy presently under revision. An important part of this revision deals with aquaculture and fishing in the Mediterranean.

*Development and environment
in close inter-relation*

ENVIRONMENT

With the evaluation of the Commission's strategy for sustainable development, the Greek Presidency will promote the completion of the Lisbon process, by enhancing the environmental dimension of this strategy, with the help of tools such as:

- Eliminating barriers for environmental technology
- Taking sustainability into account during impact assessment,
- Further developing market mechanisms
- Speeding up the process of integrating environmental requirements in the Union's sectoral policies and the Johannesburg commitments.

*Fulfilment of the Johannesburg
commitments: the
Mediterranean dimension*

By conveying a clear message, with regard to the fulfilment of the commitments undertaken by the EU at the Johannesburg Summit, both at global level and at the level of an enlarged Europe, the Greek Presidency will be contributing to the realisation of major cooperation initiatives in the sectors of energy and water, with emphasis on the Mediterranean dimension.

As it promotes the implementation of the 6th Action Program for the Environment, the Greek Presidency will give priority to environmental policies and, in particular, to important legislative proposals that are already pending or will come before Council. These include the establishment of a Community environmental liability system, based on the principle “the polluter pays”, linking the environment with health, namely through the expected new proposal on chemicals, the protection of the marine environment, bathing waters in particular, as well as measures for improving air quality. At the same time, the Greek Presidency is invited to finalise political agreement on the regulation that deals with the traceability and labelling of Genetically Modified Organisms, and prepare EU positions for several international events such as the ministerial conference in Kiev on a regional strategy for sustainable development.

EDUCATION – YOUTH - CULTURE

Education

In accordance with the Lisbon strategy, the Greek Presidency will promote benchmarks for educational objectives and will contribute to the adoption of a coherent approach to the whole process. From this perspective, e-learning, the learning of foreign languages and international cooperation in tertiary education take on special significance.

The Presidency's interest in the possibility of creating a common educational area of the EU, the Mediterranean and South-East Europe should also be noted.

Youth

In the youth sector, our objective is to promote an open coordination method and strive for a common approach to information and participation issues.

Culture

Culture 2000

The Greek Presidency will pursue the working program on European cooperation and continue to follow the progress of the Culture 2000 program. At the same time, we will seek to highlight the close link between the Olympic Games of Athens and culture. In parallel, the Greek Presidency is working with the Cultural Olympiad for the joint organisation, within and outside Greece, of events aimed at emphasising our common European roots, both at the level of cultural traditions and present-day cultural achievements.

Cultural Olympiad

In the audiovisual sector, we hope that the re-examination of the Television Without Frontiers Directive will move ahead and that discussions on the expansion of the Community media program will be carried forward.

CREATION OF A SINGLE AREA OF FREEDOM – SECURITY – JUSTICE

*Mutual trust
Flexibility – Coordination
Efficiency*

The Union's policies on immigration, external border management and judicial cooperation in civil and criminal cases are important priorities of the Greek Presidency. The values of "justice, freedom and security", enshrined in the Amsterdam Treaty and the Tampere conclusions, reflect the steadfast aspiration of all citizens in the Union.

Given the importance of immigration and asylum issues, the Presidency will make all possible efforts to achieve balance on the basis of three fundamental principles: mutual trust – coordination – efficiency.

The Greek Presidency intends to work towards: the realisation of the Union's objectives, with special emphasis on the European Council's conclusions and the road map elaborated by the Danish Presidency. In the sector of Justice, cooperation on criminal and civil issues will be developed with a view to creating the new judicial area, combating international organised crime and enhancing the Union's external action.

*Combating illegal immigration
and managing external
frontiers*

Combating illegal immigration, through joint management of external land and sea border, by all member states, will be a major priority during the Greek Presidency, which will be responsible for supervising the joint action already decided under the Danish Presidency's road map. In view of the fact that most joint cooperation programs on border issues will be completed during the first half of 2003, the Greek Presidency's Report to the European Council in Thessaloniki on the practical implementation of the Seville guidelines for the management of external borders, is of critical importance.

On matters of external frontier management, the Presidency will focus on the following issues:

- Successful implementation of all joint actions announced under the Seville conclusions regarding the EU's external frontiers (with special emphasis on sea borders); and the analysis, evaluation and utilisation of their results, with a view to reaching useful conclusions that will define the Union's corresponding policies.
- Promotion of repatriation programs and securing community funding
- Promotion of the establishment of a common database on visas.

