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**JOINT STATEMENT ON THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTS OF TURKEY, BULGARIA AND ROMANIA**

(Antalya, 16-17 April 1998)

The President of the Republic of Turkey H.E. Mr. Süleyman Demirel, The President of the Republic of Bulgaria H.E. Mr. Peter Stoyanov and The President of Romania H.E. Mr. Emil Constantinescu met in Antalya on 16-17 April 1998. Present at the meeting were H.E. Mr. İsmail Cem, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, H.E. Mrs. Nadezhda Mihaylova, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria, H.E. Mr. Andrei Plesu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania and H.E. Mr. Murat Başesgioğlu, Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Turkey.

At this second trilateral summit meeting of Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania the Presidents exchanged views on issues of common interest concerning stability and security in South-Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region. They welcomed the progress achieved in various areas of their bilateral and multilateral relations since their last meeting in Varna on 3 October 1997. The talks took place in a cordial atmosphere which provided ample ground for constructive exchange.

The Presidents stressed that enhanced peace and stability in South-Eastern Europe is the primary aim of the countries of the region and it is of utmost importance for the security of Europe. In this context, they reiterated the need to promote the increasing integration of the region with the Euro-Atlantic community.

The Presidents expressed their full support for the role of the international organisations in the full implementation of the Dayton Agreements. The international community should remain engaged in its efforts to secure the full implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords in order to maintain peace and assist the development of democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Presidents underlined that the negotiations related to article V of Annex I-B of the Dayton Peace Agreement should start as soon as possible. They also stressed that the countries of the region would play an important role in these negotiations which would contribute decisively to the building of confidence in South-Eastern Europe.

The Presidents expressed their appreciation for the interest shown by the international community to the tense situation in Kosovo. They noted with satisfaction the Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Countries of South-Eastern Europe, issued in Sofia on 10 March, and the Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Countries of South-Eastern Europe, held in Bonn on 25 March as a demonstration of the new spirit of co-operation and active participation of the countries of the region in finding solutions to the regional problems.

The Presidents reaffirmed the readiness of their states to continue the consultations with the Contact Group. They expressed the common view that any measures against Federal Republic of Yugoslavia should take into account the political and economic stability of South-Eastern Europe and should not harm the interest of the states of the region. They particularly underlined the importance of the inviolability of the borders of the states in the region including those of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and declared that a lasting solution to the Kosovo problem should be sought through peaceful and constructive dialogue between the parties concerned and be based on the full protection of the rights of all the peoples living in Kosovo, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Principles and the Standards of the Organisation for Security and co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

The Presidents reiterated their unanimity on the importance of international co-operation in

combating terrorism, organised crime and illegal drug and arms trafficking. A “Co-operation Agreement on Combating Against Terrorism, Organised Crime, Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psycho tropic Substances, Money Laundering, Arms and Human Trafficking and the Other Major Crimes” was signed between the three countries on 16 April 1998. The Presidents agreed that H.E. Mr. Süleyman Demirel would invite other countries of the region to join this co-operation agreement.

The Presidents reaffirmed the significance of regional co-operation for economic development and prosperity. They declare that it is timely to start the examination of the ways and means to establish progressively a Trilateral Free Trade Area as part of the European architecture through free trade agreements between the members of the trilateral as well as through similar future arrangements and existing links between Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania and the European Union, Duly observing the obligations resulting from EU and WTO, and other international organisations and arrangements. They particularly underlined their desire to further liberalise their trade relations in a fashion compatible with their respective engagements towards third countries and stressed their conviction that this would also contribute to the process of wider European economic integration.

The Presidents are convinced that the comprehensive political dialogue they have established represents an increasingly effective platform to exchange views on regional matters of common interest. They advised their Governments to hold Ministerial and expert meeting in the respective fields of co-operation for the implementation of the agreements reached during the Antalya Summit.

The Presidents of Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania agreed to continue these meetings in the future in order to regularly exchange views on issues of common interest.