

General Chronology of the Mediterranean

July 2003

Spain

- Attacks perpetrated by the Basque terrorist group, ETA intensify during the summer months, targeting tourist sites. Similarly, attacks continue on the two main parties in the province (the People's Party (PP) and the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE)).
- On 9th July, Santiago Arrospeide Sarasola (better known as Santi Potros) and Idoia Lopez Riaño, members of ETA, are convicted of the murders of 12 policemen in 1986.

France

- On 1st July, President Jacques Chirac sets up a committee, made up of 15 members and chaired by the French Ombudsman Bernard Stasi, with the aim of examining the application of the constitutional principle of "secularisation" in everyday life. One of the issues to be tackled concerns the growing tension between the secular state and the 5 million Muslims living in France.
- On 4th July, a Corsican named Yvan Colona, accused by police for the murder of Chief Commissioner of Police Claude Érignac in 1998, is arrested. On 6th July, Corsicans reject, by referendum, the governmental plan to decentralise power. This plan contains a series of proposals to devolve additional powers to the island. The results of the referendum lead to an intensification of attacks by separatist militants. On 11th July, 8 Corsicans are convicted of the murder of Chief Commissioner of Police Érignac. On 11th July, in protest against the sentences, the National Li-

beration Front of Corsica, (FLNC) ends the ceasefire which had lasted for 7 months and on 17th July the 'Corsica Natione Movement' withdraws from the Corsican Assembly.

Italy

- On 22nd July the Senate adopts a law on reform of the media which is criticised by the left-wing opposition parties and by media interest groups, since it gives untoward advantages to Mediaset, Berlusconi's media company.
- At the end of July, a governmental crisis erupts following Roberto Castelli, the Justice Minister's attempt (using the new immunity law passed on the 18th June and ratified, among others, by the Prime Minister) to block an investigation into tax fraud and false accounting on the part of Berlusconi's media company, Mediaset. On 27th July, the Democrats Centre Union party (UCD) threatens to withdraw from the coalition if the investigation is not conducted. On 28th July, the UCD states that it will support the motion of no-confidence in Castelli to be proposed by opposition parties on 29th July. Finally, on 29th July, Castelli announces that the investigation will be conducted.
- On 31st July, the former Minister for Home Affairs, Claudio Scajola, is appointed to the new post of Minister for the implementation of governmental programmes.

Malta

- On 1st July, the United States decides to suspend military aid to 35 countries, amongst them Malta, in retaliation for their refusal to grant immuni-

ty to Americans accused of crimes by the International Criminal Court.

- On 16th July, an agreement is signed between Malta and Slovenia to strengthen cooperation between the police forces of the two countries in the fight against organised crime and other serious crimes.

Slovenia

- On 17th July, the government submits the documents ratifying the Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities and the Civil Law Convention on Corruption to the Council of Europe.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 11th July, Resolution 1491, adopted by the Security Council, extends the mandate of the NATO Stabilisation Force by one year.
- On 28th July a mass grave containing hundreds of bodies of men and boys killed during the massacre at Srebrenica in 1995 is discovered at Crni Vrh, near the town of Zvornik.
- On 31st July, the Bosnian Serb Milomir Stakic – who, according to the accusation made against him, killed about 200 non-Serbian prisoners in August 1992 – is acquitted of genocide and complicity in genocide but convicted of crimes against humanity and of the violation of the laws and customs of war. He is sentenced to life imprisonment with the possibility of conditional release only after 20 years, the longest sentence ever handed down by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

Serbia and Montenegro

- On 9 and 10 July, for the first time since the independence of Slovenia in 1991, a President of Serbia and Montenegro makes an official visit to Slovenia.
- On 16th July, during the first trial of former members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) for war crimes in Kosovo, the former commander Rustem Mustafa is sentenced to 17 years in prison by three international judges appointed by the United Nations.
- On 22nd July, Vladimir Vukcevic is appointed special prosecutor for war crimes in Serbia. It is an important step which will lead to several trials at the national level of Serbians suspected of war crimes.
- On 24th July, the last Russian contingent leaves Kosovo after four years of peace-keeping mission.
- On 25th July, the Secretary General of the United Nations appoints Harri Holkeri, former Prime Minister of Finland (1987-1991), to head the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).
- On 28th July, Nikola Bajic, one of the prime suspects in the murder of the Serbian Prime Minister, Zoran Djindjic, is arrested.

Albania

- On 18th July, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, Ilir Meta, resigns after a disagreement with the head of the government, Fatos Nano. The latter criticises the lack of speed and inability of the Albanian diplomatic service to forge relations with its European partners. On 19th July, the Minister for Integration, Sokol Nako, also resigns.

Greece

- On 22nd July, NATO states that Turkey and Greece have undertaken complementary reciprocal confidence-building measures, including the exchange of military personnel.

Cyprus

- On 2nd July, Cyprus sees the birth of its first commercial Greco-Turkish

magazine intended to relaunch trade on both sides of the divide.

- On 14th July, the Greek-Cypriot Chamber of Representatives unanimously approves the accession of Cyprus to the EU on 1 May 2004.
- On 14th July, the Greek party of Cyprus opposes the reopening of Nicosia airport, which was closed in 1974.
- On 20th July, during the celebrations of the 29th anniversary of the Turkish occupation of the north of the island, the President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), Rauf Denktash, denounces the United Nations peace plan which, according to him, will lead to a state dominated by Greek Cypriots.

Turkey

- Relations between Turkey and the United States deteriorate when on 4th July US troops arrest 11 people from the Turkish Special Forces during a raid on a town in the north of Iraq. This event follows Turkey's refusal to authorise the Americans to use Turkish territory to launch an attack on Iraq.
- On 30th July, Turkey's Grand National Assembly (GNAT), the Turkish parliament, approves the seventh "harmonisation package" of reforms required by the EU before the opening of accession negotiations. In this context, the Turkish army's wide powers are reduced, for example by removing the executive powers of the national security council, dominated by the army, and changing it into a consultative body. In addition, allegations of torture must be investigated and civilians may no longer be prosecuted by military courts in peace time.
- On 30th July, the GNAT adopts a law on a partial amnesty for militant Kurds from the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK).
- On 30th July, Ankara's Security Court refuses the request to commute the death sentence on Abdullah Öcalan to life imprisonment, thus ending the legal proceedings.

Syria

- On 19th July, Syria states its intention to resume the peace negotiations with Israel, (suspended since January

2000), on the basis of the terms agreed upon.

Lebanon

- On 31st July, United Nations Resolution 1496 extends the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFL) until 31 January 2004.

Jordan

- On 10th July, Samih al-Batkhi, the former director of the General Intelligence Department (GID), is sentenced to prison for his involvement in a bank fraud and for abuse of power.
- On 21st July, King Abdullah II appoints a new cabinet, once again headed by Prime Minister Ali Abu al-Rageb.

Egypt

- From 3rd to 6th July, a congress is held in Cairo entitled "Towards a new cultural discourse," bringing together 150 Arab intellectuals who discuss despotism, the failure of the Arab world and the omnipresence of religion in their state. The congress concludes with the adoption of a final document entitled the "Cairo Cultural Proclamation."
- On 31st July, eleven Muslims, suspected of being linked to the Islamic group behind the Luxor attack in 1997, are arrested.

Libya

- On 3rd July, the Italian Minister for Home Affairs meets with Nassar al-Mabrouk, his Libyan counterpart, and Muammar Gaddafi, the Libyan leader, offering them his assistance in combating illegal immigration. Libya opposes the sending of Italian soldiers onto its territory to stem the arrival of illegal immigrants in Italy.

Tunisia

- On 2nd July, the sixth Conference against terrorism opens in Tunisia, bringing together various Arab countries, representatives of the Arab League and of the Nayaf Arab Academy for security studies.
- During his visit on 14th and 15th July to Morocco, Mohamed Ghannouchi,

the Tunisian prime minister, speaking at the eleventh joint Tunisia-Morocco committee, declares his wish "to strengthen relations and consolidate ties" between the two countries.

- On 23rd July, an agreement is signed between Tunisia and Algeria on water use and distribution.
- On 28th July, President Ben Ali announces that he will stand for a fourth term in the 2004 elections.

Algeria

- On 2nd July, two key leaders of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), Abassi Madani and his deputy Ali Belhadj, are freed after having served a sentence of 12 years' imprisonment. Their release is accompanied by a court order prohibiting them to participate in any kind of political activity. Mr Madani signs the order, whereas Mr Belhadj refuses.
- At the end of July, the government agrees to the introduction of Tamazight, the minority Berber language, into the educational system.

Morocco

- On 3rd July, the Moroccan government announces that it has opened its doors wider to Portuguese investment in order to make Portugal its main trading partner.
- On 21st July, the trial begins for 700 Muslim militants, suspected of having taken part in the Casablanca attacks of the previous 16th May.

European Union

- On 1st July, Italy takes over the Presidency of the European Union from Greece. Its priorities are the holding of the Intergovernmental Conference, economic support, the eastward enlargement of the European Union, an increased role for Europe on the international scene and the security of citizens.
- On 2nd July, Silvio Berlusconi, the President of the European Union, calls the German social democrat Martin Schulz a Nazi, during a speech before the European Parliament at Strasbourg. On 3rd July, Mr Berlusconi telephones Mr Schröder to apologise, but refuses to make formal apologies. Tensions between Italy and Germany increase when

Stefano Stefani, the Italian Under-Secretary of State for Productive Activities, and responsible for tourism, among others, describes German tourists as arrogant and hyper-nationalist. On 11th July, Mr. Stefani resigns from the government.

- On 9th July, following a scandal, Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, replaces the Director-General of the Statistical Service, Eurostat, and launches financial proceedings against him and two of his deputies. The scandal is considered to be the largest since the resignation of the European Commission in 1999. On 23rd July, the European Commission terminates its contracts with four companies and adopts new rules on the financial responsibilities of its officials.
- On 15th July, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) extends the investigative powers of the EU's anti-fraud office (OLAF) to the European Central Bank (ECB) and the European Investment Bank (EIB).
- On 22nd July, the ministers of agriculture adopt new rules, including the obligation to indicate on the label when a product contains more than 0.9% of genetically modified constituents.

August 2003

Portugal

- During July and August, two forest fires kill 18 and destroy 10% of the country's forests. They are the largest fires since 1980.
- A heat wave, spreading across the whole of Europe kills 1300 people.
- On 1st August, Lieutenant General Luis Valença Pinto is appointed Army Chief-of-Staff, following the resignation of General José Manuel da Silva Viegas, who had lost all confidence in the Minister of Defence.

Spain

- The heat wave causes about a hundred deaths. Spain also has to deal with forest fires, mainly in Catalonia and the region of Avila.
- On 3rd August, ETA, the Basque separatist group, announces its intentions to attack tourist targets and cau-

ses alarm among tourists who want to visit Spain.

- On 14th August, Spain orders Inocencio Arias, its Permanent Representative to the United Nations, to return to New York. He had stated at a summer school that the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq called into question the war in Iraq, thus running counter to the government's official position on this subject.

France

- On 5th August, the French Government confirms the partial (31.5%) renationalisation of Alstom.
 - Following the deaths of many elderly people during the summer heat wave, Lucien Abenhäm, the Director-General of Public Health, resigns on 19th August, while the Minister for Health, the Family and Disabled Persons refuses to resign, despite the opposition's demands. On 21st August, Jacques Chirac, the French President, admits that the public health system has been unable to handle the situation and promises to devote more resources to emergency services, calling on French society to become more responsible and to show kindness to their fellowmen.
 - On 22nd August, the Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fishing and Rural Affairs announces that emergency assistance will be granted to assist farmers affected by six months of drought and the heat wave.
 - On 28th August, the Corsican National Liberation Front-Union of Combatants (FLNC-UC) claims responsibility for over twenty attacks following the end of the ceasefire.
- #### *Italy*
- On 19th August, Silvio Berlusconi, the Italian Prime Minister, cancels his holidays to attend a crisis cabinet meeting to put an end to the proliferation of legal actions by football clubs and thus avoid relegation to a lower division. The cabinet agrees on a decree prohibiting regional courts from holding any proceedings on this case, but the Northern League threatens to vote against this measure.
 - On 28th August, the government

agrees on the strengthening of the Prime Minister's powers. A bill is to be tabled before the end of the year. The opposition criticises the conflict of interests between the roles played by Mr Berlusconi: both political leader and businessman.

Slovenia

- On 6th August, Mr Bekes, Slovenia's Ambassador in Croatia, meets with Mr Bekic, the Croatian Deputy Foreign Minister, and requests him to kindly provide an explanation on the position of the Croatian Ministry of Agriculture regarding the proclaiming of a Croatian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the Adriatic. The Slovenians oppose any such unilateral declaration of a Croatian exclusive economic zone.

Croatia

- Croatia has to deal with its most serious drought in 50 years.
- On 22nd August, for the first time since the country's independence in 1991, a Croatian President, Stipe Mesic, visits Montenegro.
- On 27th August, a former soldier from the Yugoslavian army pleads guilty before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia to charges of war crimes during the Dubrovnik bombardments.
- On 28th August, four Croatian Serbs are convicted by a Croatian court for genocide during their participation in the Serbo-Croatian war (1991-1995).

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 15th August, Mitar Rasevic, the Bosnian Serb turns himself in to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. He is indicted for crimes against humanity, violations of the laws and customs of war and grave breach of the Geneva Convention when he was commander of the Foca Kazneni Popravni Dom detention centre between 1992 and 1995.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On 4th August, Satish Menon, a United Nations police officer, is assassinated. He is the first member of an in-

ternational organisation to be killed since the end of the war in 1999. Anti-UN feeling rises after the conviction of several members of the KLA for war crimes.

- On 7th August, 16 of the 51 generals and admirals in the Supreme Defence Council (the highest military body) are dismissed on suspicion of being loyal to Mr Milosevic. Several lower-ranking officials suffer the same fate.
- On 7th August, Zoran Janjusevic, security advisor to the Serbian Prime Minister, resigns after being accused of corruption, which he flatly denies.
- On 12th August, the Serbian Government adopts a draft declaration describing Kosovo as part of Serbia, thus triggering dissatisfaction among the Albanian majority of the province. There are several reports of Serbian aggression towards Albanians crossing Serb enclaves.
- On 21st August, 44 people are accused of being suspicious of conspiring or participating in the murder of Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic. One of the suspects directly charged with this murder, Milorad "Legija" Lukovic, was a member of the Special Operations Unit during Milosevic's time.
- On 25th August, the trial of Slobodan Milosevic resumes with testimony from a soldier who claims to have acted under threat of death.

Macedonia

- On 28th and 29th August, a Regional Forum is held, organised by UNESCO, on the "dialogue between civilisations." The Presidents of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia and Serbia and Montenegro participate, as well as representatives from the EU, the UN and other international organisations and NGOs. The aim is to reinforce cooperation between the countries of South-east Europe and to provide mutual support for European integration.

Albania

- From 22nd to 24th August, the Balkan leaders meet for the first time to encourage rapprochement between the regions and put an end to ethnic tensions, pre-requisites for living in a stable and peaceful region.

Greece

- On 11st August, Greenpeace criticises lack of concern for environmental issues in the organisation of the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.
- On 14th August, a violent earthquake (6.4 on the Richter scale) strikes the southwest of Greece, slightly injuring 27 people.

Cyprus

- On 8th August, Abdullatif Sener, the Turkish Deputy Prime Minister, and the President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), sign a framework agreement for a Customs Union which will allow products from the Republic, currently under an international blockade, to be exported to the international markets through Turkey. The latter undertakes to lower port and airport duties and to encourage investment in the TRNC. The agreement is criticised for running counter to certain agreements signed between the EU and Turkey.

Turkey

- On 6th August, President Ahmet Necdet Sezer approves the seventh package of European Union harmonisation reforms, designed to limit the Turkish army's extensive powers.
- At the end of August, Turkey acknowledges the failure of its law on a partial amnesty for Kurdish militants from the PKK, after only eight members of the PKK have benefited from it.

Syria

- In mid-August, William Burns, the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State for the Middle East, meets President Bashar al-Assad in the south of Lebanon to discuss the situation in Iraq and Palestine, and the Middle East peace process in general.

Lebanon

- On 8th August, members of Hezbollah attack Israeli military positions near the Golan Heights. These attacks follow Israeli reports on the reinforcement of Israeli troops on its north border af-

ter Hezbollah's announcement to continue its military activities. On 10th August, tensions are rekindled at the border.

- On 8th August, Abdullah Shuraydi, the Palestinian Islamic leader of the *Isbat al-Ansar* group, is assassinated in the Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp, near Sidon.

Jordan

- On 3rd August, a new Chamber of Representatives is elected. It immediately rejects the temporary law brought in by the Cabinet in December 2001, authorising women to divorce without their husbands' consent. On 10th August, demonstrations by women's movements and human rights activists are carried out in protest.

Egypt

- On 23rd August, the Egyptian security services arrest 37 members of the radical Islamic movement *Jamaa Islamiya*, who want to relaunch the armed struggle.
- On 29th August, the Muslim Brotherhood calls on all Muslims to lend both moral and financial support to the Palestinians' jihad against Israel.
- The same day, nine members of the Muslim Brotherhood movement are arrested and placed in custody for having "incited the public to rise against the Egyptian regime."

Libya

- On 15th August, Libya, the United Kingdom and the United States come to an agreement on compensation for the families of the 270 people killed in the Lockerbie attack in 1988. This compensation is to be paid in stages, as United Nations continue to ease sanctions. France threatens to veto the easing of UN sanctions if Libya does not offer increased compensation to the victims of the another attack (UTA Flight 772) in September 1989. On 17th August, Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, calls on the General Council to ease the sanctions on Libya. The following day, the United Kingdom and the United States present a letter to the Security Council in this regard.

Tunisia

- On 17th August, the journalist Abdallah Zouari is arrested for the second time since his release in 2002, and sentenced on 30th August to nine months in prison for contravention of the order prohibiting him to leave his home town of Zarzis. Human rights organisations in Tunisia and abroad condemn Mr Zouari's detention and accuse the Ben Ali government of muzzling the press in order to silence opposition. After his arrest, Mr Zouari goes on hunger strike.

Algeria

- On 18th August, militant Islamic Algerians, members of the Salafist Group for Call and Combat, free 14 European hostages in Mali who they kidnapped in the Algerian Sahara in February. Most of the hostages are German nationals, but Germany denies having paid any ransom.

Morocco

- On 6th August, Mohamed Bouzoubaoua, the Justice Minister, states that 1,042 persons belonging to various organisations have been arrested in connection with the Casablanca attacks on 16th May the previous year. Eleven of them belong to the al-Qaeda network.
- On 19th August, in the Casablanca attacks trial, a Casablanca court sentences 4 people to death and 83 people to prison for their participation in the Casablanca attacks.

European Union

- On 27th August, Romano Prodi, the President of the European Commission, warns the euro-zone Member States, stating that the Commission will take steps against those which do not comply with the 3% public deficit criteria as contained in the Stability and Growth Pact. This warning follows talks between Mr Prodi and Jean-Pierre Raffarin, the French Prime Minister, and the meeting on 17th August between Pedro Solbes, Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs, and German leaders. These two countries, whose public debt in 2003 was high-

er than 3%, are requested to meet the 3% criteria in 2004.

September 2003

Portugal

- On 1st September official sources in Portugal, France and Spain declare that since November 2002, 47,225 tonnes of fuel have escaped from the *Prestige*, the shipwrecked oil tanker.
- On 15th September, Jorge Sampaio, the Portuguese President, accompanied by 50 Portuguese businessmen, undertakes a state visit to Turkey in order to strengthen economic and trade relations between the two countries. During this meeting, the President states that Turkey should be treated like any other country applying for accession to the European Union and criticises the the possibility of turning the EU into "Christian club."
- Luis Filipe Pereira, the Minister for Health, announces a reduction in the numbers of heat-wave-related deaths occurring between July ending and August ending. The official figure is 545 deaths.

Spain

- On 4th September, Prime Minister José María Aznar announces that Mariano Rajoy Brey, the current Vice-President, has been unanimously elected as Secretary-General of the Popular Party (PP) and as the PP candidate for the post of President in the next elections.
- On 5th September, 4 people, suspected of being members of ETA are arrested and on 14th September a member of ETA is killed in an exchange of fire with the police.
- The proposal by Juan José Ibarretxe, the regional Basque President, for Basque independence to be made greater through the creation of a "Free associate state" is rejected by Prime Minister Aznar.
- On 11th September, Tayseer Alouni, a Spanish journalist from Al-Jazeera who interviewed Osama Bin Laden shortly after the 11th September attacks, is arrested on suspicion of belonging to the al-Qaeda network and

having supplied it with information and money. On 13th September, 16 immigrants of North-African origin are released after two months' imprisonment on suspicion of terrorist activities. They intend to sue Prime Minister Aznar for defamation. On 22nd September, four other persons are arrested for their alleged involvement in terrorist activities.

