

Speech by George Papandreou Minister for Foreign Affairs at the Opening Ceremony of the 2000-2001 Academic year of the College of Europe

Bruges-Belgium, 6 October 2000

Ministry of Foreign Affairs —

In the longstanding tradition of the College of Europe, George A. Papandreou, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, made a speech and special 'Bruges contribution' on an aspect of European integration, at the Opening Ceremony of the 2000-2001 academic year.

Dear students, your Excellency, distinguished professors...

First of all, I would like to congratulate Your Excellency on your appointment as President of the board of directors. Allow me to add my warm congratulations to those of prime Minister Costas Simitis.

It is an honor to address the Opening Ceremony of the 2000-2001 academic year of this prestigious College of Europe and to contribute my "Bruges message" on European integration. I hope that it may further deepen the current discussions on matters that appeal to our hearts for they touch our very existence and future as Europeans.

As a former Minister of Education I would like to pay my own personal tribute to this institution. It has committed itself in training competent and experienced Europeans and providing them with the highest level of education. Tomorrow's Europe shall demand the highest level of professional responsibilities and this school has committed to meeting these challenges.

I feel also very honored that Rector von der Gablentz has chosen Aristotle as patron of the forthcoming academic year. This is a reference to the Greek roots of our common European civilization. Aristotle shaped Europe's cultural and political identity.

Aristotle does not regard politics as a separate science from ethics, but as its completion, and almost its a verification. The moral ideal in political administration is only a different aspect of individual happiness. Hence, for Aristotle, the creation of a good politician and a good political order are of the highest practical importance. In this context the State is not a local union for the prevention of wrong doing, and the convenience of exchange. It is also not an institution for the protection of goods and property. It is a genuine moral organization for advancing the development of humans. Thus it is in the constitution that the good person and the good citizen coincide. The constitutional republic, and thus a democratic regime, is regarded as the best attainable form of government.

Democracy is the key word for the future of the whole of Europe. The EU has a leading role to play in this context. Democracy which should be seen as a pedagogy of the citizen, a pedagogy of society and politicians, in a continued search, a continued dialogue, a constant reaffirmation of the values and the ethics that we, as citizens, represent.

In this context the practice of politics becomes an educative process. Not one of ready-made solutions and imposed prototypes or magical formulae from all-powerful leaders. The politician is called upon to lead the debate, and provide for the space for ideas to grow, be

challenged, be shaped as our moral tools to deal with everyday life or new and difficult challenges.

In his address Rector von der Gabletz so rightly "spoke" of today's European aspiration and challenges "...preparing a wider union, encompassing a yet richer diversity of national and regional cultures than the present EU" and the historical role of Aristotle in defining and redefining the common European heritage as a "guide" for a "prise de conscience" of it, shared by all Europeans.

There is no doubt that mankind will face unprecedented challenges of economic and political globalization in the coming century. These new challenges bring new ethical, cultural and social dilemmas. They also raise a fundamental question: how can we guarantee the 'democratic' nature of global phenomena, when, by their very nature, they go beyond the control of the nation-state as we know it? I firmly believe that in Aristotle we have the political answer to these phenomena: The heart of the European ethos lies in building the institutions and practices of inclusiveness. Building a new democratic Europe, which encompasses all is at the heart of all political challenge. This is the essence of enlargement or reunification of Europe.

Greece has always supported EU enlargement, as a means to build a bridge of security, cooperation, and development between nations. There is an inherent logic to Greece's approach. With the harrowing war in Kosovo still fresh in our memories, the Greek people are critically aware of the importance of good neighbourly relations. We believe that our neighbour's strength is our strength. To exclude a country from participation in the full benefits of international society is a sure path to the kind of crises we have faced for too long in South-East Europe.

Participation in this process has become a democratic demand of the people of this region. You might ask: In the name of security and democracy is Europe going to constantly expand? The answer is of course "no". We are a community of values, not all countries or their peoples have respect for European principles. But when the fragile majority of a neighbouring state finds the courage to scream out its agony against its authoritarian rulers, Europe has the obligation to listen. When this courageous majority finds the courage to voice its commitment to our principles and our ethics (as Aristotle would have it) then we have to listen. This is what Greece has been doing since the fall of the Wall. We have been listening carefully to the voices of the Balkans. To each and every country in South-Eastern Europe. We have made it our mission to get this hopeful message to the rest of Europe.

