



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Brussels, 16 March 2005

Council conclusions on Croatia

The Council referred to the conclusions reached by the European Council meeting in June 2004, to the effect that Croatia is a candidate country for membership and that a bilateral intergovernmental conference should be convened so that negotiations may be started. It reaffirmed the EU's commitment to the accession of Croatia.

The Council welcomed the successful conclusion of the proceedings on the negotiating framework submitted by the Commission and adopted that framework.

The Council referred to the importance of full cooperation with the ICTY on the part of all the countries of the western Balkans; that is an essential requirement for closer relations with the EU. The Council also referred to the conclusions reached by the European Council meeting in December 2004.

In that regard, after deliberation by the Council and in the absence of a common agreement, the opening of accession negotiations has been postponed.

The bilateral intergovernmental conference will be convened by common agreement as soon as the Council has established that Croatia is cooperating fully with the ICTY.

P R E S S

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