France

- On 18th September, Nicolas Sarkozy, Minister for the Interior, Internal Security and Local Freedoms, states that he is going to close mosques where radical Islam is preached and will expel foreign imams who give fundamentalist sermons. He also announces that foreign Muslims will be refused visas for attending conferences in France if they cannot "prove their compliance with the laws of the Republic."
- On 23rd September, Ali B., of Franco-Algerian origin, is arrested on suspicion of having provided logistic support to the 'Frankfurt cell', in which alleged members of al-Qaeda, arrested in France and Germany in 2000-2001, participated.
- On 24th September, the controversy about headscarves resurfaced when two girls who refuse to remove their headscarves are expelled from a school in the Paris suburbs.
- On 25th September, the National Institute for Health and Medical Research (Inserm) estimates the number of exceptional deaths caused by the high temperatures in August at 15,000.
- On 25th September, the 8 representatives of Corsica Natione resume their seats in the Corsican Parliament, after having abandoned them in June.
- On 29th September, the trial begins for former Prime Minister Alain Juppé and 26 other persons at Nanterre. They are charged with abuse of public and company funds between 1988 and 1995, when Alain Juppé was advisor to the former mayor of Paris and current President, Jacques Chirac and the secretary-general of the Rally for the Republic (RPR).

Italy

- On 11th September, an article is

published in the magazine *The Spectator* in which Berlusconi described Benito Mussolini, the Italian fascist dictator, as well-meaning and never having killed anyone. Berlusconi ends up apologising and, in spite of this incident, he is honoured in New York on 23rd September with the *Jewish Anti-Defamation League's Distinguished Statesman Award*, in recognition of his support in the Iraq war and to the Israeli government.

- On 11th September, the Ministry of Health releases the official figures on heat-related deaths: 4,175.
- On 25th September, a petition is submitted to the Supreme Court of Appeal, requesting a referendum on the new immunity law (June) granted to the Prime Minister.
- On 28th September, almost all of Italy is without electricity, in some cases for 18 hours. (GRTN, the Italian national grid operator, blames it on the malfunctioning of two supply lines from France and Switzerland. Experts from these two countries state that the incident could have been avoided if GRTN had reacted more quickly to the line malfunctions.) This incident re-opens the debate on nuclear power in Italy.

Malta

- Malta and Cyprus are not invited to the Prague Conference to take place on 23rd September, at which the small and medium-sized countries of the EU and future EU members gather to discuss the European Constitution.

Slovenia

- On 9th September, Prime Minister Anton Rop announces the abolition of compulsory military service.

Croatia

- On 10th September, for the first time since Croatia's independence, Stipe Mesic, the Croatian President, visits Belgrade, where he meets Svetozar Marovic, President of Serbia and Montenegro. The two Presidents exchange symbolic apologies for the suffering and damage their people have inflicted on each other.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 4th September, Drogan Nikolic, a Bosnian Serb comes to an agreement with the prosecutors of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and consents to plead guilty to persecution, murder and torture of Muslim prisoners and to having aided and abetted sexual violence in a detention camp in the east of Bosnia.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On 3rd September, the judges of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) refuse the request by Slobodan Milosevic, the former Serbian President, to be released for at least two years in order to be able to prepare his defence.
- On 4th September, the UN Security Council appoints Carla del Ponte for a renewed term of 4 years as chief prosecutor of the ICTY (Resolution 1504 (2003)).
- On 24th September, Maja Kovacevic, a Serbian judge, announces that Milosevic will be prosecuted for having ordered the death of Ivan Stambolic, the former Serbian President. The trial is to start in two months' time.

Macedonia

- On 4th September, security forces suffer an attack perpetrated by ethnic Albanian guerrillas on the border with Kosovo. It is one of the most serious attacks since 2001.
- On 8th September, 4 members of the Albanian national army (ANA), the extremist group, are killed by the Macedonian police. This paramilitary group, considered a terrorist group by the UN mission in Kosovo, does not recognise the Ohrid peace accords of 2001.

Greece

- On 25th September, Greece and Turkey ratify before the UN the Ottawa convention on the prohibition of antipersonnel mines, which will lead them shortly to de-mine their shared border. The same day, seven illegal immigrants die in these minefields.

Cyprus

- On 4th September, the three main opposition parties in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) form an election coalition for the December parliamentary elections. Their aim is to create a unified Cyprus, based on the plan by Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations. They also oppose Rauf Denktaş, the current President, blaming him for the failure of the negotiations to reunify the island.

Turkey

- On 2nd September, the Congress for Liberty and Democracy in Kurdistan (Kadek – the former PKK) announces that an end to its 4 years of unilateral ceasefire, alleging that the Turkish Government has not respected the freedoms and rights of the Kurdish people.
- On 22nd September, John Snow, U.S. Treasury Secretary, and Ali Babacan, the Turkish Minister for the Economy, sign a loan agreement in Dubai for 8.5 million dollars in order to alleviate the impact of the Iraq war on the Turkish economy. This loan follows discussions between the two countries on the possibility of a deployment of Turkish troops in Iraq.

Syria

- On 10th September, Prime Minister Mohammed Mustafa Mero hands over his resignation. On 18th September, a new government is put in place, headed by Mohammed Naji al-Itri, former Speaker of the Parliamentary Assembly. The key posts, such as the Foreign Minister and the Defence Minister, remain in the hands of its former holders.
- On 16th September, John Bolton, U.S. Under-Secretary of State for Arms Control, accuses Syria (considered by the United States to be a “Rogue State”) of developing weapons of mass destruction and criticises its inability to prevent militants from crossing the border with Iraq to attack U.S. soldiers.

Lebanon

- On 4th September, following accusations against Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in a disappearance case

in 1978, of the Lebanese Shi'ite leader Imam Moussa Sadr, Libya closes its embassy in Beirut, without, however, breaking off relations with Lebanon. Amr Moussa, secretary-general of the Arab League, volunteers to mediate.

- On 24th September, the Belgian judicial authorities finally abandon the prosecution for crimes against humanity of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Amos Yaron, the Israeli general.
- On 25th September, the Lebanese judicial authorities launch proceedings against Michel Aoun, former head of government (in exile in France) for the remarks he made about Syria before the U.S. Congress, considered detrimental to relations between Lebanon and Syria.
- On 26th September, Lebanese President Emile Lahoud reiterates his support for the Palestinian resistance and his refusal to interfere with banking secrecy, indirectly rejecting a freeze on the bank accounts of Hamas leaders, as requested by Washington.
- On 28th September, in commemoration of the third anniversary of the second Intifada and in homage to the martyrs, thousands of sympathisers of Hamas, the Palestinian movement, and the Lebanese Hezbollah demonstrate in southern Lebanon.

Jordan

- On 2nd and 3rd September, for the first time since the Iranian revolution in 1979, King Abdullah II of Jordan, makes an official visit to Iran where he meets with Iranian President Seyyed Mohammed Khatami and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme spiritual leader.

Egypt

- At the end of September, authorities release 900 members of Gamaat-i-Islamiya, the Islamic group implicated in the assassination of former President Anwar Sadat in 1981 and in the attack on tourists in Luxor in 1997. Since 1999, the group has been observing a ceasefire.

Libya

- On 9th September, Libya, opposed to the participation of Hoshyar Zebari,

the new Iraqi Foreign Minister, boycotts the meeting of the Arab League's Ministerial Council.

- On 11th September, France declares that it will not veto the lifting of international sanctions imposed by the UN on Libya, after the latter has agreed to increase the compensation for families of victims of the UTA flight attack (1989). On 12th September, Resolution 1506, adopted by the Security Council (13 votes for, and two abstentions: the United States and France), lifts with immediate effect the sanctions on Libya, thus paving the way for the payment of the first instalment of compensation to families of the victims of the Lockerbie attack.
- On 18th and 19th September, Spanish Prime Minister José Maria Aznar visits Libya and discusses trade relations and the situation in the Middle East. He is the first western leader to renew contacts with the country since sanctions were imposed.

Tunisia

- On 4th September, the Tunisian army destroys its last antipersonnel mine reserves, thus complying with the Treaty of Ottawa, signed in 1997.

Algeria

- On 5th September, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika carries out a partial reshuffling of government, dismissing certain ministers considered loyal to his rival, the former minister Ali Benflis, who was removed from power in May.

Morocco

- On 11th and 13th September, two Jews are murdered. King Mohammed VI sends a message of condolence to Morocco's Jewish community.
- During September, the trials of people suspected of involvement in the Casablanca attacks in May continue. 33 people are sentenced various prison terms, including three life sentences. On 25th September, two Muslims are sentenced to death for planning terrorist attacks, which brings the total of death sentences passed since the May attacks to 16.
- On 30th September, two 14-year-

old twin girls are sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment for having planned an attack against a supermarket in Rabat.

European Union

- On 6th September, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the 15 Member States agree to add the political wing of Hamas, the Palestinian movement, to the list of organisations supporting terrorism. This means that Hamas's financial assets in the European countries will be frozen and that any donation to Hamas will be prohibited.
- On 18th September, President Chirac and Chancellor Schröder announce their intention to inject massive public investment into high-technology industrial projects (TGV train between Paris and Frankfurt, Galileo, the satellite navigation system, etc.) in order to foster an upturn in economic growth in Europe.
- On 23rd September, the Commission announces that the European Solidarity Fund for disasters will release 48.5 million euros for Portugal (forest fires), 47.6 million euros for Italy (earthquake) and 8.7 million euros for Spain (oil spill).
- On 25th September, the European Commission opposes France's draft budget for 2004, with a planned public deficit of 3.6% of GDP in order to promote growth and employment.
- On 25th September, Romano Prodi, the President of the European Commission, opposes the demand by the European Parliament for the resignation of three commissioners, accused of being unable to deal with the corruption scandal in Eurostat, the statistical service. Romano Prodi acknowledges that errors have been made but emphasises that the corruption dated from before the current European Commission took up office.
- On 30th September, the European Association for Animal Production states that the cost of mad cow disease was EUR 90 million, meaning that the disease is the most costly ever to have affected European cattle.

Arab League

- On 9th September, the Arab League's Ministers for Foreign Affairs agree

to give Iraq's seat temporarily to the representative of the interim Iraqi Council of Government, formed under the aegis of the United States.

- From 26th to 30th September, the first economic forum between the Arab League and the United States is held.

October 2003

Portugal

- On 6th October, Minister for Science and Higher Education, Mr. Pedro Lynce resigns on allegations of nepotism, and on 7th October, Foreign Minister, Mr. Antonio da Cruz follows suit.
- On 21st October, President Jorge Sampaio, in a televised statement, asks the Portuguese people to retain confidence in the judicial system, after recordings of telephone calls made public suggest that politicians are trying to undermine investigations into a paedophile scandal in which several public figures have been arrested.

Spain

- On 8th October, 34 people are arrested on suspicion of belonging to ETA, the Basque terrorist group. On 12 October, a Spanish national holiday, ETA explodes two bombs in a parking lot in the Basque town of Irun, there are no casualties.
- On 15th October, the police arrest 550 illegal immigrants from Morocco on southern coasts and in the Canary Isles. At least 32 people drown at the end of October attempting to reach the Spanish coast.
- On 26th October, Juan José Ibarretxe, President of the Basque Government, presents a proposal for a referendum on "the independence of the Basque country in association with Spain." The Spanish Government opposes it and on 31st October the government announces that it will bring a case before the Constitutional Court.

France

- On 2nd October, an investigating judge in Paris issues writs to 8 banks and 100 individuals (including several

rabbis), accused of money laundering between France and Israel.

- On 5th October, the government calls on the trade unions and employers to review the law on the 35-hour working week (2002) to make it more flexible, thus preventing the French economy from worsening.
- On 9th October, suspected members of the Islamic Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC) appear in court, accused of having planned an attack on the occasion of a France-Algeria football match in October 2001. On 14th October, Larbi Moulaye, an Algerian, is extradited to Algeria, accused of being the "key man" and chief recruiter in the southwest of France for the GSPC.
- On 10th October, two attacks are committed in Nice and Paris, wounding one person. The Corsican National Liberation Front-Union of Combatants (FLNC-UC) claims responsibility for the attacks. On 15th October, two people are arrested in connection with the Paris attacks. On 17th October, the Council of State refuses the request by Corsica Natione to annul the referendum (6 July), which rejected by a very narrow margin proposals for decentralisation. Several attacks take place before the visit by Nicolas Sarkozy, Minister for the Interior, to Corsica on 30 October.
- On 17th October, Abdelkader Sahaf, a Frenchman, is arrested on suspicion of being a member of the "Chechen cell" made up of anti-Russian Muslims.

Italy

- On 1st October, the Chamber of Representatives approves two amendments to the bill on media reform, which is beneficial to Mediaset, President Berlusconi's media company. The bill is sent to the Senate for its approval.
- On 15th October, the Spanish Constitutional Court suspends investigations into allegations of tax fraud against President Berlusconi, protected by the Italian law on immunity. President Berlusconi's company Fininvest holds shares in Telecinco, a Spanish television channel.
- On 20th October, a boat carrying illegal immigrants is found with 15 people on board. According to the survivors, some 50 people must have lost

their lives during the crossing from Libya.

- On 24th October, 6 alleged members of the Red Brigade are arrested for their alleged implication in the murder of Massimo d'Antona in 1989, when he was an advisor to the Minister for Employment. On 27th October, it is announced that there will be an enquiry into the police's selection procedure, since one of the suspects in the case had been given authorisation to have access to classified state documents.
- On 24th October, the three biggest unions organise a strike in protest at the government's proposed pensions reform. Under the new reform, from 2008 the full pension will only be received after payment of contributions for 40 years, not 35 years as is the case currently.

Malta

- On 22nd October, Alvaro Gil-Robles a Spaniard and Human Rights High Commissioner for the Council of Europe, following a visit to the island from 20th to 21st October, describes the conditions in which illegal immigrants are detained in Malta as "shocking." He considers it "unacceptable" that the illegal immigrants sometimes spend two years in these centres, waiting for a decision on their asylum request. The Maltese authorities promise that these problems will be remedied.

Slovenia

- Several meetings between France and Slovenia take place at the beginning of October, including the visit to Slovenia on 23rd October by Dominique de Villepin, the French Foreign Minister, who meets his counterpart Dimitrij Rupel, Prime Minister Anton Rop, President Janez Drnovsek and officials from the Slovenian parliament. The visit is devoted to bilateral relations and Slovenia's accession to the European Union (EU) in May 2004. Following the meeting, both parties reaffirm a closeness in their positions on EU constitution.
- On 28th October, Mitja Gaspari, governor of the Slovenian central bank, states that Slovenia ought to think about joining the euro zone in 2007.

Croatia

- On 9th October, Pierre-Richard Prosper, the US Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues, announces \$5 million reward (in a 'Reward for Justice' programme) in exchange for information on the whereabouts of Ante Gotovina, a Croatian general. He has been on the run since his indictment by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was made public in July 2001. The outcome of this case is an important factor for Croatia's accession to the European Union.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 19th October, Alija Izetbegovic, President of Bosnia during the war of independence and the civil war (1992-1995), dies at the age of 78. On 22nd October, the day of his burial, a spokesman for the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) states that Mr Izetbegovic had been the subject of an investigation for war crimes. The investigation is suspended.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On 14th October, the first direct negotiations on the status of Kosovo are held in Vienna between the political leaders of Serbia and of Kosovo. Ibrahim Rugova, President of Kosovo, and Zoran Zivkovic, the Serbian Prime Minister, each attempt to demonstrate the links of the other with former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic. They agree on the setting up of working parties on energy, telecommunications, the return of refugees and on missing persons.
- On 20th October, 4 top-ranking Serbian military and security officers are indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) for war crimes during the Kosovo conflict of 1998-1999. On 21st October, Zoran Zivkovic, the Serbian Prime Minister, declares ICTY's action a "tough blow to reforms in Serbia" and "a serious breach" of the informal agreement between the court and Zoran Djindjic, the assassinated former Prime Minister, under which there are to be

no more charges based on the principle of "command responsibility." A spokesperson for Carla Del Ponte, the chief prosecutor, denies that such an agreement exists.

- On 31st October, at Podgorica, the Ministers for the Interior of Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and Macedonia as well as representatives of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) meet to fight together against organised crime. A cooperation agreement is signed between Montenegro, Albania and UNMIK.

Albania

- On 12th October, municipal elections take place, a real test for Albania's future accession to the EU. On 13th October, the opposition, led by former president Sali Berisha, announces that it will challenge the validity of the polls in Tirana and Durres, the two largest cities in Albania. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which was fully involved in the organisation of the elections, is to make its conclusions public.

Greece

- On 9th October, thousands of public sector workers demonstrate on the streets of Athens in an attempt to improve their salary terms and working conditions. Costas Simitis, the Prime Minister, rules out any increase in public sector salaries, since the public deficit will probably grow considerably as a result of the costs of the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.

Cyprus

- On 14th October, 10,000 Turkish Cypriots demonstrate against the decision by their government to grant Cypriot nationality to thousands of Turks. In the opinion of many, this is an attempt by Rauf Denkash, President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), to gain votes in his favour in the next elections.

Turkey

- On 4th October, the Supreme Board of Elections declare, after months of

speculation, that the November 2002 elections results are valid.

- On 7th October, the Grand National Assembly (Turkish Legislature) adopts the government resolution making provision for the sending of Turkish troops to maintain peace in Iraq. Neither the number of soldiers nor the date of their despatch is specified in the despatch plan. On 14th October, the Turkish embassy in Baghdad is attacked. On 18th October, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan states that no definitive decision on deployment has been adopted and that therefore there is still a possibility that troops will not be sent.

Syria

- On 5th October, following a suicide strike the day before in Haifa in which 21 people died and for which Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility, the Israeli army attacks a base at Ain Saheb, 20 kilometres south-west of Damascus. According to Israel, it is a training camp for Palestinian terrorists, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Syria rejects the Israel's assertions and maintains that it is not a training camp but the home of some Palestinian refugees. Syria brings a complaint before the UN Security Council. On 7th October, Ariel Sharon, the Israeli Prime Minister, states that Israel will attack in any place and using any means necessary in order to defend its citizens. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad rejects the U.S. demand to expel representatives of Palestinian factions.
- On 8th October, the U.S. position towards Syria toughens with the adoption by the U.S. Chamber of Representatives' Committee on International Relations of the 'Syria accountability act' under which Syria has to, if it wants to avoid any economic or diplomatic sanctions, end its support of terrorism, suspend all her programmes to construct weapons of mass destruction and withdraw from Lebanon.

Lebanon

- Following the Israeli attack on a Palestinian training camp in Syria on 5th October, tensions mount on the border between Israel and Lebanon. On 28th October, clashes break out in

a disputed zone of the Israel-Lebanon border, near the Golan Heights, between the Israeli army and Hezbollah fighters. These clashes coincide with the meeting between Emile Lahoud, the Lebanese President, and Lieutenant-General Hassan Turkmani, Chief-of-Staff of the Syrian troops.

Jordan

- On 22nd October, King Abdullah II accepts the resignation of Prime Minister Ali Abu al-Rageb's government. The same day, he designates Faysal Akif al-Fayiz, who until then has been chief of protocol at the royal court, as the new Prime Minister and on 25th October the king accepts the make-up of his government.

Egypt

- On 6th October, anniversary of the Israeli-Arab war of 1973, the Egyptian authorities release some 2,400 Egyptian prisoners, including 400 members of the Islamic movement Al Gama'a al Islamia, which is implicated in the plotting of President Anwar Sadat's assassination in 1981, and which had proclaimed a truce in 1997.

Libya

- During October, negotiations between France and Libya on increased compensation for families of the victims of the UTA flight 772 attack in 1989 fail. On 24th October, Sayf al-Islam, leader of the Libyan negotiations, and son of the Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, blames the failure of the negotiations on bad personal relations between Gaddafi and Jacques Chirac, the French President.

Tunisia

- On 13th October, Radia Nasraoui, the Tunisian female lawyer, begins a hunger strike in protest at the systematic obstacles she faces in pursuing her profession as a lawyer and the constant harassment to which she, her family and her clients are subjected. She accuses the authorities of wanting to "silence her" and of having caused her "isolation" because of her defence of hu-

man rights and denunciation of torture in the country.

Algeria

- On 23rd October, the United Nations General Assembly elects the 5 new non-permanent members of the Security Council for a period of 2 years starting on 1st January 2004. Algeria is elected alongside Benin, Brazil, the Philippines and Romania.
- On 30th October, Tayeb Belaiz, Justice Minister, sets up a committee to revise the Family Code, adopted in 1984 under pressure from Islamic fundamentalists and considered discriminatory towards women. Tayeb Belaiz emphasises that in the revision, both universal values and Islamic values will be taken into account.

