Presidency’s Statement on Iraq, Athens 16/4/2003

- The European Union welcomes the presence of the United Nations Secretary-General and the opportunity to discuss with him the next steps on Iraq.

- At this stage the coalition has the responsibility to ensure a secure environment, including for the provision of humanitarian assistance, in particular urgent medical relief, and the protection of the cultural heritage and museums.

- The people of Iraq now have the chance to shape a new future for their country and to rejoin the International Community.

- The International Community has a major contribution to make in that process, in particular:
  - The UN must play a central role, including in the process leading towards self-government for the Iraqi people, utilizing its unique capacity and experience in the post-conflict nation building.
  - Iraq’s neighbours should support stability in Iraq and the region.
  - The EU reaffirms its commitment to play a significant role in the political and economic reconstruction of the country.
  - The EU welcomes the participation of the International Financial Institutions as set out in the recent statement by the G7 at the World Bank meeting in Washington.

- The EU welcomes the appointment by the UN Secretary-General of a special adviser on Iraq and looks forward to a further strengthening of the UN’s involvement in post-conflict Iraq, initially in the coordination of humanitarian assistance.

- As part of the process of regional security and stability, the EU reaffirms its commitment to bring the Israeli/Palestinian Peace Process to a successful conclusion through the implementation of the steps foreseen in the Quartet’s Roadmap, keeping within the established time lines.

- It is essential that there is an early endorsement by Chairman Arafat and the Palestinian Legislative Council of a Cabinet, nominated by Abu Mazen, committed to reform.