*A collective problem that
requires a collective response*

The Greek Presidency wants to make it clear that combating illegal immigration is a collective problem for the Union and its resolution therefore requires a common understanding of its causes and expected results. For this reason, it feels that the preparation of a study by the European Commission on the rational distribution of responsibilities amongst member states with regard to external frontier management is important, as well as the development of the programme for expulsion and repatriation policies together with the necessary funding.

Asylum in a global planning context

Regarding asylum, the promotion of measures ensuring uniform implementation of asylum procedures should go hand in hand with the adoption of corresponding measures for combating illegal immigration, establishing common principles with regard to legal immigration and the integration of legal immigrants into the societies of member states and encouraging joint initiatives aimed at more efficient common management of the EU's external frontiers. Moreover, the joint responsibility of all member states in the matter of rational distribution of rights and obligations, with respect to both the expulsion of illegal immigrants to the countries of origin and external frontier control issues, should be promoted.

Combating trafficking of human beings and economic exploitation of immigrants

The issue of trafficking of human beings equally involves cooperation with countries of origin and transit and the adoption of a coherent common policy on readmission and repatriation. Improved cohesion of the Union's internal and external policies could contribute to the handling of problems related to the movement of populations from third countries. The Greek Presidency intends to develop closer cooperation with the main countries of origin or transit of immigrants entering the EU's territory, with respect to re-admission agreements.

The social dimension of the problem

The Presidency believes that it is important to facilitate the social inclusion of immigrants. This would have a positive impact on both social (directives on family reunion for long-term residents) and economic issues, which concern the Union and would help to allay the fears expressed by EU citizens. To that end, the Presidency will seek an approach that encourages the adoption of relevant policies by member states. Non-discrimination in the economic, social and cultural field through measures against racism and xenophobia constitutes a priority for the European Union.

Family reunification and long-term immigrants

In parallel the Presidency will maximise efforts for the adoption of the Directives on family reunification and long-term immigrants. Further work will be done on the new proposals for immigration for paid employment and for studying.

The relationship between immigration and development

The Greek Presidency will seek to open the debate on the direct relationship between immigration and development, taking into account the Seville appeal for economic and technical assistance to third countries, for the purpose of establishing social and economic conditions that will enable people to remain in their countries of origin or return to them.

Combating terrorism, cross-border crime, trafficking of human beings

The EU has increased its efforts, particularly after 1999, in response to citizens' demand for more security in the area of freedom and justice. In this context, the Greek Presidency will continue to implement the necessary measures for creating a single area where citizens will feel secure. The fight against terrorism remains a top priority issue under the Greek Presidency. Cross-border organised crime and the trafficking of human beings, are important issues to which special emphasis will be given. We shall continue the implementation of the EU Action Plan and the Seville declaration. Moreover, combating cross-border organised crime and the trafficking of human beings are crucial problems to which utmost attention will be paid in compliance with the conclusions of Tampere and later European Councils.

Coordination with third countries

Coordination with third countries, in particular the US, Russia, Balkan and Mediterranean countries is an important element in achieving the objectives of judicial and police cooperation. The advancement of the EU-US judicial cooperation agreement will be the first important step that guides our future action in this area.

Drugs policy

The gradual development of a single European policy on drugs is another area of initiatives for the Greek Presidency. Major benefits can result from the use of harmonised methods in dealing with this problem, both at the level of law enforcement and criminal procedures as well as detoxification systems and the social integration of users. The effectiveness of existing international treaties on the control of narcotics production and trafficking, should be reviewed. The extension of the Drugs Action Plan (2000-2004) to the Balkan region and stronger regional cooperation, through joint MS/EUROPOL and MS/SECI operations on drugs related issues, will significantly contribute to a coherent approach to this problem

Beyond the Tampere program

EU enlargement will bring new challenges and opportunities, resulting from the expansion of the Union's external frontiers and, more generally, from a situation where 25 or more states will be cooperating and carrying out Union policies. At the same time, economic and social conditions are changing, as a result of globalisation, creating new needs and obligations for the Union. For this reason, with a view to achieving the objectives within the original deadlines laid down by the Amsterdam Treaty through to the road map and laying the foundations of a common immigration and asylum policy by 2004, the Union must prepare its future course of action on these issues. The Greek Presidency will seek, on the one hand, to contribute to the attainment of the Union's present objectives, whilst participating in the debate on Union policies, after the completion of the Tampere program.

Mutual recognition of court rulings in civil and criminal cases

Mutual recognition of court rulings is the cornerstone of judicial cooperation, as it strengthens the EU's capacity to prosecute international crime, by simplifying and speeding up judicial cooperation, whilst providing better service to citizens. The Greek Presidency will promote the draft regulation for mutual recognition in all member states of court decisions on parental responsibility, which regulate relations between parents and children. It will also promote the draft regulation on the European Enforcement Order on uncontested claims, to further simplify and speed up the recognition of court decisions and their execution in other member states.