Morocco

- On 10th October, King Mohammed VI presents his bill to reform the Family Code to Parliament, which should be adopted without any particular problems. The changes announced constitute a real liberation for Moroccan women. The new family code is undoubtedly the most significant decision made by the king since his accession to the throne in 1999. A special jurisdiction of family tribunals will be set up in order to implement the new law.
- On 17th October, Reporters Without Borders condemn the severity of the courts towards Mohammed el Hourd, publisher of the newspaper Asharq, and Mustapha Kechnini, editor of the newspaper Al Hayat al Maghribia. On 22nd October, Ali Lmrabet, journalist, who has been in prison since 13 May 2003 and sentenced to three years' imprisonment, tells the press that he is under threat in his cell.
- On 25th October, 39 Moroccan fundamentalists, suspected of belonging to movements involved in the fatal attacks of 16th May in Casablanca, are arrested there.

European Union

- On 1st October, Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, puts forward a 220 million euro programme for the construction of a trans-

port infrastructure project linking 28 European countries, including the construction of motorways and high-speed train lines between the 10 future EU members states and 15 current members. The project also includes the construction of a bridge linking Sicily to the Italian peninsula and the improvement of communications between the Alps and the Pyrénées.

- On 4th October, the intergovernmental conference (IGC) to finalise the European Constitution begins. The IGC of 16 and 17th October highlights the divisions within the 15 members and 10 future members of the EU. Apart from France, Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries, the other governments want to make changes to the draft put forward by the Convention on the Future of Europe. These states oppose the reduction of the members of the Commission to 15 from 2009, with a rotation system. Spain and Poland oppose the double majority system for the adoption of decisions in the Council. Another point of controversy is the reference in the draft constitution to increased co-operation in the realm of defence, as advocated by France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg. The United Kingdom and other NATO members fear that a military structure outside of NATO will supplant it.

- On 9th October, Franz Fischler, European Commissioner for Fisheries, presents his plan to combat the extinction of certain species of fish under threat in the Mediterranean.

- On 13th October, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the ten European countries due to join the EU in May 2004 sign an agreement to become members of the European Economic Area on their accession. On 14th October, however, Liechtenstein refuses to ratify the agreement, provoking a diplomatic crisis.

- On 15th October, following an investigation by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) into the international sale of grain, the Belgian and French police arrest 8 people, including a Dutch official from the European Commission. Shortly afterwards, official reports are presented on financial irregularities in the EU's Committee of the Regions (CoR) and in the Eurostat statistical service

- On 16th October, the Brussels Sum-

mit confirms the appointment of Jean-Claude Trichet as President of the European Central Bank (ECB) as of 1st November.

- On 21st October, France rejects the European Commission's compromise, giving it an extra year to comply with the budget deficit rule in the Growth and Stability Pact, provided that France takes measures to reduce its deficit in 2004. The French refusal means that the Finance Ministers of the 15 EU Member States will have to decide in November whether to impose financial sanctions on France for failure to comply with the 3% public deficit rule for three consecutive years.

November 2003

Portugal

- At an Iberian summit on 7th and 8th November, Portugal and Spain reach an agreement on the construction of four high-speed rail links between the two countries and on the launch the following year of an Iberian Electricity Market (MIBEL). The two countries reach various agreements: one on the strengthening of police cooperation to combat terrorism, another on energy and infrastructure and a third on combating forest fires.

- On 25th November, Eduardo Ferro Rodriguez, the socialist leader of the opposition, accuses the centre-right government, headed by José Manuel Durao Barroso, for "lack of consistency" in his opposition to the European Commission's application of measures against the excessive deficits of France and Germany, while he is correctly applying the Growth and Stability Pact within Portugal.

Spain

- On 6th November, Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar and French President Jacques Chirac sign an agreement authorising the two countries' police forces to operate on the other's territory and to form joint units. The aim of the agreement is to facilitate operations against the terrorist organisation ETA, which operates on both sides of the border.

- On 6th November, the report on the damage caused by the Prestige accident to the Spanish coasts in 2002, by the WWF, the worldwide organisation to protect nature, states that its consequences – on shoreline pollution and on marine species as well as on tourism – might last for another decade.

- On 17th November, two members of ETA are sentenced to 20 and 61 years in prison for the murder of three civil guards in 1980. On 18th November, 11 suspected members of ETA are arrested in the Basque Country.

- On 16th November, in elections held for the Catalan autonomous government, the Catalan Republican Left (ERC), doubles its number of seats. This forces the two main parties, the Catalan Socialist Party (PSC) and the Convergence and Union Party, to include the ERC in the forming of a government. For the first time in twenty years, Catalonia is led by a left-wing government, formed through a coalition between the PSC, IC-EU-Els Verds and the ERC.

- On 21st November, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees criticises the living conditions of asylum seekers in the Spanish enclave of Ceuta in Morocco.

France

- On 11th November, proceedings are brought against Pierre Messmer, a former Prime Minister, for crimes against humanity. He is charged for having, as Minister for the Army from 1960 to 1969, abandoned the pro-French Algerians (Harkis) at the end of the Algerian war of independence. 100,000 Harkis were massacred after the French retreat in 1962.

- On 14th November, the Corsican National Liberation Front-Union of Combatants (FLNC-UC) announces that it will resume the ceasefire that had been suspended on 6th July in order to facilitate the creation of an alliance of moderate and radical nationalist groups to stand for the 2004 elections to the Corsican Assembly. The 'FLNC-October 22' group condemns the ceasefire and continues to commit attacks during November.

- On 17th November, following an attack on a Jewish school in the north of

Paris, French President Jacques Chirac summons his ministers in order to put in place an action plan to combat anti-Semitism, which is to include increased surveillance of Jewish schools, exemplary sentences for anti-Semitic activities and educational measures.

- On 17th November, the French police, with the help of the Italian authorities, arrest 13 alleged members of Takfir, the radical Islamic fundamentalist organisation, which form part of an Islamic fundamentalist network operating between France and Italy.
- On 28th November, Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin and Nicolas Sarkozy, Minister for Home Affairs, declare their support, before the National Council of the Union for a Presidential Majority (UMP – the ruling party), for a new law prohibiting Islamic veils and all other religious symbols. Several cases of the wearing of veils occur in November: the expulsion of two girls wearing veils from a school in Paris, the replacement of a female judge who wore the veil on 25th November by Dominique Perben, the Justice Minister and the expulsion of another girl wearing a veil from a school in Thann on 27th November.

Italy

- Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission and former Italian Prime Minister, has to face criticism for his interference in Italy's domestic affairs and for his inappropriate electoral campaign, in which he called on the Italian opposition parties to work together for the European elections in 2004 and the Italian elections in 2006. Some Commissioners accuse him of jeopardising the impartiality of the EU Presidency and of neglecting European affairs for Italy's.
- From 13th to 15th November, Ariel Sharon, the Israeli Prime Minister, visits Italy to reinforce links with the country, since the ruling party supported Israel on many occasions.
- On 22nd November, Cesare Preveti, Mr Berlusconi's business partner, is found guilty of corruption and sentenced to 5 years in prison.
- On 25th November, during an official visit to Israel, Gianfranco Fini, Deputy Prime Minister and member of the Na-

tional Alliance Party (AN), describes the fascist regime of the dictator Benito Mussolini as "hell." His remarks lead to the resignation of Alessandra Mussolini, grand-daughter of Benito Mussolini, from the AN party. On 30th November, she announces that she is to form her own party.

- On 27th November, demonstrations force the government to abandon the project to dump nuclear waste near the town of Scanzano Jonico, in the Basilicata region.

Malta

- On 6th November, the European Commission publishes a report on the state of integration of existing EU laws and agreements in the 10 future EU countries. The European Commission recommends that Malta, which is a particular target of its criticisms, should make "substantial efforts" on marine safety before its accession to the European Union on 1st May 2004.

Slovenia

- On 6th November, the European Commission states in its report on the state of integration of existing EU laws and agreements in the 10 future EU countries that Slovenia, alongside the three Baltic countries, is the best prepared in terms of the transposition of the existing EU laws and agreements into those countries' legislation.
- On 21st November George W. Bush, the U.S. President, partially lifts restrictions on military aid to Slovenia, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia to reward these countries for their role in the "war against terrorism" and the Iraqi crisis. The United States suspended its military aid to these six countries in July, as well as to many others, for not having signed any bilateral agreement exempting U.S. nationals from being tried before the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Croatia

- On 18th November, Milan Babic, former Croatian Serb rebel leader is indicted for war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). He is charged, among

others things, with leading ethnic cleansing campaigns against Croats in rebel parts of Croatia held by the Serbs. On 23rd November, Mr Babic states that he will not appeal against his conviction.

- On 23rd November, elections are held for the Chamber of Representatives following which the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), a right-wing party which led the country to independence in 1991, wins with 66 seats, 20 more than in the previous elections. On 24th November, Ivo Sanader, the leader of HDZ, states that his government's priorities will include joining NATO in 2006 and Europe in 2007.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 3rd November, a local television station in Banja Luka (capital of the Republic of Srpska, the Serbian entity in Bosnia) makes public the details of a report that until then had been secret on the massacre of Muslims in Srebrenica in 1995. For the first time, the government admits that Bosnian Serb troops were responsible for the massacre.
- On 13th November, for the first time since the end of the 1992-1995 war, Svetozar Marovic, the President of Serbia and Montenegro, visits Sarajevo, the Bosnian capital. President Marovic apologises for the hell suffered by the inhabitants of Sarajevo during the war, when the city was besieged.

Serbia and Montenegro

- At the beginning of November, Lord Owen, former European Union mediator in the former Yugoslavia (1992-1995) and one of the authors of the Van-Owen plan, testifies before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in the war crimes case against the former Yugoslav President, Slobodan Milosevic. He describes Mr Milosevic as a "pragmatist" who wanted the Serbs to be in the majority and states that Mr Milosevic could have encouraged a Bosnian peace agreement at the outset of the 1990s and could have avoided most of the massacres.
- On 13th November, the Prime Minister announces that early elections will be held on 28th December, after the withdrawal of two minority parties in

the governmental coalition, the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS), leading to the loss of its parliamentary majority.

- On 16th November, a new attempt to elect a Serbian President ends in failure, with a turnout of less than the 50% needed for the elections to be valid.
- On 18th November, the parliament of Kosovo agrees to implement the proposal by the Popular Movement to incorporate Kosovo into Albania. This proposal was backed by 46,000 signatures, representing 3.5% of Kosovo's electorate.
- On 20th November, Milan Filipovic, Montenegro's Minister for Home Affairs, resigns because the sexual trafficking and cigarette smuggling scandal in which he seems to be involved is continually rocking the government.

Macedonia

- On 3rd November, Ljuben Paunovski, former Defence Minister and opposition member in the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) is sentenced to 66 months' imprisonment for abuse of power and embezzlement.
- On 5th November, Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski dismisses 4 of his ministers. On 7th November, the appointment of the replacement ministers is approved by the Sobranje (the Legislature).

Albania

- On 5th November, Albania concludes an agreement with the European Commission in Tirana in which it undertakes to take back any of its nationals who are in one of the EU countries illegally.
- On 24th November, some 3,000 supporters of former Albanian President Sali Berisha demonstrate in the centre of Tirana to "denounce the results of the municipal elections" of 12th October in the Albanian capital. According to the electoral board, Edi Rama, outgoing mayor of Tirana and the Socialist Party's candidate, won the election with 58% of the votes, as against 38% to his opposition rival, Spartak Ngjela.

Greece

- On 14th November, Amnesty International expresses its preoccupation with the ill-treatment inflicted by Greek police officers and soldiers on Albanians suspected of being illegal immigrants.
- On 25th November the organisation calls on the Greek authorities to conduct an independent enquiry into the behaviour of the local police, accused of excessive use of force during the June European Summit in Thessaloniki. On 26th November, the Greek courts order the release of five militants of 'Another World is Possible' advocates. They have been held since June after incidents having nothing to do with the summit.

Cyprus

- On 11th November, The Times states that Asil Nasir, charged in the United Kingdom with having stolen £34 million from his company, which went bankrupt in 1993 (Polly Peck International), is standing for presidential elections in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).
- On 24th November, the UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1517 (2003), prolonging the mandate of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) by 6 months.
- On 27th November, Tassos Papadopoulos, the President of the Republic of Cyprus, announces that his government is planning to grant "equal rights" to Turkish Cypriots to enable them to vote, if they wish, in the European Union elections in June 2004. Implementation of this measure will depend on how the Cypriot parliament votes on this bill.

Turkey

- On 6th November, Abdullah Gul, the Turkish Foreign Minister, and Colin Powell, the United States Secretary of State, abandon the plan to send Turkish peacekeeping troops to Iraq, as decided by Turkish Grand National Assembly (parliament) in October. It is a setback in the attempt by the U.S. to enlarge the coalition in Iraq. The decision follows the systematic opposition by Kurdish members of the Iraqi Govern-

ing Council to the deployment of Turkish troops in Iraq.

- On 15th and 20th November, 4 bomb attacks take place in Istanbul. On 15th November two almost simultaneous attacks blow up two lorries loaded with bombs outside two synagogues, killing 25 people and injuring over 300. On 20th November, two other coordinated attacks targeting British interests (the United Kingdom consulate in the Beyoglu district and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC), whose headquarters is in London), kills 31 and injures over 450. Several groups claim responsibility for the attacks, but the size of the tragedy, the sophistication of the operations and the simultaneous attack method point to the hand of al-Qaeda. Several demonstrations are held against the attacks, but also against the United States and the United Kingdom for the war in Iraq. DNA tests demonstrate that the authors of the attacks against the synagogues are two young Turkish citizens originally from the Kurdish province of Bingol (known as the centre of Islamic fundamentalism) and known to have had military training abroad. The authors of the attacks on the British consulate and the HSBC are also Turks. The four perpetrators of the attacks are suspected of having links with extremist fundamentalist groups abroad. Azad Ekinci, a key suspect and a radical Islamic fundamentalist, flees the country. On 30th November, Syria expels 22 Turks suspected of being involved in the attacks. By the end of the month, 21 people are already convicted in connection with the attacks.

Syria

- On 10th November, according to the London-based newspaper Al-Sharq al-Awsat, Lieutenant-General Amin el Hafez, the former Syrian President (1963-1966), has been authorised to return to the country after 36 years of exile in Iraq.
- On 20th November, the Al-Jazeera television network announces that a new opposition group has been created, called the Democratic Alliance and led by Farid al-Ghadiri, the founder of the Al-Islah Party based in Washington. Two political figures in Syria's opposi-

tion, based in Germany, are members, as well as Badriyah Khalil, President of the Syrian League of Women and Children, and Tawfiq Hamdush, leader of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan – Syria.

Lebanon

- On 10th November, as part of an agreement reached with the help of German mediation, Ariel Sharon's cabinet undertakes to release some 400 Palestinian and Lebanese detainees, in exchange for an Israeli businessman and the bodies of three Israeli soldiers assassinated by Hezbollah in 2000 at the border between Israel and Lebanon. Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary-general of Hezbollah, informed the German mediator of his refusal to exchange prisoners with Israel if the operation did not include a Lebanese man whom Israel refuses to release: Samir Kantar, aged 41, who has been in prison for over 20 years for having killed three Israelis in cold blood in 1979.
- On 20th November, Fadi Abboud, president of the Industrialists' Association, returns to Damascus leading a delegation to discuss the plan to create a joint Syrian and Lebanese industrial zone.

Jordan

- On 17th November, King Abdullah II appoints a new Senate, enlarged to 55 members. The number of women increases from 3 to 7. Among the new Senators are several former Prime Ministers, Ministers, Army Chief Officers and a Director of Information Services.
- On 23th November, the Israeli government decides to make a gesture towards Jordan by releasing ten Jordanian prisoners, including one woman, on the occasion of the Muslim holiday of Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan.

Egypt

- On 6th November, a committee of the United Nations General Assembly adopts a resolution tabled by Egypt demanding Israel to protect Palestinian children.
- On 22 November, in a press release, Amnesty International calls on Egypt to

combat "the persistent phenomenon of torture and ill treatment" of detainees.

Libya

- On 24th November, it is announced that three judges in the Supreme Court in Glasgow have decided that Abdel Basset al-Megrahi, the former officer in the Libyan intelligence service, sentenced to life imprisonment for having placed the bomb in the aeroplane which exploded over Lockerbie in 1988, must spend at least 27 years in prison before being eligible to apply for release on parole.

Tunisia

- On 18th November, Tunisian journalist Zouhair Yahyaoui is released on parole after having been sentenced on 10th July 2002 to two years in prison for "spreading incorrect information" on his Internet site, *Tunézine*. Reporters Without Borders, which had called for his release, is satisfied, although it points once again to the ill treatment he suffered in jail as well as the lack of press freedom in Tunisia.

Algeria

- On 20th November, Algeria's newspaper *Le Soir d'Algérie* states that Rachid Ouakali, the leader of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), has been arrested by the security forces. This information should be handled cautiously since in July 2002 Rachid Ouakali was presumed to have been killed by the army.

Morocco

- On 22nd November, 39 people are sentenced by Rabat's criminal court to various prison terms ranging from two to 20 years in prison for their involvement in the Casablanca attacks in May.

European Union

- On 3rd November, an opinion poll organised by the European Commission shows that EU citizens see Israel as the only country constituting the greatest threat to international peace. Natan Sharansky, the Israeli Minister for Diaspora Affairs, reacts by saying that the EU

ought to stop "demonising" Israel "before Europe turns once again to the dark pages of its history."

- On 13th November, in Rome, seven Balkan region countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia and Montenegro), sign a series of agreements creating a free trade area with the EU. This is the first step towards their inclusion within an enlarged Europe. These seven countries agree to abolish Customs duties, except on agricultural products.

- On 18th November, the Court of Auditors publishes its report on the EU budget accounts for 2002, but for the ninth successive year, it refuses to sign off the accounts because of "shortcomings caused by weaknesses in the design of the accounting system." On the same day, Romano Prodi, addressing the European Parliament, presents his new proposals to combat fraud, including the creation of a new post of chief prosecutor to head a stronger and more independent European Anti-Fraud Office. On 3rd November, Chris Patten, the Commissioner for External Relations, is questioned by the European Parliament regarding his possible involvement in the Eurostat scandal.

- On 20th November, NATO and the EU test NATO's Reponse Force (NRF) for the first time in a joint exercise, involving the land, air and sea forces of 11 countries.

- On 25th November, the Growth and Stability Pact which governs participation in the euro zone collapses after the EU Finance Ministers decide not to impose sanctions on France and Germany (who are breaching the Pact's terms), as requested by the European Commission. The decision is criticised by a minority of the Member States, by the Commission and by the European Central Bank (ECB). On 26th November, the European Commission announces that it is examining the option of appealing to the European Court of Justice.

- On 28th and 29th November, the Foreign Ministers of the EU and of the 10 future members due to join in May 2004 meet in Naples to discuss the draft European Constitution. They reach an agreement on the relation between enhanced cooperation in the area of

defence and the existing structure of NATO.

December 2003

Portugal

- On 30th December, 10 politicians and media personalities are charged in a paedophile case. On 3rd December, another paedophile case erupts in the Azores, also involving local public figures.

Spain

- On 2nd December, for the first time since the beginning of the war in Iraq, President José Maria Aznar makes a speech before the parliamentary body on the country's participation in the war. He confirms his support for the deployment of 1,300 military personnel in Iraq and rejects the demand for a withdrawal, although a survey has shown that 85% of the Spanish people are opposed to the war.

- On 4th December, Ibón Fernández de Iradi, the alleged leader of the Basque terrorist group ETA, who had escaped from a French prison in December 2002, is arrested by the French police. On 9th December, 9 alleged members of ETA, including Gorka Palacios Alday, the military and logistics commander, are arrested.

- On 14th December, three left-wing parties (Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSC), the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) and the Initiative for Catalonia-Greens (ICV) form the new Catalan government, headed by Pasqual Maragall, the leader of the PSC. The coalition's aim is to obtain greater autonomy, to create a Catalan revenue service and to increase social expenditure. The ruling People's Party criticises the coalition, saying that any step towards independence is unconstitutional.

France

- On 1st December, a strike by employees at the Foreign Affairs Ministry in protest against cost reduction measures has a detrimental effect on French diplomatic services and consulates worldwide.

- On 17th December, French President Jacques Chirac, on the recommendation of a report by the committee investigating the secularisation of the state, published on 11th December, announces that a law will be passed before the start of the 2004 academic year prohibiting the wearing of the veil and any other religious symbols in state educational establishments and other public buildings. He declares that this law should also put an end to the growing tendency of forbidding female family members to be treated by male doctors. He also stresses the need to have mixed swimming lessons and to encourage the participation of all in sports lessons. The report's recommendation to adapt school holidays to fit in with Muslim and Jewish festivals meets with opposition from Jacques Chirac. The bill receives wide support from politicians and the public, but is described as discriminatory by the leaders of the Muslim community in France.

- On 12th December, the Corsican National Liberation Front (FLNC) – October 22 claims responsibility for 36 recent attacks.

- On 16th December, a Paris court sentences the Algerian Idriss Aklouf to five years imprisonment for his involvement in a terrorist conspiracy and for using false identity papers.

