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GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON  
THE WORK OF THE ORGANIZATION  
STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION  
OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER  
RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED  
NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC  
ASSISTANCE: SPECIAL ECONOMIC  
ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES  
OR REGIONS  
THE SITUATION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA  
COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS  
AND THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND  
COOPERATION IN EUROPE  
MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY  
THE SITUATION IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES  
OF CROATIA

SECURITY COUNCIL  
Fifty-first year

Note verbale dated 20 February 1996 from the Permanent Representative  
of Bulgaria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Bulgaria to the United Nations presents his compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour, on instructions from the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria, to transmit herewith the text of the statement of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, His Excellency Mr. Jean Videnov, on Bulgaria's foreign policy and the future of the Balkans, delivered at a meeting with the Diplomatic Corps at Sofia on 7 February 1996 (see annex).

The Permanent Representative of Bulgaria would appreciate it if the text of the present letter and its annex were circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 10, 20 (b), 28, 30, 81 and 91, and of the Security Council.

ANNEX

Statement of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria  
on Bulgaria's foreign policy and the future of the Balkans,  
delivered at a meeting with the Diplomatic Corps at Sofia  
on 7 February 1996

Most of you will probably recall that a year ago, on 3 February 1995, we met in this very hall in order to inform you about the foreign policy intentions of the newly elected Government of the Democratic Left.

An objective analysis of the period under review would show that in the foreign policy area, as indeed in all other areas, the Government has consistently pursued the objectives it had announced then: European orientation, regional stability and regional security and cooperation.

These guidelines presupposed a better balance of different trends and corresponding activation in some along with the required continuity in foreign policy. In addition the country's foreign policy activity had to be advanced.

Continuity is to be found in all areas in which our foreign policy was active in recent years. This holds true of the promotion of relations with new partners like the United States of America and a number of the Far East countries. We made an effort to intensify relations with traditional partners like the Russian Federation and other CIS countries, the central European countries and a number of Middle East and also of Latin American States. In general, what had been set as an objective - continuity, balance and promotion - was more or less achieved.

It was particularly important that we made an essential step in one of the three main lines of our foreign policy - the European one. At the European Council meeting in Madrid last December, the Government officially submitted Bulgaria's application for accession to the European Union. It is noteworthy that a week ago the second meeting of the Bulgaria-EU Association Council highly appreciated what the Government and the country had done so far on European issues. The recent letter from the Italian chair to inform that the Bulgarian accession application was officially forwarded is yet another recognition.

Naturally, the Bulgarian policy's European line intersects with many issues and problems that the country daily confronts in the region where we live.

This brings me to the problems of regional stabilization. Last year, Bulgaria continued to abide consistently by the line it had pursued throughout the conflict west of our borders. That line was expressed in consistent restraint and non-interference, parity to the sides to the conflict, a parallel approach seeking a gradual elimination of the economic sanctions regime along with progress in the peaceful settlement of the conflict.

That policy won quite broad recognition on the part of the international community. Bulgaria's positive role as a stabilizing factor in the region was recognized. Meanwhile the country, as you know, sustained large losses in

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consequence of the enforcement of the United Nations-imposed economic sanctions. In our view, the question of overcoming the consequences of the sanctions should not be overlooked.

Naturally, we welcomed the decision to start a peace process with the involvement of all parties to the conflict. Therefore, we welcome the decision and, moreover, we are ready to support it in every way in all its aspects within the scope of our capabilities.

Conclusion of the peace agreements opens up new prospects to stepping up efforts to the benefit of regional security and cooperation, the third of the Government's foreign policy priorities.

In our opinion, two groups of tasks are today facing the international community and particularly the countries of the region in the present post-conflict period. The first group covers the successful implementation of the framework peace agreements on Bosnia and Herzegovina; the second group covers the broader aspects of the creating of prerequisites, and in future, of mechanisms for lasting security and intensive cooperation in the region.

With respect to the former, Bulgaria has already affirmed its readiness to contribute as much as it can to the implementation of the military aspects of the peace process. We expect that the specific conditions of the Bulgarian contribution to the multinational forces mission in Bosnia will be agreed on as a result of this dialogue.

We too share the view that exclusively military forms applied on their own and dissociated from civilian and humanitarian forms cannot guarantee the achievement of lasting peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina or in the adjoining regions. We share Karl Bildt's opinion that the improvement of people's life, its normalization, the solution of elementary daily problems and the real start of the processes of reconstruction and reintegration are of critical importance.