Today this message is coming, loud and clear, an historic moment, from the Serbian people, from Yugoslavia.

Developments in the Balkans affect Greece's national interests and we have a duty, as a member state of the European Union and as a Balkan nation, to contribute to the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive European policy.

We believe that stability in our region is the pre-requisite for Greek security. We define stability to mean the practice of democracy, the strengthening of institutions that provide transparency and accountability, the reduction of economic inequalities and the rule of law in our societies and between our countries. Our security has been established as members of the European Union and of NATO and we work so that countries of the region may benefit from the stabilizing influence of membership in these institutions.

At the informal European Council in Lisbon, we noted that there are three crucial issues of strategic importance for long-term regional stability, as well as for Greece's security, which we must concentrate on.

- First, The constitutional future of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Even if one admits that the current federal character of Yugoslavia has completed its post-war cycle. The further

break-up of Yugoslavia into weak state entities will be a permanent source of instability. The European Union should take a clear stand on this issue. The constitutional future of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is exclusively a problem for the parties involved and should not result from unilateral actions. Within this unified state the relations between the parts will be defined by the parts, in the context of democratic procedures with the outmost respect for the rights of the minorities.

- Second, The future of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). According to the prospects, in about 10 years' time the composition of the population of FYRO? will be markedly transformed. This fact, combined with the dynamic that has emerged between Albanian communities in the region, the crisis in ??s??? and the emergence of irredentist tendencies, could create problems for the fragile ethnic balance of FYRO?. We believe that FYROM's territorial integrity is of vital importance for the national security and interests of Greece and the region. The European Union and ????? should closely monitor developments and guarantee, within international processes, the country's integrity and security, in accordance with commitments assumed by FYROM's political forces and ethnic groups.

- Negative developments in the region, particularly since 1990, (insecurity, economic recession, and a lack of democratic traditions) have all contributed to the rise of irredentism and nationalism. Ethnic cleansing has risen as the quick and easy solution for resolving all problems. Europe is in a rare position to put an end to this wave of fascism by sending a clear message: The answer to difficult problems is not the ethnic separation of minorities but the creation of a multi-ethnic, open and transparent community enriched by democracy and multiculturalism. This is the essence of Europe, this community is the European union. The path towards it, although challenging, will always be far more rewarding than separation, fragmentation and further ethnic strife.

In the next four years Greece will build upon this base. We are determined to transform the plight of a war and its brutal memories into an opportunity for the generations to come. Through the process of a neighboring war, Greece has managed to inspire in the international community the importance of a consistent, universal and unifying policy towards South-Eastern Europe. From Bosnia to Cyprus we have the same objectives: we want the countries in the region to be integral, peaceful and democratic, we want them to remain multi-cultural and we want them to join the European Union. In this political framework, it is more than certain that Yugoslavia is an essential part.

Today, the European Union has a historic opportunity to act as a credible political force with a strong presence in the Balkans. Historic for Europe proving it is a catalyst for peace and prosperity. Historic for the region – Rigas Feraios, 200 years ago, inspired people of the region by developing a constitution that could unite all under democratic rule and principles.

We believe that solutions to the above strategic problems require that the European Union assumes initiatives in three directions:

- ?n post-war Europe, we have shown respect for our borders, in order to avert any use of this issue as a source of conflict. It has become a common issue. We thereby established a climate of security, peace and democracy. We have strengthened cooperation between states, peoples and citizens. Therefore guaranteeing the territorial integrity and the inviolability of the borders of the Balkan states, by means of an international conference under the auspices of the UN.

- Formulating a policy to strengthen the region's European orientation and prospects for EU membership. The prospect of membership in European-Atlantic institutions is an extremely important incentive and should be accompanied by a "road map" of rights and obligations.

- Strengthening and promoting mechanisms for regional cooperation and development, creating a unified Balkan voice and vision, strengthening democratic institutions and wiping out economic and social underdevelopment in the region.

Faced with this challenge, Greece has created a comprehensive strategy for the region. A strategy that I term a Total Balkan Approach: a regional approach to democracy, security and prosperity. Our objectives are to control potential sources of conflict, and to create the prerequisites for political and financial development throughout the region. Our ultimate goal is regional integration into European institutions. This strategy is founded upon the principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, respect of existing borders, and the dissuasion of separatist tendencies and divisive ideologies. At the same time, we actively promote the establishment of democratic procedures, and the protection of human and minority rights.

