

# **Statement on the crisis in Albania**

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**by the High Representative, Carl Bildt**

**15 March 1997**

The plunge into chaos in Albania once more demonstrates the volatility and instability of large parts of South-Eastern Europe. In just the last few months, we have seen major crises in Serbia and in Bulgaria, and it is one of the safest assumptions that the coming year will see more turmoil and crisis in these countries.

It is high time that the governments of Europe wake up to the realities of South-Eastern Europe and start to devise the long-term policies for stability which will be necessary. Theoretical discussions on a common foreign and security policy risk looking pathetic if the European Union is not able to pursue strong policies in the area of Europe where instability is most dangerous.

A limited military operation in Albania seems essential in order to demonstrate the resolve of Europe in dealing with instability and security threats, as well as to facilitate the provision of humanitarian aid which will be necessary and to facilitate the elections which must come. It will also send a signal to other parts of the region that Europe will deal more decisively with potential threats to stability than was the case in the beginning at the Yugoslav crisis. Close co-operation with the United States will of course be vital. We must not fail again.

There is a pattern of instability in Europe south of Slovenia and north of Greece which can no longer be overlooked. The dangers to Kosovo and F.Y.R. of Macedonia should not be underestimated in this situation. There is simply a pause in the crisis in Serbia. And the dangers in Bosnia are by no means over.