Convergence of legislations for combating severe forms of criminal behaviour

Regarding criminal proceedings, efforts will be made to further improve judicial cooperation by promoting the draft framework decision on the execution of confiscation decisions in relation to specific serious crimes.

The Greek Presidency has set as its objective to further the convergence of criminal legislation relating to serious crimes with a view to effectively promoting the rule of law within the European Union. For that purpose it intends to speed up work on the finalisation of the framework decision on the crimes of racism and xenophobia.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS – ESDP

Western Balkans

The Union's relations with the Western Balkan region will be a major priority of the Greek Presidency. The Presidency is set to capitalise on the positive results achieved so far in the implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Process. In this context, the Presidency will work in a systematic way in order to deal with issues such as the consolidation of democratic institutions and civil liberties in the countries of the region, protection of minorities, promotion of economic reconstruction and development and further enhancing of regional cooperation. Furthermore, the Greek Presidency considers the objective of Romania and Bulgaria joining the EU in 2007 to be an important incentive for West Balkan countries, which have already been recognised as potential applicants. The scheduled EU-Western Balkans Summit Meeting (Zagreb II Process) next June in Thessaloniki will contribute to the development of EU relations with the Western Balkans. It is clear that the Greek Presidency, capitalising on its knowledge of the region and its tradition of bilateral relations with these countries, will give the necessary impetus to all initiatives, such as the Stability Pact, aimed at furthering the development of the region.

Russia

Russia is a strategic partner of the EU and this will be demonstrated at the EU-Russia Summit in May 2003, which we hope will be the starting point for the effective renewal of EU-Russia relations. During our Presidency, we shall push forward the creation of the Common European Economic Area, the energy dialogue between the EU and Russia, substantial progress on negotiations for Russia's accession to the WTO, as well as cooperation on crisis management and link-up on ESDP. Relations with Russia need to be reviewed within a coherent and integrated framework, not only on the economic, but also on the social and security level. To this end, the revision process of the Common Strategy for Russia, to be completed during the Greek Presidency, is particularly important.

*Wider Europe /
New Neighbours*

Following the accession of the new member states, the enlarged Union will focus its attention on developing closer relations with all new neighbouring countries. The EU has already established contractual relations with partners in the South Mediterranean and the Commonwealth of Independent States, including the Caucasus. Building on this diversified contractual relationship, the Presidency, working together with the Secretary General/High Representative and European Commission, will explore existing possibilities for developing these relations further, in sectors of growing importance after enlargement (trade and economic relations, area of freedom, security and justice, etc.).

*Ukraine
Belarus
Moldova*

In the new geography that will emerge after enlargement in Europe, countries within our immediate proximity will be the subject of a new debate. We feel it would be advisable to elaborate proposals to enhance cooperation with these countries in all sectors (economy, institutions building, rule of law, freedom, security and justice) and through the improvement of the conventional framework.

Caucasus

The significance of the South Caucasus region for an integrated EU energy policy and its proximity to high interest areas, have led to the Union's decision to assume a more active role in this region. Implementing this decision will be the main target of the Greek Presidency for South Caucasus. An important aspect of our objectives will be to utilise appropriately the partnership and cooperation agreements, whilst at the same time enhancing cooperation and the EU's presence in the region, through the Special Representative.

*Transatlantic Dialogue-EU-US
and EU-Canada Relations*

The US is an important EU partner and in this context we will seek to enhance dialogue and cooperation at all levels. The fight against terrorism, the handling of international issues, the growth of international trade and the promotion of sustainable development are all aspects of globalisation in which we share common values and interests. In the context of the Transatlantic Dialogue with the US, the Greek Presidency will put the emphasis on relations with the Balkans, Russia, CIS countries, the Middle East, Afghanistan, disarmament and illegal immigration, and on promoting the issues contained in the Positive Economic Agenda. Our aim is to achieve tangible results in all sectors at the EU-US summit that will be held during the Greek Presidency.

The Mediterranean

Relations between the EU and Canada will be further supported and enhanced, based on major international issues.

