unresolved issues, preventing some of these states from joining Euro-Atlantic structures in the near future.

In his presentation, H.E. Chryssanthopoulos divided the Southeastern European countries into several categories: (1) Greece achieved full EU membership twenty years ago; (2) Slovenia is an acceding state to the EU, its membership being, presumably, only months away; (3) Bulgaria and Romania are formal candidates to EU membership, the target date for their accession being 2007; (4) the accession negotiations with Turkey could start in 2005; (5) Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia and Serbia-Montenegro have not yet been recognized as EU candidate countries.

The Greek Presidency of the European Union has set the following six priorities for its work in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia and Serbia-Montenegro: (1) consolidating peace, stability and democratic development in the region; (2) carrying forward the EU's Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) with individual countries; (3) developing the SAP and adapting it to the new environment after the current enlargement of the European Union; (4) launching a so-called Balkan European Integration Process; (5) focusing on specific horizontal issues of significance for the region; and (6) strengthening regional cooperation and the Stability Pact. The SAP includes individual agreements between the European Union and the countries in the region on stabilization, community assistance and trade measures.

A glance at the map makes the importance of Southeastern Europe for the European Union easy to understand, said H.E. Eric Hayes, Ambassador and Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to Canada. From 2007, the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia and Serbia-Montenegro) will become an enclave of non-members of the EU, completely surrounded by the European Union. The EU, H.E. Hayes maintained, has therefore a deep vested interest in their stability, security and prosperity.

H.E. Hayes noted that the five countries of the Western Balkans were formally recognized as potential candidates for EU membership by the heads of state and government of the European Union and the President of the European Commission two and a half years ago. He added that the Stabilization and Association Process is the motor for reform in the countries of the Western Balkans. This is a step-by-step process, based on four major ideas: (1) trade liberalization through so-called Autonomous Trade Measures (ATMs); (2) significant financial assistance for reconstruction, democratization and stabilization; (3) a new contractual relationship between the EU and the countries in the region; and (4) promotion of cooperation among the countries of the Western Balkans themselves.

In its relations with the countries in the region, the European Union can learn from the enlargement process, and the countries of the Western Balkans can learn from the current candidate countries. H.E. Hayes said that the SAP should be the anchor for reform in the region just as the accession process has been the anchor for reform in Central Europe.