Italy

- On 15th December, President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi refuses to sign a media bill which would have benefited the interests of Prime Minister Berlusconi, since the latter is planning to privatise the public channel RAI without regard for the constitutional rules on the "plurality of information."

- At the end of December, the largest financial scandal in Italy's history erupts, when it is made public that Parmalat, the seventh-biggest company in Italy, has hidden debts amounting to 10 billion euros. On 23rd December, Prime Minister Berlusconi's government modifies the law on bankruptcy to enable Parmalat to obtain temporary legal protection against its creditors. On 29th December, Parmalat is declared insolvent. On 30th December, Calisto Tanzi, the company founder, is arrested for fraud and admits having misappropriated

over 5 million euros. The opposition criticises Mr Berlusconi for having liberalised the accounting rules and decriminalised accounting fraud.

- On 20th December, hidden weapons belonging to the Red Brigade group are found in a flat in Rome.

Malta

- On 1st December, President Guido de Marco makes a two-day visit to Egypt to discuss bilateral relations and the situation in the Middle East. During his visit to the Middle East, the President also meets Amr Moussa, head of the Arab League.

Slovenia

- On 9th December, the city of Ljubljana authorises the construction of the first mosque in the country. The Muslim community represents between 0.5 and 1.1 % of the population.

Croatia

- On 23rd December the newly-elected Chamber of Representatives approves the new government formed by the right-wing Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ). Ivo Sanader is the new Prime Minister.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 2nd December, General Enver Hadzihasanovic and Colonel Amir Kubura, the first Bosnian Muslim officers to appear before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), are charged with responsibility for the death of at least 200 Croats and Serbs during Muslim attacks on the Serb forces between 1993 and January 1994. The same day, the ICTY sentences Momir Nikolic, a Bosnian Serb officer involved in the Srebrenica massacre in 1995, to 27 years in prison. On 5th December, the former commander of the Serbian army in Bosnia who led the troops responsible for the 1992-1995 siege of Sarajevo is sentenced to 20 years imprisonment.

Serbia and Montenegro

- In mid-December, Wesley Clark, a

commander of the NATO forces that compelled Mr Milosevic's Serbian forces to leave Kosovo in 1999, testifies against Slobodan Milosevic before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

- On 18th December, Dragan Djurovic is elected Minister of the Interior, following his predecessor's resignation in November.
- On 22nd December, the trial opens in Belgrade of 36 people suspected of the assassination of former Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic.
- On 28th December, parliamentary elections are held in which the ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS) is successful.

Macedonia

- On 6th December, an opposition coalition named the 'Third Way' is formed, with its members including the party of the former Foreign Minister (Democratic Alternative) and the party of the former Minister of the Interior (Democratic Alliance).
- On 15th December, the EU puts an end to the military mission Concordia, in Macedonia, and launches a police mission, named Mission Proxima. It is led by the Dutch Bart D'Hooge, with the participation of the 15 EU Member States, several countries applying for accession and of the United States.

Albania

- In mid-December, the Socialist Party of Albania (PSS), the ruling party, changes the party's internal rules, forcing PSS members in the People's Assembly (parliamentary body) to vote according to the party's parliamentary line or else give up their seats. This way, supporters of Fatos Nano, party leader and current Prime Minister, hope to put pressure on the rival faction in the party, led by former Prime Minister Lir Meta, who has recently brought the opposition together in order to block attempts by Fatos Nano to appoint new ministers.
- On 29th December, the parliament approves the government reshuffle by Prime Minister Fatos Nano, who had previously signed a coalition agreement with two small parties, Social Democratic Party of Albania (PSD) and the

Union for Human Rights (PBDNj), which each obtain a ministerial portfolio.

Greece

- On 17th December, 6 leaders of the "November 17th" left-wing militant group, responsible for the death of 23 people since its creation in 1973, are convicted, and some of them are sentenced to life imprisonment. 12 other people receive shorter sentences.
- On 23rd December, the Vouli (Parliament) adopts the 2004 budget, which provides for a major public investment programme for the preparation of the 2004 Olympic Games. Expenditure on education is on the rise while defense expenditure falls.

Cyprus

- On 2nd December, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) sentences Turkey to pay compensation to Greek Cypriot Titana Leyzidou for the loss of her house in 1998 during the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. Hundreds of similar cases are before the ECHR.
- On 14th December, parliamentary elections for the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) are held. The parties in favour of reunification and accession to the EU and the Cypriot Greek party win with a small majority, but both the pro-EU and the anti-EU parties win 25 seats. On 16th December, Dervis Eroglu (Party for National Unity – UBP), the anti-EU Prime Minister, resigns. President Rauf Denktaş asks Mehmet Ali Talat of the pro-EU Turkish Republican Party (CTP), which won the most votes, to form a new government. On 30th December, Mr Talat proposes a CTP-UBP coalition, but no agreement is reached.

Turkey

- On 2nd December, the Supreme Court of Appeal in Ankara sentences Necmettin Erbakan, the former Islamic fundamentalist Prime Minister, to two years in prison for misappropriation of funds from his Welfare Party (RP), which no longer exists.
- On 26th December, Muammer Guler, governor of Istanbul, states at a press conference that the suicide at-

tacks on the British consulate and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) and on the two synagogues were orchestrated by a Turkish cell with links to the al-Qaeda network, whose members had been trained abroad. He also announces that, of the 159 people arrested in connection with the attacks, 39 have been charged.

Syria

- On 12th December, U.S. President George W. Bush signs the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act, giving it the force of law.

Lebanon

- On 4th December, at the second conference organised by the Arab Thought Foundation in Beirut, Arab officials and intellectuals, including Amr Moussa, secretary-general of the Arab League, conduct a critical examination of their regimes and institution. Mr Moussa proposes the creation of an "Arab parliament elected by the peoples of the region."
- On 10th December, a Lebanese and a Palestinian are arrested by the Lebanese army as they are about to attack the U.S. embassy.
- On 18th December, Reporters without Borders (RWB) condemns the action by the Lebanese authorities, prohibiting the private television channel NTV from broadcasting political programmes for two days.
- On 20th December, 27 people charged with having participated in the anti-U.S. attacks in Lebanon are sentenced by the Beirut military tribunal to heavy prison terms, including one for life. Some of the attacks had targeted fast-food outlets from the end of 2002 to April 2003.

Jordan

- On 30th December, the Education Minister announces the launching of a comprehensive education reform with the aim of helping children to make a distinction between terrorism and "legitimate resistance." School books will no longer contain "violent concepts"

and efforts will be made to teach “fundamental values and the principles of human rights.”

Egypt

- On 20th December, President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak meets the Iranian President Seyyed Mohammed Khatami during the World Information Summit, held in Geneva. The meeting is the first since their countries broke off diplomatic relations following the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979.

Libya

- On 19th December, the United States and the United Kingdom announce that, after nine months of secret negotiations, Libya has agreed to reveal and dismantle its programme to build weapons of mass destruction, authorise international inspectors to come to verify and eliminate any existing programme and has undertaken to sign the international treaties to reduce nuclear and chemical weapons. On 27th December, a delegation from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), headed by Muhamad al-Baradi'i, arrives in Libya to begin inspections and on 29th December Muhamad al-Baradi'i states that Libya's nuclear programme is at a low level of development and that there is no trace of depleted uranium.

Tunisia

- From 3rd to 6th December, Jacques Chirac makes a state visit to Tunisia, where he reconfirms France's support for President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's economic and social policy, despite a controversial record in the field of human rights.
- On 5th and 6th December, the inaugural conference of the '5+5 dialogue group' is held; the group consists of Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, France, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain. The participating states issue a joint declaration against terrorism and in favour of enhanced security cooperation. On 19th December, Middle East International declares that the conference, mainly concerned with ensuring EU's enlargement to the east, does not jeopardize North Africa.

Algeria

- On 22nd December, the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) meeting due to have taken place on 13th and 24th December is cancelled due to the refusal of 3 of the 5 states to participate.
- On 30th December, a court in Algiers declares the eighth congress of the National Liberation Front (pro governmental FLN), held in March 2003, to be invalid, and freezes the party's funds. At the congress former Prime Minister Ali Benflis (dismissed from his post in May 2003 by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika) had been re-elected as party secretary-general. The court's decision follows a complaint by a faction within the FLN opposed to Ali Benflis and backing his rival, President Bouteflika.

Morocco

- On 8th and 9th December, the Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar makes a visit to Morocco. In a joint statement, the two countries undertake to step up their cooperation to combat the criminal networks that organise illegal immigration operations. Spain decides to lend US\$ 478 million to create jobs in Morocco in order to discourage illegal immigration to Europe. In mid-December, it is announced that the two countries have agreed on the creation of a rail tunnel under the straits of Gibraltar.

European Union

- On 12th December, the European Summit endorses the agreement between France, Germany and the United Kingdom on the setting up of an ad hoc military planning unit aside NATO.
- On 13th December, the intergovernmental conference that had been due to finalise the European Constitution collapses. The main point of disagreement is the refusal by Spain and Poland to use to double majority voting system (a simple majority of countries and 60% of the population of Europe) for the adoption of decisions at the Council of Ministers.
- On 15th December, Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom call on Romano

Prodi, President of the European Commission, to freeze the budget until 2013. It had been envisaged that Spain and Poland would be the main net beneficiaries of the 2007-13 budget.

- On 19th December, the EU Fisheries Ministers come to an agreement on fishing quotas for 2004, maintaining the drastic reduction in the total allowable catch (TAC) of cod, as decided in 2003 to protect the shrinking reserve in the North Sea, and reducing the number of days per month on which such fishing is allowed. The TAC for certain species out of danger is increased.
- On 21st December, two bombs explode in garbage bags near the residence of Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission. The Informal Anarchist Federation, a group opposed to the EU claims responsibility for the attacks. On 27th December, another bomb explodes inside Mr Prodi's residence.
- By the end of 2003, only 8 European countries (Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom) have complied with the deadline for introducing the European arrest warrant into their national legal systems.

January 2004

Portugal

- On 23rd January, the two main unions, the General Workers' Union (UGT) and the General Confederation of Workers of Portugal (CGTP), call a general strike of public servants in protest at the freezing of salaries for the second year running. The Secretary of State for the Civil Service states that this is a temporary budgetary measure designed to reduce public debt.

Spain

- On 9th January, Prime Minister José María Aznar calls a general election for 14th March and confirms his promise not to stand. President Aznar's successor is the Deputy Prime Minister, Mariano Rajoy.
- On 27th September, Josep Lluís Carod-Rovira resigns as Head Councillor of the Catalan government after hav-

ing met with members of the Basque terrorist group, ETA, with a view to bringing about a ceasefire. This move run counter to the government's policy of non-negotiation with ETA.

France

- On 4th January, a petrochemical plant in Lens is closed, suspected of having been the cause of the 7 deaths from legionella that have occurred since November 2003.
- On 6th January, six alleged members of the Islamist 'Chechen Cell' are arrested in Lyon, including the radical imam Chellali Benchellali and several members of his family. On 9th January, officials from the Ministry of Interior reveal that, according to the members of the family, one of Chellali Benchellali's sons, Menad Benchellali, arrested in December 2002, had been trained in poison preparation techniques in the al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan and had been planning an attack in France.
- On 19th January, 5 days after the Algerian Aïssa Dermouch became the first immigrant and first Muslim in 40 years to be appointed Chief Commissioner of Police in Jura, a bomb blows up his car. Two other bombs had previously exploded, targeting the management school of Nantes formerly headed by Mr Dermouch and another school of one of his sons.
- On 26th January, Bruno Mégret, the leader of the extreme right-wing National Republican Movement (MNR), is convicted for corruption in party funding, given a one year provisional sentence and prohibited to hold any public office.
- On 28th January, the government adopts a bill banning the wearing, in public schools of "symbols and clothing which visibly display the religious affiliation of the pupils." The teachers are left to interpret the law, but ministers clearly declare that the wearing of Muslim veils is the main target. The bill meets with wide public support and is backed by many French Muslims (especially women), but is challenged by radical Muslim leaders. President Dalil Boubakeur, of the French Council of the Muslim Religion (CFCM), sponsored by the government, calls on Muslims to accept the ban and not to take part in the

demonstrations organised by the French Muslim Party (PMF). There is also a certain degree of concern within the Sikh community at the ban on the Sikh turban and beard.

- On 30th January, former Prime Minister Alain Juppé, found guilty of corruption in the funding of the Paris mayor's office from 1988 to 1995, is given an 18-month provisional prison sentence and banned from holding public office for 10 years. Of the 25 other persons charged, 15 are also convicted.

Italy

- On 13th January, the Constitutional Court declares the law of immunity granting legal immunity for the duration of their mandates to the occupants of the five highest public posts unconstitutional, since it runs counter to the principle that all citizens are equal in the eyes of the law. Therefore, the trial of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, charged with having bribed the judges during the privatisation of SME, the state food conglomerate, in the 1980s, is due to resume on 16th April.
- On 14th January, two members of the Red Brigade organisation are arrested in Cairo. They are Rita Algranati, implicated in the murder of former Prime Minister Aldo Moro in 1978, and Maurizio Falessi, charged on the basis of his activities within the Union of Combatants, linked to the Red Brigade. On 22nd January, two members of a left-wing militant group, Anti-Imperialist Territorial Nuclei, which has links with the Red Brigade, are arrested.
- In January, the Parmalat scandal mushrooms. A provisional estimate of Parmalat's debt, not including the last quarter of 2003, amounts to more than 14 billion euros. Investigations are carried out by several international banks, such as the Bank of America, Deutsche Bank, JP Morgan, Citigroup and Morgan Stanley, which had issued and backed Parmalat bonds. Investigations extend to the Netherlands, Brazil and Luxembourg. On 15th January, Finance Minister Giulio Tremonti addresses the parliament and proposes reforms on financial regulation. He criticises the Central Bank and the Bank of Italy. On 23rd January, Alessandro Bassi, an advisor to the former financial director,

Fausto Tonna, commits suicide. 11 people are arrested in connection with the scandal, including former employees of Grant Thomson and the Bank of America.

- On 20th January, a disagreement within the government concerning a constitutional bill permitting the formation of regional assemblies threatens the stability of the four-party government coalition. Umberto Bossi, leader of the Northern League (LN), threatens to sabotage Mr Berlusconi's proposals on pension reform and to withdraw the LN from the coalition if the bill is not adopted.

Malta

- On 27th January, the Council of Europe's parliamentary assembly suspends the right of the exclusively male Maltese delegation to vote, to penalise the lack of equality in the delegation. According to a new regulation, adopted in September 2003, the national delegations must "include the under-represented sex at least in the same percentage as is present in their parliament and in any case one representative of each sex."

Slovenia

- On 30th January, the heads of State and of Government of Italy, Croatia, Slovenia and Hungary meet at Brdo kod Kranj (Slovenia) with a view to step up regional cooperation. The topics dealt with include the situation in the Balkans, protection and cooperation in the Adriatic. Finally, these countries reaffirm their support for Croatia's candidacy for membership of the EU and NATO.

Croatia

- On 28th January, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) finds Milan Babic, the Serbian leader of Croatia, guilty of persecution of non-Serbs. Milan Babic reaches an agreement with the prosecutors at The Hague, to receive a reduced sentence in exchange for full cooperation.
- On 30th January, Carla del Ponte, the prosecutor of the ICTY, declares that she has confidence in the wish of the

new Croatian authorities to cooperate with the ICTY and states that she is prepared to support Croatia's candidacy for the European Union. Mrs Del Ponte had criticised the previous centre-left government for having done nothing to arrest the chief Croatian war criminal now in hiding, Retired General Ante Gotovina. This matter remains the chief stumbling-block to Croatia's efforts to join the EU in 2007.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 18th January, the High Representative of the international community and the European Union's Special Representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lord Paddy Ashdown, appoints the American diplomat, Susan Johnson, as the new supervisor of the district of Brcko.

Serbia and Montenegro

- Serbia has been in an institutional impasse since the elections on 28th December, still without a head of parliament or government. On 29th January, the four pro-reform and pro-European groupings in the Serbian parliament state that they are ready to form a government together and to reject any alliance with the ultra-nationalists, but do not manage to agree on a Speaker of the parliament. On 30th January, a parliament meeting which is due to appoint a Speaker is indefinitely postponed.
- On 30th January, the President of Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova, tells the Foreign Minister in Brussels, Louis Michel, that he would like to see Belgium and the European Union support Kosovan independence.

Macedonia

- On 13th January, for the first time since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Macedonia and Israel in 1995, the Foreign Minister, Ilinka Mitreva, visits the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. The two countries agree to sign mutual agreements on economic cooperation, the Middle East peace process and international terrorism.
- On 16th January, the Prime Ministers of Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania meet in the Macedonian capital Podgorica in order to reinforce regional co-

operation in all areas (trade, transport, combating smuggling, etc.).

- On 21st January, parliament legalises an Albanian-language university, an issue that has been a source of major tensions between the two ethnic groups of the countries.

Albania

- On 12th January, a day of national mourning is announced for 20 Albanians who died on 9th January as they tried to cross the Adriatic to Italy. The Prime Minister, Fatos Nano, in a speech, promises to take drastic measures against the human trafficking outside Albania and demands the adoption of strict measures against people trying to cross the border illegally. Some opposition politicians call for Mr Nano's resignation after the tragedy.

Greece

- On 7th January, Prime Minister Kostas Simitis announces his resignation as leader of the ruling party, the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (Pasok) and calls a general election for 7th March, saying it is time power passed to the younger generation. On 8th January, Foreign Minister Georgios Papandreou announces his candidacy for Pasok leadership.

Cyprus

- On 12th January, hopes of a reunification increase when President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) Denktash states that the UN reunification plan is "always on the table." On 15th January, during a visit to Ankara, the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, states that the resolution of the Cypriot question would be a point in Ankara's favour when it applies for EU membership.
- On 13th January, President of the TRNC Rauf Denktash approves the new government led by the pro-European Turkish Republican Party (CTP) in coalition with the anti-European Democratic Party (DP). Ali Talat (CTP) becomes Prime Minister and the leader of the DP, Serdar Denktash, deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. On 16th January, the Chief Public Prosecutor,

Akin Sait, declares the appointment of three ministers unconstitutional because they do not live in the TRNC.

Turkey

- On 13th January, the United States adds the Kurdistan People's Congress, affiliated to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), to the list of organisations it considers "terrorists."
- On 22nd January, *The Guardian* announces that a proposed law has been put forward to compensate innocent Kurdish victims of the Turkish security services' operations from 1984 to 1999 against the armed insurrection by the PKK, now called the Freedom and Democracy Congress of Kurdistan (Kadek). Almost a million Kurds could benefit from this law.
- On 28th January, the National Assembly (GNA, the Parliament) approves the proposal by the Finance Minister, Ali Babacan, to eliminate 6 zeros from the Turkish lira. One 'new Turkish lira' will be equal to a million old lira. Both currencies will be in concurrent circulation until 30th December 2005.
- During an interview at the World Economic Forum, Babacan states that by 2007 the Turkish economy will have fulfilled the requirements for accession to the EU.

Syria

- On 6th and 7th September, a Syrian head of state, President Bashar al-Assad, visits Turkey for the first time. Both countries, with large Kurdish minorities, agree on the importance of the territorial integrity of Iraq. Regarding the peace process between Israel and Syria, which has stalled since 2000, Turkey, which has good relations with Israel, offers its help to Syria to improve its relations with the latter.
- On 31st January, a presidential pardon enables the release of 130 political prisoners, including 84 religious activists and members of the dissolved Iraqi Ba'ath party. Other releases are made on humanitarian grounds.

Lebanon

- On 19th January, Hezbollah fighters kill an Israeli soldier and wound another.

er during a missile attack on their bulldozer, which is operating close to the Lebanon-Israel border. Israel reply on 20th January with an air attack on Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon.

- On 29th and 30th January, there is an exchange of prisoners between Israel and the Lebanese group Hezbollah of 427 Palestinians, Lebanese and other Arabs, two Lebanese militant leaders, and the bodies of 59 Hezbollah fighters and three Israeli soldiers. Israel also gives information on the disappearance of 24 Lebanese people during the Israeli invasion in 1982, as well as maps of minefields in southern Lebanon.
- On 30th January, the UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1525 (2004) extending the mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) until 31st July.

Jordan

- On 13th January, the Jordanian authorities officially accept the end of a 13 year-old agreement, by which Jordan obtained all its petrol from Iraq, half at a reduced price and the other half as a "gift."

Egypt

- On 3rd January, a plane belonging to the Egyptian airline Flash Airlines operated in France crashes in the Red Sea shortly after taking off from Sharm el-Sheik, killing 148 people, 135 of them French. The possibility of an attack is immediately ruled out. Shortly after the crash, the Swiss civil aviation authority reveals that Flash Airlines had been forbidden from entering Swiss airspace in October 2002, for serious shortcomings.
- On 14th January, after the death on 9th January of its leader Ma'mun al-Hudaybi, the Muslim Brotherhood appoints his successor, the 75 year-old Mohammed Mahdi Akef, who calls for dialogue with the government in the light of outside threats.