The Mediterranean has always enjoyed advanced relations with the EU, which we will try to enhance further during our Presidency. The main aim is to achieve a de-escalation of tension in the region, by encouraging dialogue and cooperation amongst Mediterranean countries and strengthening their ties with Europe (confidence building measures, new institutions, such as the EuroMediterranean Parliamentary Assembly). The Action Plan that was adopted at the last EuroMediterranean Foreign Ministers Conference in Valencia represents a suitable framework for promoting the Barcelona Process and a more active involvement of Mediterranean partners in this Process. The Greek Presidency will work for the fulfilment of the Valencia commitments and promote dialogue with Mediterranean countries and cooperation in the sectors of trade, development, justice, immigration, security and environment. The establishment of the EuroMediterranean Institute for Intercultural Dialogue will strengthen cooperation on questions related to culture, youth and information. During our Presidency, conferences of Foreign and Energy Ministers will be convened.

Middle East

The Union's traditional relations with the region of the Middle East should be further developed by creating an opportunity for effective action to put an end to violence, allow political considerations to prevail over military prospects and revive the peace process. To this end, the "Quartet" should be promoted as a decisive element of coordination of the international community's efforts. In this context, we will be supporting efforts aimed at reforming the Palestinian Authority and obtaining a positive response on the part of Israel, since these are elements that affect the peace process. The partisans of peace on both sides should be supported through the resumption, inter alia, of contacts between representatives of the two civil societies concerned.

	<p>We shall maintain our contacts with Iran's neighbours and pursue dialogue with this country. Our objective is to develop relations with the Arab and Islamic world, with a view to establishing a climate of trust and cooperation that will be beneficial for the region's security. In the wider region, the promotion of negotiations for a free trade agreement will be a positive development for the countries of the Gulf.</p>
<i>Africa</i>	<p>The role of the EU in the African continent needs to be enhanced. The Europe-Africa Summit in Lisbon, on 5 April 2002, provides a good opportunity along these lines. At the same time, all possible efforts will be made to avert conflicts in crisis areas and to address the humanitarian crisis on the African continent.</p>
<i>Asia</i>	<p>For the Asian region, our aim will be to build on the conclusions of the 4th ASEM and the opportunities provided by the EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, which will be held in Brussels. The development of the EU's relations with Japan and China should gradually reach a level commensurate with the size and importance of these two countries. The Union's role has already been instrumental in normalising relations between India and Pakistan and in preventing a new crisis. To further stabilise security in this region, we shall continue to support the efforts for the reconstruction of Afghanistan and the implementation of the Bonn Agreement.</p>
<i>Latin America</i>	<p>Capitalising on the opportunities provided by the Ministerial Meetings with Latin American countries, following on the efforts of the recent Madrid Summits, we will strive, during the Presidency, to enhance the EU's relations with the countries of this region. The Ministerial Conference of the EU and the Rio Group will be a further step in this direction.</p>
<i>Development</i>	<p>In the field of development, it is important to make progress with respect to the economic partnership agreements and we hope that the EU-ACP Ministerial Conference in May 2003 will accelerate this process. Meanwhile, we will be examining a number of issues in the Council, such as the orientation discussion on European foreign policy and immigration and development issues. We shall work together with the European Commission to establish better partnerships between North and South, in conformity with the commitments made at Monterey and Johannesburg.</p>

Trade Relations

With the aim of arriving at a satisfactory outcome at the 5th Ministerial Session in Cancun, we shall seek to obtain satisfactory and balanced results during the negotiations on the development agenda in Doha. We will try to achieve progress in all areas and, in particular, on those issues for which there is an agreed calendar for the first half of 2003, i.e. services, agriculture and market access. At the level of bilateral trade relations, we will give special emphasis to the EU-US Positive Economic Agenda. We will support the process of the EuroMediterranean free trade area and try to achieve progress in the negotiations with Gulf countries, Mercosur countries, Iran and ACP countries and the completion of negotiations for the cooperation agreement with Syria.

Fight against terrorism

International cooperation, and especially cooperation with the US, in the fight against terrorism is of paramount importance. The political dialogue between the EU and third countries on this issue is necessary so that the international alliance against terrorism becomes more effective. We shall continue efforts to include this issue in all facets of EU external policy, in international fora as well as in bilateral relations.

United Nations

During our Presidency, the text on the priorities for the preparation of the European position with regard to the General Assembly will be drawn up. At the same time, we will be studying the UN Secretary General's Report on the reform of the organisation.

Environmental diplomacy

The difficulties encountered by the EU positions at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development have highlighted an important gap in EU external policies, with respect to environmental diplomacy. Greece will try to promote the development of common European diplomacy on the environment and sustainable development. In addition to the support it will bring to European positions on these issues, environmental diplomacy may constitute an effective tool for preventive policies and a policy of rapprochement between peoples. In this context, contacts will be organised with interested member states, the Council's General Secretariat and the European Commission and efforts made to establish a network of the Environment Policy Directorates of member states Foreign Ministries. An international conference on "Peace and Sustainability" will also be convened, in cooperation with the World Bank.