If this Total Balkan Approach is to succeed, the EU must develop a consistent, coherent, and unified approach to South-Eastern Europe. We cannot have competing spheres of influence and double standards. Principles and regulations must be applied uniformly. The European Union's approach to the Balkans should be based on fostering democracy, security and development. Development should focus on programmes that are beneficial to the entire region and promote regional cooperation. Development should also go hand in hand with the building of democratic institutions and the security of minorities in the region. Regional, European and international cooperation are essential to building consensus regarding individual citizen's rights to self-determination.

The European Union should coordinate its own internal processes into a unified strategy. There is a need for open, democratic channels of cooperation between nations. Regional problems are never solved by enclosing them within new borders. Too often the Commission or the Council had worked on a country to country basis, disregarding the regional a regional/total approach.

In the Azores, we reiterated our proposal that the international community be opened-up for Serbia. My belief is that sanctions were counter-productive. It was fortunate that the 15, already, had sent a strong message to Serbian people. A step forward was taken with the lifting of the flights ban. I myself visited the region before the elections. Today through these elections the Serbian people had sent us a clear message: they want democracy, they want stability, they want security, they want to share their future with us. Now is the time for our own answer. They await our own answer. It must be a strong 'yes'.

Now the time has come to lift sanctions. To immediately help to begin reconstruction. To provide with humanitarian help, if and when necessary. Europe has to proceed to a new open and creative relationship with Yugoslavia. We are friends of Serbia. We are part of a group of countries that want to help. A part of these scheme is the Stability pact.

South-Eastern Europe can be a region unified, reunified with Europe – within the European Union. This vision led more than 40 nations last year to develop a unique contract between the international community and S-E Europe: it was coined "the Stability Pact". In short, the Stability Pact can be the incubator of a new contract for the Balkans.

For Greece, all this is critical. We are unique in that we belong the European Union, NATO and the Balkans. What happens in the region and what our allies and partners propose for the region is central to our own future.

Thessalonica, Greece's bustling northern seaport has become a commercial and cultural centre for our neighbouring countries. Today it is the host of the regional office for the Pact and of the seat of the EU Reconstruction Agency for S-E Europe. Its academic institutions will provide training possibilities for young leaders from the Balkans concerning know-how on EU laws and institutions.

Greece has a clear sense of how the Stability Pact could achieve these goals. First we need to empower the region that has historically been handicapped, dependent and divided by a world community of competing interests and a babble of conflicting signals. This 'balkanisation' of the region must be replaced by coordination of international efforts. This

'balkanisation' had created standards: competition of the great powers, creating axes and spheres of influence, the Balkans fighting 'proxy' wars and a lack of democratic institutions. It therefore is an optimistic sign that today, international organizations, the EU, the US and Russia cooperate in the context of the Stability Pact. Secondly we need to support cooperation within the region. Regional integration can be achieved as the Stability Pact promotes investment in infrastructure projects, democratic leadership training, institution building and education that will bring us together, stimulate economic development and promote systematic cooperation and respect of international law amongst the states and peoples of S-E Europe. Finally we need to integrate the region into the wider European family. This translates into providing a "roadmap" for the region with clear standards to be achieved by each country: improved systems of governance; an effective market; strong democratic institutions and, a thriving civic sector. Central, therefore, to the future of the region, is whether the European Union is willing to commit itself, by action, to the eventual integration of the region into the Union.

I strongly believe that, in the ever-changing world of the 21st century, cultural and educational diplomacy should be a vital political priority. Through culture and education, we can fundamentally transform and reform the Balkans. Educational diplomacy will help promote European integration in the Balkans. Educational exchanges among the Balkan candidate countries will be essential to the establishment of peaceful cooperation.

The College of Europe, in response to the challenge posed by the opening of Central and Eastern Europe, has made a commitment. A commitment to provide the necessary European education channels and training with the establishment of a second campus in Natolin (Warsaw). I do believe that, with the opening of the Balkans, the College of Europe, in close co-operation with the European Commission, should commit itself in establishing a third campus in Thessalonika, provide the region with the same opportunities.

A strong message was sent to the peoples and governments of S-E Europe last December in Helsinki. The EU Summit then decided to open negotiations for membership with Bulgaria and Rumania, offer EU candidacy to Turkey and provide a special 'stabilization and association' relationship to the remaining countries, including a democratic Yugoslavia. This effort gives a European specificity to what already exists in the Stability Pact, will assure greater stability for Europe and a clear objective, of historic proportions, for the region.