Libya

- On 9th January, after several months of tension between France and Libya, the Libyan government agrees to pay US\$ 170 million in compensation to

the families of victims of the attack on flight UTA 772 in 1989.

- On 14th January, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) announces that Libya has signed the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). On 20th January the IAEA, which is responsible for verifying the dismantlement of Libya's nuclear programme, comes to an agreement with the United States and Great Britain under which representatives of the two countries will oversee the destruction of Libyan nuclear capabilities.

Tunisia

- On 14th January, President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali reshuffles his cabinet.
- On 28th January, the regional council of Jendouba, in the presence of the head of state, decides to include the El Faija reserve (in north-western Tunisia), one of the richest ecosystems in the Mediterranean "in the list of areas slated for regional development as sites for ecological tourism in the region." The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) praises the decision and states that it is prepared to consolidate cooperation with Tunisia by establishing a network of protected areas in Kroumirie-Mogod.

Algeria

- On 5th January, the members of the National Assembly (parliament), supporters of the former Prime Minister Ali Benflis, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's main rival at the next elections (April), demands President Bouteflika's resignation, describing him as a threat to stability and an insult people's dignity. On 9th January, the army declares that it will remain neutral during the elections.
- On 14th January, members of the National Liberation Front (FLN) demonstrate in Algiers against the decision by a court in December 2003 to ban the party's activities. 20 people are arrested.

Morocco

- At the beginning of January, King Mohammed VI pardons 33 prisoners, including some Islamic fundamentalists, some independence fighters from Wes-

tern Sahara and Ali Lmrabet, a newspaper publisher sentenced to three years in prison for insulting the King. According to the authorities, these pardons mark the start of the Commission for Equality and Reconciliation set up by the King in December 2003 in order to assess human rights violations over the previous decades and to allocate compensation to the survivors.

European Union

- On 5th January, 3 letter bombs are sent from Bologna to the Brussels offices of MEPs: Hans-Gert Pöttering, German leader of the European People's Party (PPE), and José Ignacio Salafranca, head of the Spanish conservatives in the European Parliament, as well as to the Manchester offices of Gary Titley, leader of the British Labour Party in the European Parliament. A group called the Informal Anarchist Federation (IAF) claims responsibility for these attacks.
- On 5th January, world and European Jewish leaders accuse the European Commission of anti-Semitism for having published an opinion poll in November 2003 revealing that Europeans considered Israel the major obstacle to peace in the world and for repressing a Commission report revealing that Muslims are responsible for the increase in anti-Semitic incidents in the EU. Shocked by the accusations, the President of the Commission Romano Prodi announces on 6th January that conditions are no longer favourable for the organisation of a seminar on anti-Semitism already scheduled. On 23rd January, the Commission, having received the support of various Jewish leaders, announces that the seminar will take place on 19th February.
- On 13th January, the Commission announces that it will take legal action in the European Court of Justice against the Finance Ministers' decision made on 25th November 2003 to suspend the Growth and Stability Pact and not to impose sanctions on France and Germany for their excessive public deficits.
- On 22nd January, Justice and Home Affairs Ministers of the 15 Member States meet in Dublin, where they come to an agreement on a 30-million-euro programme to fund the repatriation of

illegal immigrants and asylum seekers by chartering flights which could stop in one or more EU countries. The programme will be managed by a European Border Control Agency, which will be set up by the end of 2004.

February 2004

Portugal

- On 17th February, charges against 7 women who had abortions in 1997 and their accomplices, including the doctors and the women's companions, are dropped even though Portuguese law forbids abortion. A public survey published on 3rd February reveals that 64.7% of Portuguese people are in favour of decriminalising abortion.

Spain

- On 10th February, on the Franco-Spanish border, French police arrest two people suspected of being members of ETA carrying 38kg of explosives. On 29th February, a van containing more than half a ton of explosives is stopped in Madrid, and two people suspected of being members of ETA are arrested.
- On 18th February, the Basque separatist group, in a video sent to television channels, announces a partial ceasefire limited to the autonomous region of Catalonia. The government of José María Aznar, which had adopted a draconian policy towards ETA, describes the partial truce as "blackmail" and as a "trap" intended to divide Spain.

France

- On 1st January, Corsica Nazione / Indipendenza and two other Corsican nationalist groups form a Corsican nationalist alliance in view of the parliamentary elections in March. They launch the Lista d'Unione Naziunale, led jointly by Edmond Simeoni and Jean-Guy Talamoni.
- On 2nd February, President Jacques Chirac praises former Prime Minister Alain Juppé and contests the verdict of three French judges who found him guilty on 30th January of corruption in funding the mayor of Paris's office from 1988 to 1995, when Chirac was may-

or. While waiting for his appeal, Juppé states that he will remain a member of the National Assembly and mayor of Bordeaux, but he will step down as chairman of the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), the ruling party, at the party congress in November.

- On 5th February, the president of the Bastia football club in Corsica is arrested and subjected to investigations on suspicion of having extorted money from travel agencies which in exchange, were spared attacks by Corsican separatist militants.

- On 10th February, the National Assembly (lower house of the parliament) adopts a bill authorising state schools to forbid the wearing of the veil and other visible religious symbols on school premises. The law still has to be adopted by the Senate.

- On 11th February, thousands of lawyers demonstrate against the adoption by the National Assembly of a law granting increased powers to public administration and police in combating organised crime. They regard this as an attempt to weight the scales of the judicial system in favour of the state.

- On 18th February, a court forbids Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the National Front (FN) from standing in the Provence – Alpes – Côte d'Azur regional elections in March since he has not been able to prove that he has paid taxes in that region. Le Pen considers that the taxes he is paying for the FN office in Nice are sufficient for him to stand as a candidate. On 22nd February, the administrative court in Marseilles rejects the National Front's appeal. Le Pen accuses the government of using "totalitarian methods."

Italy

- On 3rd February, following the Parmalat financial scandal, the government adopts a bill diminishing the Bank of Italy's jurisdiction and tightening controls on stock markets. Consob, which controls the stock exchange and which is heavily criticised in the scandal, is to be replaced by a Savings Protection Authority, given the task, among other things, of checking on company bonds, until then the responsibility of the Bank of Italy. On 17th February, 4 members of the Tanzi family, founders of Par-

malat, are arrested. 900 million euros from Parmalat accounts had been invested in subsidiaries in the hands of the family.

- During February, criticisms of the former Prime Minister and current President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, continue. On 14th February, he makes a speech at the launch of the June 2004 European elections campaign of the centre-left coalition and states that he wants to reunify the Olivo coalition he led to power in 1996. The centre-rightist Italian government considers these remarks incompatible with his role as President of the Commission and demands his resignation.

- On 17th February, the Chamber of Deputies approves, the media law adopted by the Berlusconi government for the second time, even though the Italian President, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, refused to sign the law in December 2003.

- It is an attempt to thwart the measures imposed by the constitutional court against the interests of Berlusconi's television channel Rete 4,

Malta

- On 28th February, the ruling Nationalist Party (PN) elects Lawrence Gonzi, the current deputy Prime Minister and Social Affairs Minister, as its new leader and successor to the current Prime Minister, who will be resigning on Malta's accession to the EU.

Slovenia

- On 18th February, the last wall dividing Eastern and Western Europe, the wall separating the Italian border town of Gorizia from its Slovene half, Nova Gorica, is officially destroyed. A border post will remain in place until Slovenia becomes part of the Schengen zone in 2007.

Croatia

- On 23rd February, the independent daily newspaper Jutarnji List states that the Croatian government believes that the country's secret service is protecting Ante Gotovina, the general on the run who has been charged with war crimes by the International Criminal Tri-

bunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and whose continued evasion of justice is the chief obstacle to Croatia's efforts to join the European Union.

- On 20th February, Europa Press backs plans of an association, to file a suit against Belgrade by the end of March for damages suffered. It is headed by Danijel Rehak and comprises of 4,000 Croatians who were prisoners of war in the Serb camps during the 1991-1995 war between the Serbs and the Croats.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 3rd February, the trial of Momcilo Krajisnik begins at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. He is a former Serb member of the joint Bosnian presidency, and is charged with genocide, crimes against humanity and contraventions of the laws and customs of war.

- On 11th February, the ICTY's chief prosecutor accuses Serbia of sheltering Radovan Karadzic, a Bosnian Serb leader charged with genocide. The Serbian Minister of the Interior denies the accusations.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On 4th February, the Serbian Assembly (parliament) elects Dragan Maricanin, vice-chairman of the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), as its new President; he will also hold the post of President of Serbia. Although the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) obtained the majority of votes at the December 2003 elections, the DSS allied itself with the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), former Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's party, against the SRS. Since December 2002, attempts to elect a President of Serbia have ended in failure, since Serbian law requires 50% of the population to participate in the elections for them to be valid. For this reason, the Serbian Assembly annuls the 50% requirement on 25th February. A simple majority will now be sufficient to elect a President.

- On 22nd February, the judge presiding over the trial of Slobodan Milosevic announces that he will resign on 31 May for health reasons. The trial of Mr Milosevic will be delayed as a result. On

25th February, the prosecutors announce that they are suspending the trial, which had been regularly interrupted by Mr Milosevic's state of health. The court suspends hearings until 8th June, so that Mr Milosevic can have time to prepare his defence.

Macedonia

- On 26th February, President Boris Trajkovski dies in a plane accident caused by bad weather. The President of the Sobranje (parliament), Ljupco Jordanovski, replaces him until elections can be held.

Albania

- On 7th February, the leader of the opposition Democratic Party of Albania (PDS), Sali Berisha, calls on the population to go onto the streets to bring down the government, whom he accuses of not having done enough to improve Albanians' living conditions. Hundreds of demonstrators try without success to enter government buildings and at least 64 people are arrested. On 21 November, another, more peaceful demonstration is organised to demand the resignation of Prime Minister Fatos Nano.

Greece

- On 8th February, Georgios Papan-dreou, the Foreign Minister, respected for his policy of reconciliation with Turkey and his role in the success of the Greek Presidency of the EU in 2003, is appointed with unanimous support to the post of head of the party in government, the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (Pasok).

- On 9th February, five alleged members of the terrorist group Revolutionary People's Struggle (ELA) are arrested. ELA is suspected of having been responsible for several attacks in the 1980s, mainly targeting the U.S. army in Athens, and of the murder of two Greek police officers.

Cyprus

- On 13th February, Tassos Papadopoulos, the Greek Cypriot President, and Rauf Denktaş, the President

of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), accept a UN reunification plan. This agreement, which provides for a weak federation between two autonomous states under a limited central government, gives the parties until 22nd March to sign a reunification agreement followed by simultaneously organised referendums on 21st April in the two halves of Cyprus.

- On 19th February, just before the start of formal reunification negotiations in Nicosia between the leaders of the two Cypriot communities, a bomb explodes outside the house of Mehmet Ali Talat, Prime Minister of the TRNC, a supporter of reunification of the island.

Turkey

- On 2nd February, a 36-floor building collapses, killing 88 people. It is the second building to collapse in one year because of construction defects.

- From 8th to 14 February, Irène Khan, Amnesty International's secretary-general in London, goes to Turkey where she meets with members of the government and representatives of NGOs. For the first time, the Turkish Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Minister of the Interior meets Amnesty International representatives. In a speech given on 12th February, Ms Khan recognises the progress made by Turkey but says she is preoccupied by the continued harassment that human rights activists have to undergo. She states that human rights legislation has not been taken sufficiently into account in the reforms introduced at all levels in the police and judicial systems.

- On 23rd February, Gerhard Schröder, the German Chancellor, states during a three-day visit to Turkey that he supports Turkey's accession to the EU and that he offers his assistance to Turkey in the reform process.

- On 25th February, the State Security Court charges 69 people, suspected al-Qaeda militants, with involvement in the Istanbul suicide attacks of November 2003 which killed 62 people.

Syria

- At the beginning of February, a group of 700 Syrian intellectuals sign and circulate on the Internet a petition, whose

demands include the abolition of the state of emergency laws in force for over 40 years, the freeing of political prisoners and a right of return for Syrians forced into exile.

- From 10th to 19th February, the United Kingdom's embassy in Damascus is closed for security reasons. On 19 February, *The Times* states that this closure coincided with a worsening in relations between the United Kingdom and Syria.

Lebanon

- On 11th February, during an official visit to Cairo, Prime Minister Rafic Hariri states that Beirut wishes to join the Agadir agreement protocol on the creation of a free trade area between Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan.

- From 17th to 19th February, an 'international conference on the Muslim world and Europe' is held in Beirut, attended by German, French and Arab experts and representatives of Hezbollah. With the motto 'From difference to understanding', participants debate subjects such as democracy and pluralism, human rights, occupation and resistance, modern Islamic fundamentalist movements, the new colonialism, the militarization of international relations and the war against terrorism.

- On 20th February, the Supreme Council of Women in Lebanon, which brings together all women's associations, concludes its fiftieth congress. One of the Council's decisions is to support the candidacy of female MP Nayla Moawad in the presidential election in autumn 2004. Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, speaking at the opening of the session, undertakes to strengthen the role of women in politics. Hezbollah, which is also taking part in the congress, states that it supports the Council's demands.

- On 22nd February, Ghazi Aridi, the Lebanese Culture Minister, announces that the government has decided to withdraw its plan to join Isesco, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, (set up by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference). Lebanon's plan to join an international Islamic organisation had given rise to heated controversy, since the Christian opposition considered it ran counter

to the pluralism enshrined in the constitution

- On 29th February, the daily London-based newspaper *al-Hayat* backs Syria's rejection of the United States' Greater Middle East plan. The plan calls on the main industrialised countries in the region to devote more money to the promotion of civil society, free elections and the market economy.

Jordan

- On 26th February, Mohammed Abu-Hammur, the Finance Minister, states that the loss of oil trade benefits with Iraq will cost the country 300 million dinars and that the reduction in exports to Iraq, which had until then accounted for 20% of Jordan's exports, will compromise the country's economy.

Egypt

- On 18th February, the National Human Rights council, set up by the Egyptian authorities in January and headed by Boutros Boutros-Ghali, holds its first meeting in Cairo. It is made up of 25 members – former ministers, leaders of human rights organisations, chairmen of professional bodies of journalists, lawyers and legal experts – and reports to the Egyptian Advisory Council.

- On 23rd February, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak announces the repeal of a highly controversial criminal law provision which restricted freedom of the press, authorising journalists to be imprisoned for "press offences." Several journalists had been given sentences of up to two years in prison for "defamation" of top state officials.

- On 27th February, the 33 member states of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) – mostly from the OECD – announce that Egypt has been removed from the blacklist of countries which do not display enough "cooperation" regarding the combating of money-laundering and the funding of terrorism.

Libya

- On 4th February, Libya signs the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). On 6 February, Rogelio Pflirter, the Director-General of the UN Organisation

for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), following a visit to Libya, states that Libya has a major chemical weapons programme and that the OPCW will help the country to draw up, by March, a complete inventory of weapons stocks. On 21st February, a report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirms that Libya has obtained a whole range of equipment, technologies and nuclear expertise and has produced a small quantity of plutonium as part of its nuclear weapons programme.

- On 9th and 10th February, Abd al-Rahman Mohammed Shalgam, the Secretary for Foreign Relations and International Cooperation, makes a historic visit to the United Kingdom, as the highest-ranking Libyan figure to have visited the United Kingdom in 30 years. He meets Prime Minister Tony Blair and Jack Straw, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Commonwealth. Libya agrees to step up cooperation with the British police in the hunt for the murderers of Yvonne Fletcher, a police officer killed outside the Libyan embassy in London, and authorises British police officers to go to Libya as part of their investigations. For its part, the United Kingdom undertakes to urge the EU to lift the embargo on arms bound for Libya.

- On 24th February, Prime Minister Shukri Mohammed Ghanim states that money was paid to the families of the victims of the Lockerbie attack (1988) in order to "buy peace," but states that Libya bore no responsibility for the attack, nor for the murder of Yvonne Fletcher in 1984. However, on 25th February, in order to reassure the United States and the United Kingdom, Libya acknowledges its responsibility for these two events.

- On 26th February, the United States lifts its prohibition on travel in Libya and authorises U.S. oil companies to reopen negotiations with the Libyan government for oil contracts.

Tunisia

- On 13th February, the Tunisian President, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, receives Abderrahmane Chalgam, the Libyan Foreign Minister. The meeting takes place the day before the official visit of

the Tunisian President to the United States. Tunisia played an important role, in Libya's renunciation of its programmes to build weapons of mass destruction, and this is well viewed by Washington. The relaunch of the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), whose rotating presidency is at that time held by Libya, is also on the agenda for debate.

Algeria

- On 10th February, the 129th Conference of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries is held in Algiers (OPEC). With a view to keeping the price of oil around US\$22-US\$28 per barrel, the member states decide to adhere strictly to the current production quotas in order to achieve the objective of selling 24.5 million barrels per day. The finance ministers also announce that with effect from 1st April, they will reduce joint production by a million barrels per day, and that production will then reach its lowest level since February 2003. The immediate response by the market is a rise in oil prices.

Morocco

- Several Islamic fundamentalists are imprisoned during February: on 12th February, the Casablanca Court of Appeal sentences two members of the Islamic fundamentalist group Salafiya Jihadiya to 20 years' and six years' imprisonment respectively, for having formed a "criminal gang"; on 20th February, Rabat's Court of Appeal sentences 10 members of Salafiya Jihadiya to 8 years in prison and on 27th February, it sentences 10 other Islamic fundamentalists to prison terms ranging between 2 and 15 years.
- On 23rd February, an earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale around the port town of Al Hoceima to the north of the Rif mountains kills 600 people and renders over 30,000 people homeless. On 26th February, demonstrators attack the regional governor's office in protest at the government's slowness in reacting to the earthquake. On 26th February, Nabil Benabdallah, the government's spokesman, announces that the aid distribution process will from now on be conducted by local committees. On the same day, King

Mohammed VI visits Al Hoceima and other affected areas.

European Union

- On 17th February, the Prime Ministers of Italy, Spain, Poland, the Netherlands, Portugal and Estonia write a letter to Bertie Ahern, the Irish President of the EU, calling for strict adherence to the EU's economic directives, including the Growth and Stability Pact, at that time being contravened by France and Germany.
- On 18th February, there is a trilateral summit between German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, French President Jacques Chirac and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, with the aim both of establishing a common approach to the key political topics in an enlarged Europe and also of dispelling tensions caused by the Franco-German opposition to the U.S. and British invasion of Iraq. The summit is criticised by the other members, particularly Italy, as an attempt by the three "heavyweights" to determine EU decisions in advance.
- On 19th February, at a seminar in Brussels on anti-Semitism, Romano Prodi, President of the Commission, promises that the EU will do more to combat the phenomenon, but calls on Jewish leaders not to confuse political criticism addressed to Israel with anti-Semitism.
- On 23rd February, the United Kingdom announces that the citizens of the eight former Communist republics which are to join the EU in May 2004 will be able to work in the United Kingdom, but that new rules will prevent any abuse of the British system. This will not apply to Malta and Cyprus, which has agreements with the United Kingdom on the free movement of workers. In making this decision, the United Kingdom aligns itself with the other 14 countries which have imposed restrictions of all types on the free movement of citizens of the states joining the EU.

March 2004

Portugal

- On 3rd March, Parliament rejects bills advocating the decriminalisation

of abortion, introduced and voted for by the four left-wing opposition parties.

- Following the Madrid bombings on 11th March, debate on security takes on increasing importance, in view of the staging of the European Championship football tournament from 12th June to 4th July. Portugal predicts it will have to reinforce security for teams most at risk and ask NATO for its help in ensuring tight security.

Spain

- On 10th March, a report published by the United Nations human rights specialist, Theo van Boven, criticises the use of torture by the police on detainees in the Basque region. The government contests this report, stating that allegations of torture are a method used by Basque separatists to discredit the government.
- On 11th March, 10 bombs explode during the morning rush-hour in four suburban trains headed for Madrid, killing 190 people and injuring 1,400 more. Three other bombs are discovered by police and defused. The same day, a van is discovered in the car park at the Alcala de Henares station, on the train's route, containing 7 detonators and a cassette with verses from the Qur'an. The same day, in the evening, the Arab newspaper al-Quds al-Arabi, based in London, receives an email from a group called the Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigade claiming responsibility for the attack, carried out in the name of the al-Qaeda network. Following the discovery on 11th March of a telephone and a bomb, on 12th March the police arrest 5 people under anti-terrorist legislation. In spite of evidence pointing to the responsibility of a fundamentalist Islamic group, the ruling Popular Party strongly suspects, until the evening of 13th March, the Basque separatist group (ETA), to the point where the UN Resolution 1530 (2004) of 11th March condemning the attacks refers to ETA. On 12 March, ETA makes two statements denying responsibility for the attacks. The same day, Prime Minister José Maria Aznar declares the end of the campaign for the 14 March elections. On 12th March, between 8 and 11 million people hold demonstrations in several cities in Spain. On 13th

March, 5,000 people protest outside the PP offices about the lack of information on the attacks in all the public media. The morning of the general elections, on 14th March, Angel Acebes, Minister for Home Affairs, announces that a video has been discovered in a litter bin outside the largest mosque in Madrid on which Abu Dujan al-Afgani, describing himself as al-Qaeda's military spokesman in Europe, states that the attacks are the consequence of Spanish involvement in the invasion led by the Americans of Afghanistan and Iraq and threatens to carry out more attacks if Spain does not withdraw its troops from those countries. On 18th March, a Spaniard is arrested on suspicion of having supplied the explosives from a mine in northern Spain where he is working. On 19th March, the 5 people arrested on 12th March, including a Moroccan, Jamal Zougam – alleged to have links with the Salafiya Jihadiya group, perpetrators of the attacks in Casablanca in May 2003 and with alleged members of the al-Qaeda network –, are charged with involvement in the attacks. At the end of March, 17th people, mainly Moroccans, are arrested in connection with the attacks.