Therefore, today, with greater conviction, we voice our proposals for Bulgaria's active inclusion in the various both urgent and long-term reconstruction programmes. We are encouraged by the initial positive response by the EU and the other international structures. However, we expect a move towards active practical implementation. Bulgaria has the required capacity, capabilities and conditions. There is the geographic proximity and good knowledge of the region and conditions to work there. We have a number of proved competitive advantages that should be used in the reconstruction programmes in the region.

With regard to security, development and cooperation between countries of the region today, we believe there can be five possible lines of action:

- Establishment of lasting good-neighbourly relations. We believe all Balkan countries must unambiguously reaffirm principles like inviolability of borders, territorial integrity, non-interference and good-neighbourly cooperation;

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- Transborder cooperation. Recognition of the inviolability of borders should not presuppose that they are hermetically sealed. These issues cover a wide range: passport and customs regulations and formalities; cooperation in the effort to combat illicit traffic and immigration etc;
- Accelerated and intensive development of transport, telecommunications and energy infrastructure in compliance with European standards and the nine principal trans-European networks agreed on by the transport ministers of Europe in Crete in 1994. Infrastructure development is important as a precondition for better communications and also for the attraction of private and public investment, and naturally, as a factor of political stability;
- Promotion of trade and investment; establishment of free trade zones; harmonization of legislation in line with international standards and expectations; making the region attractive and competitive from the point of view of investors and in comparison to other regions of the world;
- Bilateral and multilateral solution of legal, cultural and social issues by legal instruments and administrative procedures facilitating the freedom of movement from the receptive countries. Complications arising in ethnic relations will be successfully solved in this context.

We are aware that unless the external key factors of the international community are positively involved, local initiatives will find it hard to weave through and yield results.

Advancement in each of these areas depends first and foremost on the countries of the region. With this concept in mind, Bulgaria's Government would like to suggest the following formats for practical action.

Let me start with Balkan cooperation. The format today covers Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey, Croatia, Macedonia and Yugoslavia. The pan-Balkan process was retarded but not discontinued or destroyed by the conflict in former Yugoslavia. May I recall that the last meeting of Balkan Foreign Ministers at Tirana in 1990 took the decision that the next meeting should take place in the capital of Bulgaria, Sofia. Bulgaria is ready to host a meeting of the Balkan Foreign Ministers. The agenda might include joint efforts to enforce the frame agreements on peace in Bosnia and cover the above-stated five lines of joint action.

Infrastructure development is the next set of issues around which the efforts of the parties concerned could focus. To put it mildly, entire countries in the region, the new ones in particular, are far from modern communication standards. The existing infrastructure needs to be interconnected and modernized in line with the standards and direction of trans-European infrastructure networks.

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Last November, Bulgaria hosted an OSCE seminar on the role of infrastructures in the Black Sea region. The work and conclusions of the seminar outlined the practical need of a focal converging point where regional exchange of information and contacts on infrastructure issues will be made. We believe Sofia could be a suitable centre in this respect. We believe that active cooperation will be possible in the future on these issues between the countries of the Black Sea Cooperation Region and the Central European Initiative.

Other initiatives of European cooperation should be launched in clear correspondence with European aspirations and calling of the peoples and societies of the Balkan region.

EU members or associated countries are called on to play an active role in this respect. Bulgaria has already felt the advantages of this type of European cooperation with its neighbours Greece and Romania. It will be natural to try to expand this circle by making regular contact with the other "troika", Austria, Hungary and Slovakia, which recently likewise started this kind of trilateral cooperation. I believe that the listed countries could maintain an "arc of stability" along the borders of the regions that until recently were restless. This will promote the consolidation of the process of pacification, stabilization, reconstruction and reintegration and along with that make use of a conductor of integration impulses like the River Danube.

In conclusion, I would like to inform you that yesterday I had the opportunity to present most of these ideas in Davos where this time the agenda gave significant attention to the Balkan region. In my opinion, they aroused interest. I suggest you bring them to the attention of your Governments. On the one hand, this would be useful in view of further contacts and cooperation with our partners of Europe and the world. On the other hand, it would be useful in relation to the Bulgarian Government's specific initiative that I would like to officially announce today, namely, the intention to hold a meeting of the Balkan countries' Foreign Ministers in 1996. It should give an impetus to the other two undertakings: infrastructure projects of common interest and cooperation between the CEI and BSEC countries.

Bulgaria is calling for a joint formula of lasting efficiency for regional stabilization, regional security and cooperation. We trust in the possibility of a new better future in the Balkans as part of twenty-first century Europe. Bulgaria stands ready to work indefatigably and within the scope of her capability to translate this policy into reality.

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