The Balkan Stability Pact and the decisions taken at the EU summit in Helsinki, in December 1999, have created a new reality: a framework of principles and a road map for the Balkans, in their course towards European integration. This is why Greece strenuously supported a meaningful, a real not a virtual, candidacy for Turkey, and the improvement of relations between Bulgaria, Romania, FYROM, Albania and the EU. This new framework should embrace Serbia as well. Excluding Serbia would be inconsistent with our principles of inclusiveness. Greece strongly advocates a comprehensive, consistent policy that must be carried out within a specific time frame.

Since I became Foreign Minister of Greece in February of last year, I have consistently followed a policy of regional co-operation. Greece is committed to embracing all those nations who strive for democracy within their frontiers, and peaceful cooperation beyond them, into the European family. This policy applies to Turkey.

I believe that Greece and Turkey have no choice but to explore new avenues for co-operation. I believe our mutual interests can outweigh our political differences. We can and must resolve these differences through peaceful means, through the arbitration of the International Court of Justice and other legal mechanisms. That is why Greece has initiated a process of constructive dialogue with Turkey – a process which began even before the Kosovo crisis and the earthquakes that shook both our countries. In short, Greece has attempted to turn a new page in Greek-Turkish relations. Out from under the rubble of last's year earthquakes came a strong moving message from the people of both Turkey and Greece. 'We want to live in

peace, in cooperation, working for our own mutual benefit'. It is up to the political leadership of our two countries, with the help of Europe, to make this a reality.

This policy of openness requires courage and determination. While Greek foreign policy is guided by a genuine commitment to regional stability and prosperity, we also have a duty to safeguard our national interests. Our European allies appreciate that Greece has both more to gain - and potentially more to lose - from Turkey's European prospects, than any other EU member state.

That is why Greece has created a window of opportunity for Turkey to move closer to Europe. The time has now come for Turkey to prove that her intentions towards Europe are serious. EU candidacy brings shared benefits, but also mutual responsibilities. If Turkey is willing to play by EU rules, we in Europe must back Turkey's candidacy both in substance and in process.

What does this mean in practice? We cannot condone double standards: the entry criteria set down in Copenhagen apply equally to all candidate nations. In Turkey's case, this means greater political and religious freedom, independence of judiciaries, and free media. It means guarantees for the protection of human rights and minority rights. It means the settlement of disputes by peaceful means, and respect for international law. We remain worried by Turkey's incessant violations of Greek airspace and its practice of placing restrictions on the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople.

Turkey still has a long way to go before meeting EU entry criteria. Indeed, some of our partners in Europe believe that Turkey is not yet politically, economically, or socially stable enough to join Europe. I do not agree with this approach. Let Turkey prove her maturity by undertaking the necessary reforms. And let the EU provide a realistic framework and assistance for Turkey to undertake these reforms- a 'road map' of conditions, criteria and deadlines.

The accession partnership defines the priority areas which the EU considers that Turkey should focus on, in progressively complying with the Copenhagen criteria within the framework of the Helsinki conclusions. The importance the EU attaches to the Copenhagen criteria and the Helsinki conclusions in this context cannot be over-emphasized. The Copenhagen criteria of 1993 established political and economic criteria for accession as well as the ability to take on the obligations of membership. An institutional stability which guarantees democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the respect and protection of minorities' rights, as well as the existence of a functioning market economy and capacity to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union are conditions for membership for all candidates.

We all, member-states of the EU, abide by the basic principle defined at Copenhagen, that compliance with the political criteria is a prerequisite for the opening of accession negotiations and that compliance with all the criteria is the basis for accession to the Union.

Turkish candidacy is not a bilateral question for Greece, but an issue of Turkey adjusting to the democratic principles of the EU. Equal responsibility lies with the EU: Turkey cannot and should not be expected to carry out painful reforms, unless the EU demonstrates an unequivocal commitment to Turkey's European future. Membership in the European Union is a binding contract. It is a contract that requires engagement both within and among countries. A contract that requires economic efficiency and the reduction of military expenditure, in exchange for participation in the greater security provided by the Union. It calls for the renunciation of unilateral action and submission to the multilateral arbitration of differences. Turkey must commit to these values, and Europe must be determined to uphold them and her commitments.

