

**High Level Political Meeting
of Senior Advisors to the Prime Minister**

15 July 2004, Radisson SAS Palais Hotel, Vienna

Conclusion

The States of South Eastern Europe with the active support the European Commission and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe have embarked on an ambitious process to create an Energy Community in South Eastern Europe (ECSEE). The overall objective of this process is to improve social, environmental and economic standards throughout South Eastern Europe by working together on a regional basis in the vitally important energy sector.

The Senior Advisors to the Prime Ministers of the participating countries/territories¹ were greatly encouraged by the recent decision of the EU Council to mandate the European Commission to hold comprehensive negotiations with the participating countries/territories to transform the initial political agreements – the so-called Athens Memoranda of 2002 and 2003 – into a legally binding agreement. Such an agreement will firmly underpin the legal and institutional basis for this process and facilitate further investments in this sector. The first round of negotiations with the EC was held in Vienna on 14 July and a detailed schedule of further meetings was agreed in view of meeting the target of finalising the negotiations on the agreement by the end of 2004.

This process is firmly set in the framework of the EU's directives on energy and will result in the participating countries adopting the energy and related environmental sections of the *acquis communautaire* as envisaged in the Athens Memoranda, fulfilment of these directives should allow the countries to participate fully in the EU's internal energy market. Countries can also be considered to have fulfilled an important element of the EU accession process.

The representative of Prime Ministers agreed on the importance of an early establishment of the Secretariat of the ECSEE process and call on the Commission to ensure its realisation on the basis of proposals from interested members of the ECSEE.

They expressed strong commitment to this process and looked forward to the full support of the new Commission of the European Communities for this challenging endeavour.

The Senior Advisors to Prime Ministers of ECSEE

¹ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Turkey and UNMIK/Kosovo (Moldova is observer); Austria, Greece, Italy and Slovenia are political participants