- On 14th March, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), led by Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, wins the parliamentary elections, even though opinion polls carried out before the Madrid bombings had predicted victory for the PP. Participation in the elections increased by 7% in comparison with the 2000 parliamentary elections.

- On 15th March, the Prime Minister-elect, Zapatero, confirms his decision to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq if the United Nations does not take over control of peacekeeping operations by 30th June. He also criticises American President G.W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, describing the war in Iraq as a "disaster" based on lies.

- On 21st March, an ETA communiqué proposes dialogue with the PSOE, but with the intention of continuing the struggle. This declaration is strongly criticised and causes Zapatero to reconfirm his intention of pursuing the previous PP government's policy of non-negotiation with ETA.

France

- On 3rd March, the Senate adopts the law authorising state schools to forbid the wearing of visible religious symbols. On 16th March, a hitherto unknown group, the "Servants of Allah, the All-Powerful and Wise" states that France had become an "enemy of Islam."

- On 3rd March, the Minister for Home Affairs reveals that he is taking seriously the blackmail threat made by a group or person calling itself "AZF" who has since mid-December been threatening to set off bombs on trains if 5 million euros are not handed over. Although AZF demands that "the socio-economic system should be returned to the individual," police think that the threat is more criminally than politically motivated. On 27th February and 24th March, AZF warns the police of the planting of two bombs, successfully defused. On 25th March, AZF announces that he is suspending operations for logistical and technical reasons. On 26th March, two people are arrested.

- On 21st and 28th March, the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) suffers a large defeat in the elections to regional councils, in which 20 of the 21 regional councils in mainland France are won by the Socialist Party (PS) and its allies, the French Communist Party (PCF) and the Greens. The Popular Front (FP) also suffers a setback. In Corsica, the parties in favour of maintaining the island's French status keep their majority, with the UMP at the head. On 31st March, although President Jacques Chirac's government has kept its parliamentary majority, the defeat of the UMP and its ally, the Union for French Democracy, in the regional elections causes a change in ministerial portfolios which includes the appointment of Nicolas Sarkozy as Minister of State and Minister of the Economy, Finance and Industry.

- On 23rd March, a Paris court sentences two Corsicans to 4 years in prison for being members of the Corsican National Liberation Front (FLNC) and for the possession of weapons and explosives. Among the various attacks committed on the island in March, at least one is committed by a hither-

to unknown group, the Clandestini Corsu (CC), which attacks North-African immigrants for their involvement in drug smuggling and their refusal to integrate.

- On 26th March, 7 members of the Breton movement Engamm ('Combat') are sentenced to prison terms of up to 11 years for their involvement in attacks in Brittany in the 1980s and 1990s.

Italy

- On 24th March, the Chamber of Deputies adopts the controversial media bill opposed by President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi. This law enables the circumvention of a court decision forcing one of Prime Minister Berlusconi's terrestrial television channels to broadcast via satellite.

- On 25th March, the Senate approves the first reading of a draft constitutional reform which, if passed, will be the most significant change in the Italian system of government in 50 years. The role of the Senate will be strengthened, becoming a federal body representing the 20 Italian regions with the exclusive power to legislate on regional questions. The regions will be given greater powers in health, education and law and order matters. The opposition criticises this project which, according to them, is the consequence of pressure applied by the Northern League (LN), a regionalist party from northern Italy, which had threatened to pull out of the governmental coalition led by Berlusconi if regions are not granted more autonomy.

- On 26th March a general strike is held in protest at proposals for pension reforms and at the economic policies of the Berlusconi government.

Malta

- On 23rd March, Prime Minister Edward Fenech Adami resigns and on the same day Lawrence Gonzi, the former Deputy Prime Minister and Social Affairs Minister, is appointed Prime Minister by President Guido de Marco. Mr Gonzi announces changes in the government, himself taking on the Finance Minister's portfolio. On 29th March, Fenech Adami is elected President by the House of Representatives.

Croatia

- On 11th March, two retired Croatian generals, accused of war crimes for their violent actions against the Croatia Serb rebels during the recapture in 1995 of the Krajina region, (which had been under the control of the Serbs since 1991), surrender to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The government's decision to hand the two generals over to the ICTY is an important step towards full cooperation with the ICTY.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 1st March, President of the Bosnian Council of Ministers Adnan Terzic appoints Dragomir Dumic (a member of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS)) Defence Minister. The post had been vacant since the formation of his government in January 2003. On 8th March, Mr Dumic refuses his appointment and the next day Nikola Radovanovic, without any political affiliation, is appointed to the post.
- On 11th March, Ranko Cesic, a Bosnian Serb, is sentenced by the ICTY to 18 years' imprisonment, found guilty of crimes against humanity and violations of the laws and customs of war for his conduct in 1992 in the camp at Luka, near the town of Brcko. On 30th and 31st March, two Croatian Serbs are sentenced to 10 and 17 years in prison, their sentences having been reduced by the judges in return for their cooperation.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On 3rd March, the Serbian Assembly (parliament) approves the new minority coalition government (110 seats out of 250), headed by Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica, the former President (2000-2003) and leader of the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS). This coalition opposes the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), which had won the most seats (82). Its political programme involves a "division" of Kosovo in order to protect Serbs, the trial of war crimes suspects in Serbia and not by the ICTY and the relaunch of the economy through reducing taxes and combating corruption. The Speaker of the Assembly, Dra-

gan Marsicanin (DSS) becomes the new Finance Minister and on 4 March the Assembly names its new Speaker, Predrag Markovic, who will also fulfil the duties of President of Serbia until the election of a new President.

- On 17th March, violent clashes break out in Kosovo between Serbs and ethnic Albanians, leaving 28 people dead and destroying or damaging 366 houses. In response to the violence NATO orders the deployment of more than 1,000 supplementary troops to the K-For in Kosovo.
- On 26th March, the UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1534 (2004) requesting the ICTY to do its utmost to finish its investigations by 2004, finish all its trials by 2008, finish all its mission by 2010, end trials that can be transferred to national jurisdiction, concentrate on convictions of the most senior officials responsible for war crimes and, lastly, request the authorities in Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to increase their cooperation with the ICTY.

Macedonia

- On 22nd March, in Dublin, a delegation headed by Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski submits Macedonia's official application to join the EU.

Albania

- On 12th March in Dublin a European delegation led by Brian Cowen, the Irish Foreign Minister, meets Kastriot Islami, the Albanian Foreign Minister. Discussions centre on the reform process in Albania and on progress made in the negotiations on a stabilisation and association agreement (SAA) between the EU and Albania. The ministers also discuss recent political developments in the western Balkans, such as the situation in Kosovo and the role played by Albania in encouraging cooperation in the region. At the end of the meeting, Mr Cowen states that "the EU has clearly confirmed that Albania is a potential candidate for future accession."

Greece

- On 7th March, the Panhellenic So-

cialist Movement (Pasok), in power for 22 years except for three, loses the general election to the conservative party, New Democracy (ND), which takes 45.37% of the vote. The election campaign focuses on unemployment, inflation and corruption. On 9 March, the leader of the ND, Costas Karamanlis, becomes Prime Minister – the youngest Greek Prime Minister for a century – and is also appointed Culture Minister in charge of handling the crisis stemming from the preparations for the Olympic Games in August.

Cyprus

- By 31st March, the time limit set by the EU to reach an agreement on the reunification of the island, and following three weeks of negotiations between the two sides, no agreement on reunification is reached. This failure means that the Greek and Turkish governments will become involved in the negotiations.

Turkey

- On 3rd March, the Supervisory Committee of the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe decides to end its checks in Turkey, believing that the latter has made significant reforms regarding human rights and democracy. The end of this supervision is a prior condition for the start of negotiations to join the EU.
- On 9th March, two people trained in the terrorist camps in Afghanistan carry out a suicide bombing in the restaurant of a Masonic lodge in Istanbul, killing a waiter and injuring 5 people. In response to speculations over al-Qaeda involvement, the governor of Istanbul, Muammer Guler, announces that the amateurish nature of the attack showed few similarities with the attacks in November 2003. On 16th March, 12 al-Qaeda sympathisers are arrested, suspected of being linked to this attack as well as those in November 2003.
- On 13rd March, the Financial Times reveals Turkey's disagreement with the American plan for autonomy for the Iraqi Kurds, since it fears that the plan will reawaken Kurdish nationalism in Turkey. Turkey's special envoy to Iraq, Osman Koruturk, and the American diplomat

and member of the provisional Iraqi authority, Ronald Neumann, do not manage to settle their differences over the relationship between the federal and local Iraqi governments nor over what Turkey considers as an insufficient recognition of the Turkish minority in Iraq.

Syria

- On 8th March, the celebration of the 41st anniversary of the March Revolution – when a coup brought the Ba'ath party to power – a demonstration organised by the committees for the defence of democratic liberties and human rights in Syria brings together several activists outside the People's Assembly (parliament). The demonstrators are arrested, but released the next day.
- In mid-March, serious clashes occur during a football match in the Kurdish province in north-eastern Syria between the supporters of an Arab team who brandished photos of the former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and the Kurdish supporters of the local team who brandished photos of the American President G. W. Bush. Riots also break out in the Turkish neighbourhoods of Damascus. The Syrian authorities count 30 deaths in these clashes, while Kurdish leaders in Syria claim there were 40 deaths, 200 people injured and hundreds of Kurds arrested in Damascus. The authorities announce that a committee of inquiry has been established to investigate the causes of these clashes.

Lebanon

- The days following the assassination of the founder of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmad Yassine, by Israel on 22nd March are marked by an increase in tensions on the Israeli-Lebanese border. On 22nd March, Hezbollah is the first to reply to the assassination of Sheikh Yassine by bombarding the Israeli positions in the disputed territory of the "Shaba Farms" for the first time in five months. On 23rd March, Israeli helicopters open fire on armed men in southern Lebanon, killing two Palestinians and wounding another. This increase in tensions leads the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFL) to increase its patrols on 24 March

along the 'blue line' which acts as a border between Lebanon and Israel.

- On 27th March, the leader of Hezbollah informs the new head of Hamas that the Shi'ite organisation is under his orders.

Jordan

- On 9th March, the first stone of the Israeli-Jordanian International Science Centre is laid in the presence of the Jordanian Foreign Minister, Marwan Mouchar, as well as that of his Israeli colleagues Benjamin Netanyahu (Finance) and Limor Livnat (Education), but Mr Sharon and King Abdullah are absent. The centre is located on the south of the Dead Sea, on the border between the two countries and is opened to students from all the countries in the Middle East,
- On 16th and 17th March, King Abdullah makes an official visit to Turkey. The King calls on the two countries to improve their economic relations, proposes common investment in Iraq and states that the Jordanian authorities will do their utmost to create favourable investment conditions for Turkish businessmen. The situation in Iraq and the Middle East is also discussed.
- On 22nd March, about 5,000 people demonstrate, especially in the Palestinian camps in the country, against the assassination of the spiritual leader of the Palestinian Islamic fundamentalist movement Hamas. Jordanian Islamic fundamentalists call on the "popular forces" to denounce any agreement signed with Israel and any Arab high official establishing contact with the Hebrew state.

Egypt

- On 25th March, the Security Court in Cairo sentences 26 people, among them three British citizens, to prison terms ranging from 1 to 5 years for their links with the Islamic Liberation Party (Hizb-ut-Tahrir), banned in Egypt.

Libya

- At the beginning of March, the People's Congress (parliament) reshuffles the People's Committee (cabinet), creating the new post of Energy Secretary

and filled by veteran oil expert, Fethi Omar bin Chetwane.

- On 6th March, Libya reveals in a formal declaration to the UN Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) that it has produced and stored more than 20 tons of mustard gas and that as part of a secret chemical weapons programme it began in the 1980s it has used the gas as a weapon and made thousands of bombs. On 10th March, Libya signs the additional protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) authorising IAEA inspectors to make surprise inspections.
- On 25th March, British Prime Minister Tony Blair visits Libya for talks with the Libyan leader, Col. Muammar Gaddafi. The Libyan secretary for foreign liaison and international relations, Abd al-Rahman Mohammed Shalgam, stresses Libya's determination to join the struggle against al-Qaida.
- On 25th March, the Anglo-Dutch company Royal Dutch/Shell signs an agreement with the Libyan state petrol company to look for oil and gas.

Tunisia

- On 27th March, Foreign Minister Habib Ben Yahia announces that the summit of the Arab League's heads of state scheduled for 29 March has been postponed because of differences of opinion between the Foreign Ministers of the Arab League during their meeting on 26 and 27 March concerning the United States' 'Greater Middle East Initiative', which consists of reforming the region and the Middle Eastern peace process.

Algeria

- At the beginning of March, the names of the 6 candidates for the presidential election on 8th April are announced. Luisa Hanune is the first woman to attempt to win a presidential election in an Arab country. The candidacy of the former Foreign Minister, Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi, is rejected by the constitutional council, which Ibrahimi accuses of unfair bias.
- Between 8th and 18th March, at least 30 alleged members of the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC)

are killed in clashes with the Algerian army at Djerrah, in the Kabylia region.

- On 16th March, the president of the African Union, Alpha Oumar Konarequi, announces that the AU intended to open an "antiterrorism centre" within six months, with its headquarters in Algiers, which will coordinate information and finalise a common method of combating terrorism on the continent.

Morocco

- On 2nd March, the United States and Morocco conclude a free trade agreement.
- On 4th March, the Moroccan press agency MAP announces the official figures of the Al Hoceima earthquake: 628 people are killed and 926 injured.

European Union

- During March, following the elections in Greece, Spain and France, three European Commissioners leave their posts to take up positions in their respective national governments. They are the Commissioners for Employment and Social Affairs, Economic and Monetary Affairs and Regional Politics and Institutional Reform.
- On 24th March, the Commissioner for Competition announces that a record fine of 497.2 million euros will be imposed on the U.S. company Microsoft for having used its quasi-monopoly position in the European markets to illegally eliminate competition.
- On 25th and 26th March, the Summit of the EU heads of State and of Government is held under the Irish Presidency. Following the Madrid bombings, the 15 Member States undertake to step up their cooperation with regard to combating terrorism. They settle on an action plan and decide to refuse to grant financial assistance or develop trade agreements with non-Member States which do not adopt appropriate anti-terrorist measures. The summit also urges the Member States to implement all the measures adopted by the extraordinary summit following the 11th September 2001 attacks, including the European arrest warrant. Gijs de Vries, a Dutch, is appointed to the new post of anti-terrorist coordinator, reporting to

the EU's High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The election of a new government in Spain, which is determined to reach a compromise, also makes it possible to renew efforts to finalise the draft European constitution, which had been stalled since December 2003 and which the Member States had undertaken to adopt by June 2004.

April 2004

Spain

- During April, investigations into the 11th March attacks continue. On 1 April, an arrest warrant is issued for Sarhana Ben Abdelmajid Fakhel, believed to be the brains behind the attacks and known under the name of 'the Tunisian', as well as for five other Moroccans. On 2nd April, a bomb with a make-up identical to those used on 11th March is found on a railway 65 km from Madrid. On 3rd April some suspects are traced to a flat in Leganés, in the suburbs of Madrid, where seven suspects, including the Tunisian and others, end up blowing themselves up. They are planning other bombings on trains, shopping centres and against Jewish targets. On 13th April, 24 people are detained in connection with the attacks.
- During the first week of April, five people suspected of being ETA members are arrested, including the military 'brains' Felix Alberto Lopez de la Calle and the logistical chief Felix Ignacio Esparza Liuri, arrested on 2nd April. On 9th April, the leader of Batasuna, the political wing of ETA, announces that ETA is willing to announce a unilateral ceasefire and to negotiate with the government.
- On 4th April, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) fails to convince 10 opposition parties to back its policies in exchange for having a say in the appointment of the speakers of the two legislative chambers. The People's Party (PP) remains the main party in the opposition. On 16th April, the new cabinet takes up office. Half the ministers in the cabinet are women.
- On 18th April, Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero decides to withdraw the 1,300 Spanish soldiers in Iraq as soon as possible, although he

had declared in his electoral campaign that he would withdraw the Spanish troops on 30th June if the United Nations had not taken control of peacekeeping operations by then. His decision on an early withdrawal is based on the conviction that the UN will not be able to take over operations in the near future. On 28th April, all the Spanish combat forces leave Iraq, with the exception of 700 soldiers responsible for the logistics of the retreat, expected to return on 27th May. A survey shows that 72% of Spanish people approve of the decision to withdraw the troops from Iraq.

France

- On 2nd April, Jean-Marie Le Pen, the leader of the National Front, is sentenced by a Paris court to pay a fine of 10,000 euros for incitement to racial hatred towards Muslims.
- On 5th April, one of the leaders of the Lista d'Unione Naziunale for the elections to the Corsican Assembly in March 2004 is arrested on suspicion of tax fraud. On 15th April a dissident faction of the Corsican National Liberation Front (FLNC), the FLNC-October 22, claims responsibility for bomb attacks at the beginning of the year.
- On 5th April, the paramilitary police arrest 13 people suspected of being members of the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM), of whom 6 are to be later charged with having participated in the May 2003 attacks in Casablanca.
- On 14th and 21st April, two radical Algerian imams are deported for making fundamentalist speeches.
- On 22nd April, following the adoption of the law on the prohibition on wearing visible symbols of any religion, the Ministry of Education sends instructions for the implementation of the law, which are considered confusing by teachers' representatives. The Minister for Education and Research admits that the instructions are not perfect and that a revision might be needed.

Italy

- On 3rd April, 161 immigrants, mainly of north African origin, are arrested during an anti-terrorist operation involving the police and the *carabinieri*.

- On 5th April, the head of the parliamentary committee for the intelligence and security services and state secrets (COPACO) announces in an interview granted to *la Stampa* that links have been established between al-Qaeda and the mafia, whereas he rules out any link between al-Qaeda and the Red Brigade.
- On 15th April, the Italian government reconfirms its support for the war in Iraq and its intention not to withdraw its troops, even following the murder in Iraq of Fabrizio Quattrocchi, a security guard, kidnapped on 12th April by a group named al-Katibat al-Khadra (Green Battalion).
- On 16th April, the trial of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi for alleged bribery of judges resumes, after having been suspended in June 2003 by the passing of a law subsequently declared unconstitutional in January 2004.
- On 22nd April, the European Parliament criticises Mr Berlusconi's influence on the Italian media and describes Italy as an "anomaly" in Europe, being the only country where "political, economic and media powers are held by a single person." On 27th April, Lilli Gruber, who has been a well-known presenter on the television channel RAI's magazine programme for 20 years, resigns, criticising the government's excessive influence on the channel. On 29th April, a highly controversial media law is adopted by the senate and is due to enter into force by May, after being signed by President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi. The law adds flexibility to the restrictions on revenue generated by advertising and the property of newspapers, and bypasses a court decision which forced Mr Berlusconi's channel, Rete 4, to change to satellite broadcasting.
- On 28th April, the European Commission issues a warning to Italy, calling on it to reduce its expenditure or increase its revenues in 2005 in order to avoid contravening the 3% rule of the Growth and Stability Pact.

Malta

- On 26th April, Malta's delegation to the Council of Europe's parliamentary assembly regains its right to vote, which had been suspended in January to penalise it for the lack of equality in its delegation.

Slovenia

- On 2nd April, Slovenia officially joins NATO.
- On 4th April, in a referendum organised by conservative and ultra right-wing parties, 94% of Slovenians reject a law backed by the government, adopted in February, which retroactively re-established residence rights for approximately 18,000 people of Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian ethnicity who had lost these rights when the Slovenian Republic separated from Yugoslavia in 1991. The law allowed non-Slovenian residents of the country to benefit from the right of residence, the right to own assets, a right to education, health and social services. On 7th April, having voted against the government in the referendum, the Slovene People's Party (SLS-SKD) withdraws from the governmental coalition to try to force the resignation of Rado Bohinc, Minister of the Interior.