The Helsinki European Council stated that all countries aspiring to become EU members must share the values and objectives of the EU as set out in the treaties, particularly stressing

the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the UN Charter and international law. The European Council urged candidate States to make every effort to resolve any outstanding border disputes and other related issues. Failing this they should within a reasonable time bring the dispute to the International Court of Justice at The Hague. At the latest by the end of year 2004, the European Council will review the situation relating to any outstanding disputes, in particular concerning the repercussions on the accession process and in order to promote the settlement through the International Court of Justice.

Greece has built half the bridge that will draw Turkey closer to Europe. I call upon our European partners that they commit themselves to build the other half, so that we can cross the river together.

Greece advocates a real, and not a 'virtual' candidacy for Turkey. Neither the EU nor Turkey can be satisfied with empty gestures of goodwill. Turkey must now commit to concrete actions. And of course, we strive to reach a mutually acceptable diplomatic solution to end the division of Cyprus.

EU membership is the best way to guarantee progress on the Cyprus issue. Cyprus is closest among all EU candidates to fulfilling entry requirements. Entry into the European framework would increase the security, stability, and prosperity of both communities on Cyprus. Indeed, the Turkish Cypriot community, now isolated from the rest of the world, would benefit the most. Indeed we see them as brothers in our wider European family.

We consider the matter of accession of Cyprus to the EU as of strategic importance for Europe, the Middle-East, as for stability in a vital region. The international community appreciates the responsible and consistent stance of the Cypriot government throughout all efforts towards a just solution as well as its will to defend the interests of the whole population of Cyprus: the interests of both communities in Cyprus. Greece supports the effort and commitment of the Cypriot Government so that proximity talks become substantive; so that they lead to a just and viable solution for Cyprus; so that they secure the essence of the Republic of Cyprus as a modern multi-cultural society, inseparable part of the European Union.

Recalling the Helsinki conclusions, I've mentioned above, I know that all our European partners agree with us that a political settlement will facilitate the accession of Cyprus to the European Union. If no settlement has been reached by the completion of accession negotiations, the EU's decision will be made without the above being a pre-condition. That is our commitment as European Union.

I truly believe that the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities can find solutions that will allow them to live together peacefully. We, both Greece and Turkey, can aid them in this process. Cyprus will either unite or divide our two countries. We have a responsibility to cooperate on the Cyprus problem and to facilitate the process. Greece and Turkey, through their rapprochement, share a rare opportunity to help the citizens of Cyprus rebuild their island, their homes and their dreams. The outcome of these efforts should be that every Cypriot enjoys safety, equality under the law, protection of their human rights, appropriate representation and the security under a European roof.

Turkey continues to occupy 38% of the island with over 30,000 troops. Can the EU accept any candidate country, which forcefully occupies the territory of another candidate country? Blatantly disobeying UN Resolutions it maintains that troops are to protect the Turkish Cypriots. The EU can provide greater security and prosperity than the fragile status quo of Cyprus today. The European Union has a responsibility to help break down the last Berlin Wall dividing a European capital. The legitimate government and innocent population of Cyprus must not be held hostage to the whims of a regime, which is not recognized by the international community. This would tarnish the moral integrity of Europe.

Greece's regional policy is, in a sense, our answer to the new challenges of globalization. The Greek government has chosen to seize these challenges as a unique opportunity. An opportunity to take bold initiatives, an opportunity for the European Union to engage fully in the process to shape the political, social, and economic reality of the entire region, to our common standards, as defined by Aristotle and the Treaties establishing the Union.

I have committed an extensive part of my speech on the burning issue of European expansion by focusing on our region. I have done so fully aware that the stand we each take on this issue defines both who we are and what we each hope Europe shall become.

Are we to look at our neighbours and the world with fear? If we are, then how in the world do we hope to deal with our own differences?

Are we going to create impermeable borders to close out the world? Then how do we hope to be effective in opening up our own minds to the debates, the ideas, the new ethical-moral issues of our technological world and shape a new democratic community?

Are we to deny the beauty of our differences, of all differences, and seek homogeneity? If we are, then how do we hope to ever know and understand ourselves? Education without frontiers, that the key policy for our future.

Ladies and Gentlemen, even though we might look similar in our respective neighbourhoods, I can assure you that our power is NOT derived from the way we see each other but from the way others see us. What they see is a kaleidoscope of cultures deeply committed to using our differences in making our world a better democratic place. This is the Europe Greece is committed to.

Thank you.