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Situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 1481 (2000)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has studied with close attention Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 1481 \(2000\)](#) on the situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and [Recommendation 1491 \(2001\)](#) on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – recent developments. It wishes to recall that, since the adoption of these respective texts, a number of significant developments have taken place with regard to the Council of Europe's relations with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, including the granting of Special Guest status to the Parliament of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The Ministers' Deputies continue to follow closely the developments in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in particular in the south of the country. They expressed their strong support for stability in the region and their condemnation of any act of violence. They appealed for a solution to problems through negotiation and dialogue.

2. With respect to paragraph 1.ii of [Recommendation 1481](#), the Committee of Ministers has created a mission for the federal republic, headed by the Special Envoy of the Secretary General, who will co-ordinate the Council of Europe offices in the country. An office in Belgrade (competent for relations with the federal and Serbian authorities), headed by a special representative of the Secretary General, is in the process of being established, on the basis of the co-location arrangements with the OSCE Mission. The office in Podgorica is competent for relations with Montenegro, whilst the Council of Europe Office in Pristina will continue to function within the framework of UN Security Council Resolution 1244. Assistance and co-operation activities of the Council of Europe in the federal republic will be closely co-ordinated on the spot with the OSCE Mission in line with the exchange of letters signed by the secretaries general of the two organisations on 15 February 2001.

The OSCE Mission and the Council of Europe bureau in Belgrade will be officially opened on 16 March 2001, in the presence of the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE and of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. The Chairman of the Committee of Ministers will also pay an official visit to Belgrade on 19 and 21 March.

3. As regards paragraph 5.i of [Recommendation 1491](#), based on an early needs assessment and on a number of Secretariat visits, the Council of Europe prepared a programme of priority co-operation activities with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (outlined in document SG/Inf (2000) 48), which include reinforcing democratic institutions, human rights and the rule of law, particularly in the fields of the judiciary and the police as referred to in paragraph 1.i. of [Recommendation 1481](#). Expert advice on higher education policy, on media and on minorities, for example, has also been provided.

4. A number of priority activities have already been implemented, such as the 2nd Conference on Media Reform held in December 2000 which paved the way for Council of Europe assistance in the drafting of new media legislation. Referring particularly to paragraph 5.iv of [Recommendation 1491](#), the European Commission and the Council of Europe are discussing a joint proposal to promote profound legal reforms in

1. Joint reply to [Recommendation 1481 \(2000\)](#) and [Recommendation 1491 \(2001\)](#) of the Parliamentary Assembly, adopted by the Committee of Ministers at the 745th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies on 14 March 2001.



the media field. A first step might be to provide urgent assistance to the media experts who are preparing a new legislative framework for the media (the Law Group of the Belgrade Media Centre and the National Working Group (NWG) set up within the framework of the Stability Pact Media Task Force).

5. The conference on the compatibility of the legislation and practices of the federal republic with European human rights and other standards (Belgrade, 16-17 February 2001) (see paragraph 5.vi of [Recommendation 1491](#)) played a focal role in launching the programme of legislative and other reforms to be undertaken by the federal and the republic authorities. This conference, which had a high level of attendance by the federal and republic authorities as well as by the Secretariat, led to the adoption of a priority programme to support the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in strengthening human rights and the rule of law with a view to fulfilling the conditions for its accession to the Council of Europe.

A draft consolidated co-operation programme with the federal republic, which includes both the initial activities agreed with the Yugoslav authorities and the additional proposals resulting from the conference, has been prepared by the Secretariat. The Committee of Ministers has given its support to this programme and is currently examining the means to implement it.

6. The Secretary General's Special Envoy participated in the conference organised in Belgrade on 2 and 3 February 2001, by the Federal Ministry of National and Ethnic Minorities, on the development of a multicultural and multinational society (paragraph 5.v of [Recommendation 1491](#)). This conference marked an important step in the new political approach of the federal and Serbian authorities to relations with national and ethnic communities and minorities, including the Gypsy/ Roma, their recognition and integration into society and the state. It contributed to preparations for new legislation as well as public awareness-building in connection with the involvement of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the Council of Europe/Stability Pact Awareness-raising Campaign to promote multi-ethnic society and democratic citizenship for all – Project Link Diversity. With regard to the former, proposals have been formulated concerning a specific assistance programme on the drafting of legislation relating to national and ethnic communities, and minorities. The Committee of Ministers attaches the utmost importance to the respect of rights of national minorities and ethnic communities in the federal republic, taking into account also that the federal republic has applied to accede to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

7. In order to favour complementary multilateral action in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Secretary General convened, on 19 December 2000, a coordination meeting in Strasbourg with the participation of the OSCE, the European Commission, the Stability Pact and the Geneva-based UN bodies concerned. The federal republic is now fully included in all of the Council of Europe's multilateral projects within the Stability Pact, following the country's admission as a full participant in the Stability Pact in October 2000. Within this framework, the Council of Europe contributes through its Paco programme (Programme against Corruption and Organised Crime) to a large regional project against corruption and organised crime, which is now being extended to the federal republic. Similarly, full participation of the federal republic in the various Council of Europe projects under the aegis of the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe is being considered.

8. In its endeavours in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Council of Europe Mission and offices are instructed to do their best to help competent international organisations, in particular the UN institutions and humanitarian NGOs, working for the return or the integration, as the case may be, of refugees and internally displaced persons.

9. As no budgetary provision was included in the 2001 budget for co-operation activities with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, a number of voluntary contributions have already been pledged, in order to start implementation of this programme.