

Conclusions of the Lisbon Conference on assistance to the new independent States of the former Soviet Union (23 and 24 May 1992)

Caption: On 23 and 24 May 1992, the European Community organises an international conference in Lisbon on the coordination of economic assistance to the New Independent States (NIS) of the former Soviet Union.

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Conclusions of the Lisbon Conference on assistance to the new independent States of the former Soviet Union (Lisbon, 23 and 24 May 1992)

1. At the invitation of the European Community, Ministers and other representatives of donor countries and international organizations, as well as Ministers of the new independent States (NIS) of the former Soviet Union, met in Lisbon on 23 and 24 May 1992 to discuss and consider the coordination of assistance to the NIS.
2. The Ministers welcomed the process of reform in the NIS and expressed their support for it. In this context, they stressed the importance of resolving all conflicts involving the independent States in accordance with the CSCE principles and appealed to all involved to exercise restraint. This was an essential condition for the effective implementation of assistance and of the reform process.
3. The Ministers expressed satisfaction with progress made in the coordination of assistance to the NIS.
4. Since the Washington Conference, the already considerable financial effort devoted to assistance to these countries has been strengthened in order to encourage the NIS in their progress towards reform.
5. The Ministers considered that the first stage of short-term assistance, which had taken the form of humanitarian measures, had produced positive overall results. These measures had been designed to facilitate the transition of the NIS to a market economy while contributing to their stability. The Ministers welcomed the food aid operations undertaken and noted the US initiative on monetization of food aid, inspired by the European Community's success in establishing counterpart funds for its assistance to Moscow, St Petersburg and other cities.
6. The representatives of the NIS made statements to the Conference on the progress achieved in their reform programmes and gave details of the needs of their countries and of the sectors which they regarded as priorities for international assistance.
7. The Ministers noted that progress in implementing the action plans drawn up in Washington had been reviewed by the working groups set up in the five priority sectors: food, health, housing, energy and technical assistance. The working groups had held meetings in which representatives of the independent States had participated. Several working groups had also organized missions which had made it possible to evaluate the situation on the spot. The conclusions of the working groups would serve as a guide to donor countries in planning and preparing their future assistance programmes. These programmes would be consistent with, and support, the process of political and economic reform.
8. The Ministers welcomed the accession of the NIS to the IMF and the World Bank, which would both play a central role in the macroeconomic assistance effort. The Ministers noted the comprehensive statement of the Managing Director of the IMF on the progress made towards developing the macroeconomic framework for encouraging the economic transformation of these countries. He underlined the huge financial burden which this transformation process would put on the resources of the IMF and emphasized the need both for complementary additional finance to be made available and for the NIS to reinforce their own reform efforts.
9. The Ministers underlined the importance of the NIS developing their ability to meet their own food requirements. They noted that, in present circumstances, humanitarian aid in its various forms remained an important element. They recommended that the developing situation, especially in the fields of health care and food supply, should be carefully monitored. They noted the intention of the main donors to coordinate, as necessary, their humanitarian aid efforts on the spot, in the light of recent experience.
10. Recognizing that the future objective was the complete integration of the NIS into an international system based on a market economy and the development of their own human and economic resources, the Ministers considered that technical assistance should be the essential component of future programmes of assistance to the NIS, including in the fields of health, housing and energy. Such assistance would make it

possible to improve local qualifications and capacities to provide the advice and experience necessary for the proper functioning of the public and private sectors. In the specific area of shelter, programmes could also be aimed at facilitating the rapid reintegration of those military forces of the independent States still stationed outside the NIS.

11. For reasons of effectiveness, donors should consider, in appropriate cases, utilizing triangular arrangements in implementing their technical assistance programmes. A number of countries had faced similar problems to those now being experienced in the new independent States in making a transition to democracy and a market economy. These countries had a unique role to play in such triangular assistance arrangements.

12. The Ministers emphasized the priority nature of nuclear safety. They underlined the importance of the present preparations for a multilateral programme of action to address nuclear safety problems in the NIS and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. They especially welcomed the programmes of the United States of America, the European Community and its Member States, and of other donor countries and international organizations, aimed at improving the safety of reactors of Soviet construction. They noted that a principal objective of these programmes was to permit the independent States themselves to institute the necessary safety procedures. To that end, emphasis would be laid on strengthening the regulatory framework and the inspection authorities and on the training of engineers and technicians in these countries.

13. The Ministers welcomed the agreement reached in Lisbon between the United States of America, Japan, Russia and the European Community to establish an International Science and Technology Centre and noted the intention of other donor countries to participate. The purpose of the Centre was to facilitate the redeployment of scientists and engineers from the former USSR, previously employed in defence industries.

14. The Ministers welcomed the intention of the European Community to encourage partnership between establishments in the Community and the new independent States in the health, culture, education, business and sport sectors. They also noted the Community initiative to introduce a voluntary service which would mobilize the experience of individuals to assist the transition process under way in the NIS. Such actions had the merit of underlining that the success of transition was also a matter for the individual citizen.

15. The Ministers encouraged the NIS to develop political, trade, economic, financial and monetary cooperation amongst themselves in order to benefit to the maximum from both their own resources and international assistance. The Ministers laid emphasis on the decisive role which cooperation amongst the NIS would play in the future of each of these States, in particular in seeking solutions to regional problems involving several of them.

16. Future coordination of international assistance should, above all, be flexible and efficient and based on a pragmatic approach. The Ministers, accordingly, discussed new international coordination arrangements. In this context, emphasis was laid on the importance of on-the-spot coordination to ensure that the implementation of assistance measures took account of the realities in each independent State and their developing circumstances.

The Ministers took the view that the new independent States should progressively assume the main responsibility for future coordination in order to improve the consistency between assistance programmes and the implementation of reforms.

The Ministers considered that broad, long-term coordination would require a central role to be played by international organizations and could, in principle, be effected on a geographical basis.

The Ministers agreed to explore the establishment of assistance coordination groups, as necessary, combining interested donors and the appropriate international organizations with the country or countries concerned. These groups, which should be flexible and temporary, would coordinate overall assistance to the countries concerned, while leaving certain specific coordination activities to more specialized organizations.

The Ministers announced that new arrangements for international coordination, based on the work begun by the Washington and Lisbon Conferences, would be introduced gradually with a view to being confirmed at the Conference to be held in Japan in the autumn of 1992.

The Ministers welcomed the important contributions made by the five working groups, whose work should be completed by this autumn. Full use would be made of these working groups as long as they served their expected objectives.