Croatia

- On 20th April, the European Commission recommends the opening of accession negotiations with Croatia, although it makes it clear that the formal opening of negotiations will depend on several political reforms and a commitment to hunt down war criminals.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 5th April, six top-ranking Bosnian Croats, including Jadranko Prlic, the Prime Minister of the Croatian Republic in the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Herceg-Bosna) and Bosnia's Foreign Minister from 1996 to February 2001, and Bruno Stojic, Herceg-Bosna's Defence Minister, turn themselves in to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), which accuses them of having, between 1991 and 1994, put in place and participated in a joint criminal undertaking which aimed at politically and militarily subjugating the Muslims of Bosnia and other non-Croats who lived in the Herceg-Bosna regions, driving them definitively out of these regions, carrying out an ethnic cleansing of these regions, and reuniting these regions within a 'Greater Croatia'.

- On 16th April, Lord Paddy Ashdown, the High Representative of the international community for Bosnia-Herzegovina and Special Representative of the European Union in Bosnia-Herzegovina, dismisses General Cvjetko Savic from his post as Army chief of staff of the Republic of Srpska and dismisses Dejan Miletic from his post as head of the Srpska office for cooperation with the Hague Tribunal, for having failed in the task of providing the information requested by the committee on enquiries into the Srebrenica massacre of 1995.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On 17th April, three UN police officers, two Americans and one Jordanian, based in the province of Kosovo, kill each other. Stefan Feller, the UN chief of police for Kosovo, refuses to comment on the causes of the incident, while the Independent, citing anonymous sources in the UN police, reports that the shots had been preceded by a dispute between the American and Jordanian officers about events in Iraq.

Macedonia

- On 14th and 28th April the presidential elections, which have been brought forward, are held. Branko Crvenkovski, Prime Minister since November 2002 and leader of the ruling party, the Alliance of Democratic Forces in Macedonia (SDSM), becomes the President-elect. After the second round, leaders of the opposition party, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO – DPMNE) call for the elections to be annulled, because the rate of participation was less than 50%, although the state's electoral commission reports a turnout of 53.7%. Observers from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) note certain irregularities during the elections.

Albania

- On 22nd April, Alfred Moisiu, the Albanian President, makes the first official visit by an Albanian President to Kosovo, at the invitation of Harri Holk-

eri, head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). He takes part in a meeting with General Holger Kammerhoff, the commander of NATO's KFOR forces, Ibrahim Rugova, the President of Kosovo, Nexhat Daci, the Speaker of Parliament, Bairam Rexhepi, the Prime Minister, and representatives of civil society and religious communities.

Greece

- On 15th April, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Public Order announces that no foreign security force for athlete protection will be authorised during the Olympic Games to be held in August in Athens. On 16th April, The Times states that Greece's security strategy for the Athens Olympic Games in August is flawed and that the British authorities plan to send British police officers to protect the national team. On 27th April, the International Olympic Committee announces that it has taken out insurance of US\$170 million against the cancellation of the Games due to war, terrorism, earthquakes or floods, and denies that this decision had been influenced by the concerns over security or construction delays.

Cyprus

- On 13th April, the Communications Minister resigns following the Greek Cypriot President's rejection of the plan for reunification of the island drawn up by Kofi Annan (the United Nations Secretary General) on 30th March, and his call to Greek people to vote against reunification in the referendum.
- On 24th April, in their referendum, 75% of Greek Cypriots reject the latest plan by Kofi Annan to reunify the island, while in a parallel referendum 65% of Turkish Cypriots in the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) approve it. As a result, only the Greek half of Cyprus is to join the EU the following month. The EU says it is furious at the rejection of the Annan plan by the Greek half of the island and accuses the President of the Greek part of Cyprus, Tassos Papadopoulos, of having manipulated the media before the referendum. As a reward for its support of the Annan

plan, the EU announces the lifting of the embargo in force since 1974 on the Turkish half of the island, authorising it to export its products, via the Greek half of Cyprus, to the EU, and decides to grant the aid of 259 million euros originally envisaged for the Turkish Cypriot economy with a view to its accession to the EU. On 26th April, the Prime Minister of the TRNC calls on Bertie Ahern, the Irish President of the EU, to postpone the accession of the Greek half of the island until reunification has been achieved.

- On 26th April, two MPs from the Democratic Party (DP) resign, leaving the government coalition, made up of the DP and the Turkish Republican Party (CTP), in the minority.

Turkey

- On 1st April, the European Parliament adopts a resolution by overwhelming majority of its members, stating that Turkey does not yet meet the political criteria necessary for the opening of accession negotiations. The Parliament refers to the practice of torture, the persecution of minorities and the absence of democracy.

- On 1st April, during operations coordinated between Turkey and five European countries, the police arrest 54 people suspected of being members of the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP/C), banned in Turkey.

- On 3rd April, the EU's list of terrorist organisations is updated and includes two other names for the PKK separatist group: Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (Kadek) and KONGRA-GELL.

- On 29th April, the police arrest 16 people in the city of Bursa, members of the radical Islamic fundamentalist group Ansar al-Islam suspected of planning an attack on the NATO summit, due to be held in June in Istanbul. This radical group is alleged to have links with al-Qaeda.

Syria

- On 27th April, a bomb explodes outside the former office of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in Damascus.

Lebanon

- On 17th April, Rafic Hariri, the Lebanese Prime Minister, visiting President Jacques Chirac at the Élysée, asks for a right of return to Israel for Palestinian refugees, stating that Lebanon refuses to naturalise them. Discussions also touch on the issue of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, the Iraq issue and the U.S. Greater Middle East Plan.
- On 19th April, the Lebanese authorities reactivate an old measure prohibiting entry for foreign public figures and journalists into Palestinian refugee camps. The decision follows a worsening in the regional situation.

Jordan

- In April, it is learnt that the security forces have thwarted a fatal chemical attack planned by militant Islamic fundamentalists which had targeted the offices of the Prime Minister, the General Intelligence Department and the U.S. embassy in Amman. The prisoners confirm that they are under the command of Abu Misab Zarqawi, a Jordanian trained in Afghanistan.

- On 6th April, the state Security Court sentences 8 people to death, including six *in absentia*, for the murder of the U.S. diplomat Laurence Foley in October 2002. Abu Misab Zarqawi is one of the six people sentenced to death in their absence.

Egypt

- On 12th April, Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian President, begins a four-day official visit to the United States, where he discusses various international issues with U.S. President G.W. Bush: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the situation in Iraq, the joint fight against terrorism, democratic reforms in the Greater Middle East, ridding the region of nuclear weapons and the Israeli plan to unilaterally withdraw from the Gaza strip.

- On 17th April, Hervé Gaymard, the French Agriculture Minister, arrives in Cairo for a two-day visit during which he signs a framework Franco-Egyptian agreement on veterinary cooperation.

- On 19th April, President Mubarak visits Paris and meets with French President Jacques Chirac. They discuss the

crisis situation in the Middle East following the assassination of the new leader of Hamas, Abdelaziz al Rantissi, and U.S. support for the plan by Ariel Sharon, the Israeli Prime Minister, for unilateral withdrawal. The situation in Iraq is also discussed.

Libya

- On 7th April, it is announced that a joint investigation between the United Kingdom and Libya will be conducted to clarify the murder of Yvonne Fletcher, a police officer killed outside the Libyan embassy in London.
- On 23rd April, the United States lifts almost all its trade sanctions on Libya, putting an end to the economic embargo imposed in 1986. The United States removes almost all restrictions on investment and trade and removes Libya from the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, which imposed sanctions on non-U.S. companies investing in the Libyan energy sector. On the other hand, Libyan assets located in the United States or in U.S. banks remain frozen and Libya is off the U.S. list of countries sponsoring terrorism.
- On 27th and 28th April, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, the Libyan leader, visits Brussels, the European capital, in his first visit to Europe in 15 years, where he meets, among others, Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, Javier Solana, the High Representative for the CFSP, and Chris Patten, Commissioner for External Relations.

Tunisia

- On 2nd April, the Tunisian authorities confirm that the file on the legalisation of the International Association for the Support of Political Prisoners (the AISPP, banned in Tunisia) has been passed to them.
- On 13th April, Patrick Beaudoin, honorary president of the International Federation for Human Rights (IFHR) and former IFHR President, is turned back on his arrival at the airport. It is the third time that the French lawyer, who was to submit the report by the International Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the IFHR and the World Or-

ganisation against Torture (WOAT), has been expelled from Tunisian territory. An official communiqué explains that Mr Beaudoin "is perfectly aware that he is prohibited from visiting Tunisia." The government accuses him of "hostility, a provocative attitude and systematic use of disinformation with regard to Tunisia."

- On 14th April, in Geneva, Tunisia is elected a member of the United Nations Sub-Committee for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, for a four-year term.
- On 30th April, the Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH) publishes a report entitled "Media under surveillance." The LTDH, the only legal association for the defence of public and individual freedoms, accuses the government of mistreating and imprisoning journalists and criticises the censorship suffered by the press and the legal arsenal which obstructs freedom of expression, referring in particular to the anti-terrorist law passed without debate in December 2003. The League also criticises the surveillance of the Internet network. In its view, 2003 and the first few months of 2004 are marked by a continuity of previous years' trends with regard to the repression of freedoms of expression and the press in Tunisia.

Algeria

- On 8th April, the current President Abdelaziz Bouteflika is re-elected with 85% of the votes for a new term of 5 years. The other candidates, including former Prime Minister Ali Benflis, accuse President Bouteflika of election fraud, whereas international observers describe the elections as peaceful and free, in general. The army had declared itself neutral for the elections. On 26th April, in a presidential decree, President Bouteflika appoints a new government on the recommendation of Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia.

Morocco

- On 10th and 11th April, Justice and Development, the Islamic fundamentalist conservative party, holds its fifth annual congress, during which Saad Eddine Othmani, the new secretary-general, is elected. The newspaper *Le*

Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb describes him as "moderate and open" and "a man who seeks consensus."

European Union

- On 1st April, Jean-Claude Trichet, governor of the European Central Bank (ECB), decides to maintain the base interest rate in the euro zone at 2%, a decision which is criticised by the French and German Finance Ministers.
- On 3rd April, the Finance Ministers Council (EcoFin) decides not to review the Growth and Stability Pact before 2005, as certain Member States had been calling for after the failure of the Pact in November 2003 when the EcoFin Council decided not to impose sanctions on France and Germany for their contravention of the public deficit conditions. On 7th April, the European Commission warns Greece, Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal that they are likely to infringe the 3% public deficit rule in 2004.
- On 29th April, the Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs, meeting in Luxembourg, agree on the first stage in a single European asylum system, establishing minimum standards for the treatment of political refugees by the Member States and setting the objective of avoiding the practice of "asylum shopping." Refugee groups protest, stating that the system sets in stone the lowest common denominator of the Member States' practices and therefore reduces protection for asylum seekers. The Ministers also formally adopt a "qualification directive" which sets out differentiation criteria to establish whether a person has refugee status under the UN Convention on Refugees or whether the person needs international protection and to determine the rights corresponding to each of the two statuses. The Ministers also adopt an "asylum procedure directive" describing minimum standards in the handling of admissible asylum requests (the provision of full information in advance, legal aid, formal interview, notification of the decision in writing) and makes a list of the cases in which asylum requests might be considered inadmissible. The system will be implemented by the current and future Member States, excluding Denmark.

May 2004

Portugal

- On 4th May in Lisbon, the heads of the Spanish and Portuguese governments state their desire to increase co-operation between Spain and Portugal, especially within the EU, despite their differences over Iraq.
- On 11th May, the Finance Ministers of the EU decide to revoke the excessive public deficit procedure begun two years earlier against Portugal, who refuses to adhere to the public deficit criteria in 2002 and 2003, after having exceeded it in 2001.

Spain

- On 12th May, three French citizens suspected of belonging to the Segi group banned in Spain for providing ETA with financial and logistical support are arrested in the French Basque region.
- The investigation into the Madrid bombings continues throughout May. A Spaniard of Syrian origin, Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, thought to be currently in an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan, is named as the al-Qaeda leader who ordered the attacks. On 28th May, an official commission is instituted to inquire into the processing of information before the 11th March bombings in Madrid. It will concentrate on the lack of coordination of information before the attacks, the emphasis placed by the government on ETA's involvement and the possible lack of consideration of other leads, as well as the conduct of politicians between the 11th and election day, 14th March.

France

- On 2nd May, the Turk Midhat Guler, the imam of a mosque in the Paris suburb of Courtry, is arrested in order to be deported to Turkey, charged with being the leader of a Turkish extremist Islamic fundamentalist group inciting violence and terrorism. He immediately applies for political asylum, thus postponing his deportation until his application has been considered. On 23rd May, the Algerian Chirane Abdelkader Bouziane, a radical imam from Vénis-

sieux, near Lyons, returns to France to appeal against his deportation from French territory.

- On 6th May, Dalil Boubakeur, president of the French Council of the Islamic Faith (CFCM), supported by the government, announces that the main mosque in Paris will start training religious Islamic leaders to embrace an open-minded and tolerant brand of Islam. On 11th May, the Minister of Interior announces that, in view of the secular nature of the French state, no state funding will be granted for this training.
- On 13th May, the Corsican National Liberation Front – October 22nd, claims responsibility for 6 recent bombings. On 29th May, the Clandestini Corsi group claims responsibility for two recent bombings in Bastia.
- On 25th May, a Paris court sentences the Algerian Mohamed Chaouki Baadache, the French-Algerian Ahmed Laidouni and the Frenchman David Courtailler to prison terms of ten, seven and four years respectively for “terrorist conspiracy linked to a terrorist undertaking” after their return from al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan at the end of the 1990s. David Courtailler had also been in contact with the Moroccan prime suspect arrested for the Madrid bombings on 11th March .
- On 16th May, the CFCM's makes an about-turn in its position regarding the ban on wearing religious symbols in state schools, for the first time criticising this law as a violation of “the right of young Muslims to exercise their religious freedom.” On 17th May, modifications to the Education Minister's controversial instructions for the practical application of the law are approved. The amendments authorise schools to, amongst other things, allow Muslim girls to wear “discreet scarves” and compels Sikhs to wear hair-nets instead of their traditional turbans.

Italy

- On 4th May, the Director of the state television network RAI, Lucia Annunziata, appointed in March 2003, resigns in protest against state interference in the network's programming.
- On 5th May it is announced that a new security system on trains will be put

in place, following the Madrid bombings on 11th March.

- On 11th May, Italy escapes being fined for exceeding the 3% public deficit criterion contained in the Stability and Growth Pact, the EU Finance Ministers deciding to limit themselves to warning Italy and to being informed of the measures Italy is intending to take to reduce its deficit.
- On 13th May, the Senate adopts the controversial pension reform plan by a majority.
- On 18th May, 10 new Italian terrorist groups appear on the EU's list of terrorist organisations, including the Red Brigade and the Informal Anarchist Federation, which sent letter-bombs to the home of the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi.
- On 25th May, judges and prosecutors go on strike in protest against a government reform proposal which will limit magistrates' independence.
- On 26th May, Italian police demand the trial of more than 4,000 doctors who took bribes from the pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline in exchange for prescribing the company's products to their patients.

Malta

- On 17th and 18th May 2004, a seminar is held in Valetta called “Religion and education: the possibility of developing tolerance through religious instruction,” organised by the Council of Europe's Human Rights Commissioner, Alvaro Gil-Robles, in cooperation with the Foundation for International Studies at the University of Malta. This seminar, which brings together representatives of the various monotheistic religions, government experts and teachers, is part of the Commissioner's ongoing project to analyse relations between states and religions.

Croatia

- On 25th May, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) confirms it has charged General Mirko Norac with crimes against humanity and the violation of the laws and customs of war during the Medak Pocket operation in September 1993, during which the Croatian army killed 100

Serbs, including 29 civilians. The ICTY also announces that his trial might take place in Croatia.

- On 29th May a new party is formed, the Croatian Social Democrats (HSD).

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 14th May, Radomir Njegus, the Chief of Police of the Republic of Srpska, dismisses Dragan Lukac, the commander of the special police unit, and suspends seven of his men for “lack of planning” in the operation in April to arrest two people sought by the ICTY for war crimes, which failed and led to the death of an innocent person. An open letter signed by 69 police officers demands Mr Lukac’s dismissal – he had refused to resign – but also calls on Mr Njegus to resign. Finally, Mr Lukac resigns on 20th May.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On 4th May, Milorad Lukovic, charged with having organised the assassination of the Prime Minister, Zoran Djindjic, in March 2003, and sentenced *in absentia* in December 2003, surrenders to the police.
- On 6th May, Amnesty International publishes a report revealing that UN and NATO peacekeeping troops and Western humanitarian workers are supporting the illegal sex trade in Kosovo. The UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) describes the report as highly unbalanced.
- On 19th May, an international prosecutor acquits four UN Jordanian police officers, charged with involvement in the deaths of two U.S. policemen and a Jordanian policeman from the UN during an exchange of fire in Kosovo in April.
- On 25th May, Harri Holkeri, the head of UNMIK, resigns for health reasons. The Financial Times states that he also referred to the lack of support he had received from the U.S. and the EU.
- On 27th May, Dusko Jovanovic, chief editor of the opposition newspaper and well-known for his criticisms of the ruling coalition in Montenegro, is murdered outside his office in Podgorica. On 31st May, thousands of journalists demonstrate in the streets to protest against his killing.

Macedonia

- On 12th May Branko Crvenkovski officially takes office as the new President of Macedonia and on 14 May he appoints Hari Kostov the new Prime Minister.

Albania

- On 20th May, Et’hem Ruka, the Environment Minister, reveals to the France-Presse agency that increasing pollution is threatening to create a “humanitarian catastrophe” in Albania. According to the Minister, emissions of pollutants and carbon dioxide exceed by, at least, ten times the tolerance level set by the World Health Organisation (WHO), thus increasing the number of people affected by cancer and cardiovascular and pulmonary diseases. Moreover, Albania is suffering from the presence of several tens of thousands of tonnes of toxic waste, especially chemical waste, abandoned in the ruins and surroundings of Communist-era factories. Specialists estimate that the level of pollution in Albania is such that it is also threatening biological diversity and the quality of the water in the water-table and seawater.
- On 27th May, for the first time, the Albanian State is brought before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Sentenced to life imprisonment for murder, the Albanian Taulant Balliu accuses his country’s legal system of having violated his right to a fair trial, guaranteed by article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Greece

- On 5th May, three bombs explode outside a police station in Athens. A group calling itself ‘Revolutionary Struggle’ claims responsibility for the attacks as a , protest against the security measures introduced for the Olympic Games, which are transforming Athens into a “fortress.” The explosions revive speculations about security for the Games. On 13th May, several banks (Alpha Bank, HSBC Bank) are the targets of bomb attacks. On 19th May, a bomb is discovered by police near a Games complex before it explodes.
- On 7th May, the EU statistics office,

Eurostat, publishes its figures, showing that because of its expenditure on mounting the Games, Greece in 2003 exceeded the 3% public deficit criterion allowed in the Stability and Growth Pact.

Cyprus

- On 8th May, the United States announces, following negotiations with Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the UN, and with Mehmet Ali Talat, Prime Minister of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), that they are planning to implement measures to put an end to the TRNC’s trade isolation.
- On 9th May, Greek Cypriot President Tassos Papadopoulos, having rejected Kofi Annan’s reunification plan for the island and thus prevented a united Cyprus from entering the EU, announces that he will do his utmost to find a political solution to the Cypriot conflict and that only a few small amendments to Kofi Annan’s plan are required to satisfy the Greek half of the island.
- On 17th May, after two members of parliament in the government coalition resigned in April, putting the government in the minority, a member of parliament from the Republican Turkish Party (CTP), a member of the coalition, also resigns. After these events, Prime Minister Talat suggests the holding of early elections.

Turkey

- On 5 May, the Grand National Assembly (parliament) adopts draft amendments to the Turkish constitution including the abolition of the death penalty, equality between men and women and the abolition of the very controversial anti-terrorist state security courts.
- On 8th May, during a visit to Athens by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, which is the first visit to Greece by a Turkish leader for 16 years, Turkey receives Greece’s support for its candidacy for accession to the EU.
- On 13th May, the Grand National Assembly (parliament) adopts a controversial education bill lifting the restrictions in force since 1999 on university entrance for students graduating

from 'Imam Hatip' Islamic schools. The law enables students who have trained as an imam or preacher to enter university and pursue careers in the Turkish state administration as lawyers, teachers and government officials. The law is criticised by the opposition People's Republican Party (CHP) and by the Higher Education Committee as a threat to the secular status of the state. On 28th May, President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, a fervent advocate of the secular status of the state, vetoes the bill.

- On 17th May, a few hours before the visit to Turkey by British Prime Minister Tony Blair, four small bombs explode outside two branches of the HSBS (which has its headquarters in London) in Istanbul and Ankara. On 20th May, a bomb explodes in a McDonald's car park in Istanbul and on 29th May the police arrest six people, alleged members of the banned Communist / Marxist-Leninist Party (TKP-ML), in connection with this attack.
- On 29 May, the television channel NTV announces an end, on 1st June, to the 5-year unilateral ceasefire by the Kurdistan People's Congress (Kongra-Gel) – formerly known as the Congress for Liberty and Democracy in Kurdistan (Kadek), and also known as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). According to the group, this is due to offensives by the Turkish government over the previous three months.

