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Summary of remarks made by

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Minister Kitt, ladies and gentlemen, I am very pleased that I could join you this evening and share in your important work.

No region is untouched by conflict or immune to its effects. For societies emerging from conflict, the road to recovery is long, difficult and uncertain.

In the Western Balkans, the international community is faced with new security challenges in Kosovo, five years after war ended. In Bosnia, the European Union is preparing to take on new security responsibilities for peacekeeping this year. We are committed to ensuring that these societies complete a peaceful transformation to eventual membership of the European Union.

Europe's Security and Defence Policy gives us a new means to build the conditions for peaceful recovery in societies that have become locked in a cycle of conflict. In Africa, we were able to respond to Kofi Annan's request for international peacekeepers in Ituri Province in the DRC last year. Tomorrow, I will join Brian Cowen for discussions with the African Union for discussions on how we can work together to foster peace and security on the continent. The African Union is building new capabilities for crisis management and conflict prevention. We have a responsibility to assist.

In Afghanistan, the message from today's Conference in Berlin is that the twin challenges of security and development will take many years.

Security and development are two essential and interlinked themes in our work. Europe's humanitarian and development activities are rooted in a long tradition of generosity and impartiality. We should take pride in this. Our security activities are more recent, but they are rooted in the same values and the same generosity of spirit. We need to develop the conversation between our development and security communities. Better understanding will lead to better policies. Our crisis management capabilities, our support for security sector reform, action on small arms and assistance with reintegration can and should help build a firm foundation for development. Likewise, conflict sensitive development can prevent more serious problems later on. This Conference can contribute to better understanding.

The values which underpin our development activities also underpin the security strategy which was adopted by the European Council in December and which is now being implemented under Ireland's Presidency of the EU. Responsibility is a theme in Europe's security strategy. In a month's time, the European Union will grow to a political union of 450 million people and 25 countries producing a quarter of the world's wealth. We are privileged. And privilege brings particular responsibilities.

Effective multilateralism is also a theme. International law is the guiding spirit and lifeblood of our multilateral system. The system is made strong through our commitment to upholding and developing international law and to ensuring that the UN is made effective and equipped to fulfil its responsibilities. The United Nations cannot function unless we are prepared to act to uphold its rules when they are broken.

But the key theme is prevention. It lies at the heart of our approach to security. We should be clear. There is nothing easy about prevention. Of all policy objectives, the prevention of violent conflict is the most ambitious, the most demanding and the most thankless. It requires the imagination to see ahead to the consequences of our inaction. And it demands the political will and courage to take preventive action where this is costly, dangerous or unpopular and where the benefits may never be seen. Address a crisis and you will be praised. Prevention is often unseen. It requires a different level of political courage.

In societies at risk of conflict or recovering from conflict, peace is built and sustained by the quiet, heroic work of small organisations such as yours. I wish you well in your work and I hope that your discussions in the coming days will contribute to a strong partnership capable of sustaining our efforts through the challenges ahead.

Thank you.