Every opportunity will be taken to promote the Olympic Truce initiative, including at selected multinational events, during the Greek Presidency. Information will be available on this international peace initiative, and there will be the possibility of holding special Truce signing ceremonies by leaders and personalities wishing to contribute to the spread of the initiative.

European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)

With regard to the ESDP, a main priority of the Greek Presidency will be to conclude all pending issues in order to achieve, during 2003, the EU's full operational capability for global crisis management, through a balanced development of political and military facets and the promotion of political – military coordination.

In this context, with regard to the ESDP's military aspects, the efforts of the Greek Presidency will focus on:

- improving military capability, to allow the Union to conduct, on an autonomous or non-autonomous basis, Petersberg type missions. At this level, emphasis will be given to the armaments sector and, especially, to the strengthening of the European Defence Industry, mainly through the development of research and technology.
- consolidating and further expanding and deepening cooperation with NATO,
- promoting the necessary adjustments to the ESDP's mechanism, following enlargement, to ensure the smooth integration of new members,
- finalising the institutional framework for the mechanism's operation by adopting the necessary operational concepts and general ideas,
- re-adjusting and testing procedures, mainly through preliminary work, for the implementation of the exercise program.
- tightening relations with third countries, potential partners in particular, with special emphasis on relations with Russia, in view of its integration in the European security system and by promoting dialogue and closer relations, at ESDP level, with Mediterranean and Balkan countries.

Crisis management

At the level of political crisis management, the main aim of the Greek Presidency is to integrate the capabilities and operational framework in all four areas (police, rule of law, civil protection, public administration) while, at the same time, promoting horizontal issues such as financing, the participation of third countries and cooperation with international and non-governmental organisations. Special emphasis will be given to political – military coordination.

Conflict prevention

Regarding conflict prevention, the Greek Presidency will present the annual progress report, which will reflect results achieved in this area during the second half of 2002 and the first half of 2003. The objectives of the Greek Presidency will be to develop the regional approach, by focusing on prevention in areas like the Balkans, to establish the prevention mechanism and procedures and to promote cooperation with international and non-governmental organisations.

GENERAL AFFAIRS

GAC, the main coordinating body

Under the Seville guidelines the GAC will pursue its coordinating role and will have primary responsibility for preparing the European Council. In the context of the Council, we will continue the debate, which began during the Danish Presidency, on language issues and the rotating Presidency, in view of the forthcoming enlargement.

The regime applicable to European MPs and parties and the status of EU staff

During our Presidency, the Council will examine the regime applicable to European MPs and political parties, with special emphasis on funding. Similarly, we will strongly focus on the status of Community officials, which constitutes a question of wider interest for the Union's operation, in the hope of reaching a final conclusion.

Cohesion Policy

The Greek Presidency attaches importance to the future of the policy on economic and social cohesion and we are awaiting with interest the 2nd Interim Report on Cohesion. In this framework, we shall promote the dialogue on the future of cohesion policy after enlargement and on the policies to assist areas with particular structural disadvantages, such as the islands.

The Council will continue the discussion on the restructuring of external actions, giving emphasis to its operational aspects. Furthermore, in the Seville context, the Commission will present, in addition to the annual programme for 2004, the multi-annual programme, which is expected to contribute significantly to the inter-institutional dialogue within the Union.

IV. Epilogue

The task of organising an EU Presidency has now reached completely different dimensions, compared to the previous Greek Presidency in 1994. The duties of the Presidency in the areas of external relations and Justice and Home Affairs are particularly enhanced.

During the first half of 2003, there will be 2 European Councils, 5 international summit meetings (EU-Africa, the signing of the Accession Treaty, the European Conference, EU-Russia, EU-Western Balkans), 39 regular meetings of the Council of Ministers and 14 informal ministerial councils and meetings. In addition, 16 troika meetings at summit level are planned, as well as 37 ministerial troika meetings and more than 180 meetings and conferences at various other levels in 36 Greek cities.

As it completes its two-year preparations, the Greek Presidency has a strong feeling of responsibility towards the European family for the critical role it will be assuming in a period that will clearly be one of transition. It will seek, in a balanced way, to continue the highly positive role of the Danish Presidency, pursuing or completing pending matters, whilst bringing forward new ideas and proposals for action for an enlarged Europe. An enlarged Europe that is more competitive, socially fairer, safer, with a strong international presence and, above all, much closer to its citizens. Close cooperation with the Italian Presidency that follows will ensure, we believe, the necessary continuity and cohesion of action in 2003, a year of major decisions for the Union's future.