Syria

- On 11th May, the U.S. imposed economic sanctions on Syria, banning all exports to it, in response to Syrian threats to pursue its weapons of mass destruction programme and for its support of terrorism. The Treasury Department is also authorised to freeze the assets of Syrian nationals or bodies suspected of involvement in terrorism. On 12th March, Adil Safar, the Agriculture Minister, states that the U.S. pressure is characterised by "injustice and double standards" and accuses the Bush administration of supporting Israeli policy in the Middle East.
- On 11th May, the Deputy Prime Minister and Lieutenant-General Mustafa Tlass, Defence Minister since 1972, resigns.

Lebanon

- At the beginning of May, clashes break out between Hezbollah and the Israeli army in the disputed border area between the two countries around the Shaba farmlands on the slopes of Mount Hermon, immediately adjacent to the Golan Heights.
- On 27th May, clashes in a suburb of Beirut between the Lebanese army and demonstrators protesting against a sharp rise in petrol prices lead to 5 deaths and 15 people injured.

Jordan

- On 10th May, the state Security Court sentences three militant Islamic fundamentalists to three years in prison for organising attacks against U.S. and Israeli tourists in Jordan. One of them, a 19 year-old man, is the nephew of the militant Islamic fundamentalist Abu Misab Zarqawi, a Jordanian trained in the camps in Afghanistan and suspected of being close to the leader of al-Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden.

Egypt

- On 16th May, security forces arrest 54 members of the banned organisation the Muslim Brotherhood and close down some of their businesses, including pharmacies, shops, construction firms and publishing houses.

Libya

- On 6th May, five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor are sentenced to death by a Benghazi court, charged with deliberately contaminating more than 400 Libyan children with the HIV virus at al-Fateh hospital between April 1997 and March 1999. The verdict is questioned by Bulgaria, the United States and the European Commission, with the latter criticising the numerous violations of defence rights at the trial. The President of the European Commission asks the Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi to intervene personally.
- On 13th May, John Bolton, U.S. Under-Secretary of State for Arms Control, announces that Libya has stopped arms trading with countries accused of pro-

moting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction such as North Korea, Syria and Iran.

- On 28th May, the UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) publishes a report in which it reveals that a container of elements to enrich uranium arrived in Libya in March, three months after Libya declared that it was stopping its nuclear arms development programme. Libya replies immediately, saying that the container was sent directly out of the country again. On 26th May, the Financial Times reports that Pakistani scientists have revealed that North Korea supplied Libya with a delivery of uranium hexafluoride at the beginning of 2001.

Tunisia

- On 7th May, the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (IFHR) accuses the Tunisian government of "trying to economically asphyxiate" the LTDH. According to the IFHR, the Tunisian government has blocked European funding intended for the restructuring of the LTDH and the modernisation of its management as part of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).
- On 7th May, fisheries professionals from 11 countries bordering the Mediterranean (Albania, Algeria, Egypt, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Libya, Malta, Morocco and Tunisia) meet in Tunis, at the initiative of EUROFISH (the EU association of national organisations of fishing enterprises) and with the financial support, of the European Commission, and found the MEDISAMAK Association, establishing its headquarters in Tarragona (Spain). This organisation is open to any national organisation representing fisheries professionals in the Mediterranean and aims to represent and defend their general and specific interests in dealings with regional, national and EU authorities.
- On 22nd and 23rd May, the Arab League holds its annual summit meeting in Tunis, centred on reforms in Arab countries. The summit is marked by several early exits, including that of the Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, following criticisms made by Amr Musa, the secretary general of the League, accusing Libya of making uni-

lateral decisions without taking the general context of the region into consideration, referring to the Libyan decision to stop its weapons of mass destruction programme without consulting other countries in the region. The Egyptian President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak also leaves the summit before it ends because Tunisia, which is chairing the summit, refuses to debate an Egyptian proposal. The closing document of the summit, entitled 'A Statement on Development and Modernisation' calls for greater political participation, respect for human rights, greater freedom of expression and the strengthening of the role of women in society. Another document which is adopted, the "Solidarity Pact between the leaders of the Arab World," aims to strengthen the Arab capability for collective action through the League by strengthening it and its institutions as well as reforming its charter. The reforms included the modification of voting rights in the League (decisions are currently all made unanimously, by "consensus"), the application of suitable retaliation measures against members of the League who do not respect the Charter or the decisions, the creation of an Arab Parliament, of an Arab national security council, an Arab Investment Bank, an Arab Court of Justice and an Arab High Council for Culture. The Tunis summit confers the Secretary General the task of continuing examination of the draft amendments, which will then be submitted for ratification at the next summit of the Arab League, scheduled for 2005 in Algeria. During the summit, Algeria raises the question of the alternation of the post of secretary general of the League, strangely the exclusive position of Egypt, where the League's headquarters are located.

Algeria

- In mid-May, the leader of the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC), Amari Saifi, sought by the Algerian authorities for several crimes, including the murder of 49 Algerian parachuters and the kidnapping of a group of European tourists, is captured in Chad by the rebels from the Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad (MDJC).

Morocco

- On 16th May, Mohamed Bouzoubaa, the Justice Minister, announces that the number of people being sought in connection with the Casablanca attacks in May 2003 has reached 2,000, of whom 90% have already been arrested. He also announces that the Ministry of Justice is working on a programme to rehabilitate those convicted in order to "correct their understanding of Islam."
- On 30th April, King Mohammed VI sketches out the broad outline of reforms to the country's religious system. The proposals included the following: the High Council of the Ulamas will be the sole source of fatwas; the number of regional councils of the Ulamas will increase from 19 to 30; for the first time, nominations for the councils will include women and one of them will be appointed to the Supreme Council.

European Union

- On 1st May, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia join the EU, increasing the number of Member States from 15 to 25 and the European Union population from 380 to 455 million people.
- On 12th May, the European Commission publishes a draft European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) establishing a policy framework for the relations between the EU and the new neighbour states of the EU after enlargement, as well as for other states near the EU which are not regarded as future candidates for membership, among which are included the non-European members of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The ENP will enable these states to participate in various European activities in the political, security, economic and cultural spheres.
- On 17th and 18th May, during a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the 15, disagreements arise once more concerning the European constitution, including the opposition of the smaller Member States to the fact that the number of Commissioners will decrease from 30 to 15 from 2009. Moreover, it appears that Germany and France are not satisfied by the willingness of the new Spanish government and Poland to

make certain concessions concerning voting rights in the Council. Another problem arises on 24th May when the Czech Republic, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal and Slovakia demand that a reference be made in the preamble to the constitution to Europe's Christian origins. France, a secular state, and other states with Protestant majorities such as Denmark and Sweden are categorically opposed to this demand. As far as Spain is concerned, the new left-wing government no longer keeps to the position of the former PP government, which had supported this reference to Christianity.

- On 19th May, the European Commission grants a ten-year permit to the Swiss company Syngent to import genetically-modified corn into the EU as long as it complies with the rules on labelling and traceability laid down by EU Agriculture Ministers in July 2003. Environmental groups regard this decision as a capitulation in the face of U.S. threats.

- On 28th May, the EU and the United States sign an agreement under which the EU Member States undertake to supply the U.S. in advance with personal information on all passengers on transatlantic flights. The European Parliament had voted in April to put the question before the European Court of Justice.

June 2004

Portugal

- On 31st May, the charges against Paulo Pedroso, former spokesperson of the Socialist Party (opposition), on his participation in a paedophile network, are dropped.

Spain

- On 8th June, Hamed Sayed Osman Rabei, alias 'Mohammed the Egyptian', described as the 'brains' behind the Madrid bombings, is arrested in Milan and charged with association with international terrorism. Spain calls for his extradition. As part of the same international investigation, 15 people are arrested in Belgium the same day, not for involvement in the Madrid attacks but on

suspicion of being members of the terrorist cell headed by Hamed Sayed Osman Rabei which is planning more attacks. On 9th June, six Spaniards are arrested in the north of Spain in connection with the sale of explosives used in the attacks.

- On 15th June, judge Balthasar Garçon orders the trial of 15 alleged members of al-Qaeda, held in Spain, for involvement in the attacks of 11th September 2001 in the United States.
- On 17th June, eight people are arrested on suspicion of being members of ETA, including three who are alleged to be commanders of reserve units.
- On 18th June, Luis Rodríguez Zapatero's socialist government announces the construction of 20 desalination plants on the southeast coast to provide drinking water in the dry months, replacing the National Hydraulic Plan of the former People's Party (PP) government, vehemently criticised by environmentalists and consisting of diverting water from the Ebro, to the south, via pipelines.

France

- The defeat of the ruling party, the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), in the European Parliament elections on 13th June, heightens tensions between the current President Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy, the Minister for the Economy, Finance and Industry – who intends to stand as candidate for the post of chairman of the UMP, after Alain Juppé has resigned in November – regarding Mr Sarkozy's intention to succeed Mr Chirac in the presidential elections in 2007. On 22nd June, President Chirac states that he will not block Mr Sarkozy's candidacy to become the new chairman of the UMP, but insists that he will have to leave the cabinet if he is elected party chairman.
- In June, Jacques Chirac displays concern at the growing number of anti-Semitic acts, mainly committed by extremist Muslims, and anti-Muslim acts, mainly committed by right-wing extremists. On 8th June, Dominique de Villepin, the Minister for Home Affairs, announces that monitoring committees will be set up in all the French regional districts in order to prevent anti-Semitic

acts. The same day, Dominique Perben, Justice Minister, declares that 180 anti-Semitic acts have been committed since 1st January and that legal proceedings have only been initiated for 35 of them.

- On 15th June, the anti-terrorist police swoop on a religious meeting-place in Levallois-Perret, to the west of Paris, arrest 12 people and seize 2 firearms as well as equipment for manufacturing false identity papers. On 19th June, a legal proceedings into terrorist activities begins for five of these people.
- On 21st June, four people are arrested in Bastia, on suspicion of involvement in the bombings carried out by the group Resistenza Corsa before it merged with the National Liberation Front – Union of Combatants (FLNC-UC) in August 2003. On 28th August, 10 people are arrested in the south of Corsica in connection with the murder, in October 2001, of Nicolas Cros, an associate of the leader of Armata Corsa, who had himself been assassinated in August 2001.

Italy

- On 3rd and 4th June, U.S. President G. W. Bush makes an official visit to Italy where he meets the Italian President, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, and Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. On the second day, a peaceful demonstration is held in Rome to protest against the war being waged by the United States in Iraq.
- On 8th June, the European Union criticises Italy for not complying with the anti-terrorist objectives that have been set, including failure to introduce the European arrest warrant into its legislation and failure to take action to combat money-laundering.
- On 13th June, the opposition parties criticise action by Mr Berlusconi's cabinet, which sent millions of SMS messages to the mobile phones of Italians to remind them to vote in the European elections in order to increase the election turnout, saying it was a violation of privacy and of the rules of the election campaign.
- On 26th and 27th June, local elections are held, in which the ruling centre-right coalition lose 7 provinces to the centre-left Olivo coalition.

Malta

- On 12th June, day of the European elections in Malta, the smallest EU Member State sees the largest turnout, of 82 %.
- On 14th June, the chamber of investigation of the Paris Court of Appeal hands down a judgement cancelling the court case against the Maltese Maritime Authority, which had accorded a Maltese flag of convenience to the oil tanker Erika, wrecked on the Brittany coast in December 1999. Investigating charges of "endangering life " and "complicity to cause pollution," the Court of Appeal considers that the Maritime Authority "has availed itself of prerogatives of public power demonstrating that it is an offshoot of the Maltese state" and should therefore "benefit from the immunity against prosecution granted to the Maltese state."
- On 20th June, Mr Anton Tabone, the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Republic of Malta, makes a visit to Tunisia at the head of a delegation to talk about bilateral relations. He states that Malta could provide significant support to Tunisia, especially after its accession to the European Union.

Slovenia

- On 24th June, Prime Minister Anton Rop of the Slovenian Liberal Democrats (LDS – centre left) asks the parliament to replace the current Foreign Minister, Dimitrij Rupel, with Ivo Vajgl, currently the Slovenian ambassador to Germany, both men being members of his party. Prime Minister Rop requested Dimitrij Rupel's resignation following the latter's participation in a forum attended by major right-wing figures.

Croatia

- On 3rd June, the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Carla del Ponte, announces that the ICTY will soon be authorising Croatia to take over the investigations into some war crimes and to try some of the suspects charged. She congratulates Croatia on its cooperation with the tribunal. On 29th June, Milan Babic, the former rebel Croatian Serb leader, is sentenced by

the ICTY to 13 years' imprisonment for orchestrating the ethnic cleansing of Croats in the parts of Croatia held by Serb rebels in 1991 and 1992.

- On 18th June, the 25th Member States of the EU meeting in Brussels agree to open negotiations with Croatia at the beginning of 2005 on its joining the EU, without specifying the date of accession.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 30th June, Lord Paddy Ashdown, the High Representative, dismisses 60 Serb high officials of the Republic of Srpska (the Bosnian Serb enclave), accused of impeding the capture of the Serbian war leader Radovan Karadzic and other indicted war criminals. In an attempt to purge the Republic of Srpska leadership, he dismisses, among others, the Speaker of the People's Assembly (parliament), Dragan Kalinic, the Minister for Home Affairs, Zoran Djeric, and high officials in the Serbian Democratic Party, businessmen as well as high-ranking officials in the army, the police and the intelligence services.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On 16th June, Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the UN, announces the nomination of the Dane Soren Jessen-Petersen to the post of head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).
- On 27th June, after several failed attempts since December 2002, a new President of Serbia is finally elected. He is Boris Tadic, former Defence Minister of the Council of Ministers of Serbia and Montenegro and leader of the Democratic Party (DS). Javier Solana, the High Representative for the CFSP, states that by electing Mr Tadic, a pro-western reformist, the Serbs have clearly expressed their desire for a future in Europe.

Macedonia

- On 3 June, the Sobranje (Parliament) approves the government of Prime Minister Hari Kostov, appointed by the new President Branko Crvenkovski, elected in mid-May. The members of the cabinet remain unchanged.

Albania

- On 21st and 22nd June, Prvoslav Davinic, Defence Minister of Serbia-Montenegro, makes a historic visit to Tirana, the first in 57 years. Mr Davinic is received by President Alfred Moisiu, Fatos Nano, the Prime Minister, and Kastriot Islami, the Foreign Minister. The two countries agree to step up military cooperation and to work together for peace, security and integration.

- On 5th June, at the initiative of Fatos Nano, the Albanian Prime Minister, the heads of state and of government of Albania, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina meet informally to strengthen regional cooperation and to support their integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures. To this end, they undertake to continue their cooperation on the combating of terrorism, organised crime, corruption, illegal trafficking and extremist nationalism. The bad weather conditions prevent Hari Kostov, the Macedonian Prime Minister, from attending the meeting.

Greece

- On 4th June, Dimitris Platis, the security coordinator at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, states to the Guardian that although Greece cannot legally authorise the presence of foreign security guards on its territory to protect teams taking part in the Olympic Games, it will be difficult to prevent people from carrying weapons outside the Olympic Games complexes.
- On 8th June, the EU reports that Greece has not implemented by the set deadline 5 key EU anti-terrorist measures, including the European arrest warrant.

Cyprus

- On 1st June, the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) lifts the time restrictions on Greek Cypriots visiting the Turkish half of the island, allowing them to remain there as long as they want, provided that they stay in the tourist areas, and allowing children under 11 years old to enter the Greek part without an identity card.

- On 7th June, a new political party open to all is created in the TRNC, called the New Party (YP). The aim of this party is to protect the unity of society and to eliminate discrimination.

- On 11th June, the UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1548 (2004), extending the mandate of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) until 15 December 2004.

Turkey

- On 1st June, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan annuls a controversial education law, considered by some to be detrimental to the secular nature of the state.

- On 2nd June, Amnesty International severely criticises Turkey for not taking action in the face of the violence towards women, and for tolerating 'honour crimes'.

- On 9th June, the Turkish Supreme Court orders the release of four former Kurdish members of the Grand National Assembly (Parliament), including Layla Zana, the human rights activist. They had been sentenced in 1994 to 15 years' imprisonment for their support of the banned Kurdish Democratic Party (PKK). The European Commissioner for Enlargement welcomes the decision. On 13th June, Layla Zana calls on the Kurdistan People's Congress (Kongra-Gel), as the PKK is now known, to reinstate the ceasefire suspended on 10th June.

- On 12th June, 13th people are detained in Istanbul, some of whom allegedly trained in the al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan. On 18th June, in operations in Istanbul and Bursa, the police arrest four alleged members of the group Ansar al-Islam – suspected of having links with al-Qaeda – who are preparing to commit suicide attacks.

- On 28th and 29th June, the NATO summit takes place in Istanbul. Before the meeting, several bombs explode, including one before the 24th June meeting, near the Hilton in Ankara, where U.S. President G.W. Bush is to stay. The same day, another bomb explodes on a bus in Istanbul, killing four people and wounding 21. The mayor of Istanbul states that the bus had not been the intended target, and that the bomb had exploded earlier. A Marxist

group claims responsibility for the attack. During June, tens of thousands of people, anti-Bush and anti-NATO, demonstrate in the streets in protest at the Mr Bush's policies in the Middle East. There are 40,000 people at the largest demonstration, on 27th June.

Syria

- At the beginning of June, the Syrian military intelligence service summons three Kurdish leaders to tell them that the state will no longer tolerate the activities of Kurdish parties without a licence.
- On 23rd June, Aaktham Naisse, an activist for democracy, leader of the group of committees for the Defence of Democratic Freedoms and Human Rights, arrested in April, begins a hunger strike in protest at the treatment he has suffered during his detention. He was arrested for having circulated a petition for democracy on the Internet and having organised a demonstration in Damascus.
- On 29th June, the UN Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 1550 (2004), extending for six months, the mandate of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), stationed on the Golan Heights between the Syrian and Israeli positions.

Lebanon

- On 8th June, in response to a missile fired from Lebanon on an Israeli ship (patrolling the coasts), Israeli combat planes attack targets of the Syrian Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, on the Na'ma heights, eight kilometres south of Beirut.

Jordan

- On 16th June, the state Security Court sentences 9 people, 8 of them *in absentia*, to prison terms for having planned terrorist attacks. They had been charged with having links with the al-Qaeda network, the Iraqi group Ansar al-Islam, based in Iraq, and with being associates of the Jordanian Abu Misab Zarqawi, accused by the United States of having orchestrated several attacks in Iraq.

Egypt

- Between 23rd May and 19th June, partial elections (132 of 264 seats) are held for the Advisory Council (Majlis ash-Shoura), which fulfils an advisory role for the People's Assembly (Parliament). Turnout is only 3 to 5%. The ruling National Democratic Party wins 70 of the 88 seats, and for the first time in history, an opposition party, the National Progressive Unionist Party (NPUP or Tagammu) wins a seat in the upper chamber, through elections. President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak appoints the remaining 44 members.

Libya

- On 10th June, the New York Times states that Libya planned a secret operation to assassinate the Saudi Arabian Crown Prince, Abdullah ibn Abdul Aziz. Abd al-Rahman Mohammed Shalgam, the Secretary for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation, states that the accusations are baseless.
- On 10th June, the Financial Times states that exporters in Turkey and South Africa have played a significant role in the transfer of nuclear technology and expertise to Libya.
- On 28th June, the United States formally re-establishes its diplomatic presence in Libya by opening a liaison office in Tripoli.

Tunisia

- On 1st June, the Tunisian Parliament ratifies the convention imposing a total ban on nuclear tests, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10th September 1996. Tunisia is the 102nd country to ratify the treaty, which has been signed by 167 states.
- On 11th and 12th, Miguel Angel Moratinos, the Spanish Foreign Minister, pays a visit to his counterpart, Habib Ben Yahya, and President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, whom he describes as a "great friend to Spain and a great Arab and Mediterranean leader." Discussions deal with major issues of joint concern, such as Mediterranean cooperation, the situation in the Middle East, and in Iraq. Mr Moratinos emphasises that on all these subjects, the two countries have the "same point of view,

and the same analysis." As a result of these bilateral relations, Mr Moratinos signs an agreement to relaunch relations. The visit forms part of the framework of regular consultations instituted by the treaty on friendship, cooperation and good neighbourliness signed by Tunisia and Spain on 26th October 1995.

- On 21st June, Mr Foued Mebazaâ, chairman of the Chamber of Deputies, meets with Mr Bruce George, chairman of the parliamentary council of the 'Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), who is visiting Tunisia at the head of a major delegation. The meeting deals with enhancing the cooperation that has been set up between the two parliaments.

- On 25th June, the 10th conference of the Ministers of the Interior of the Western Mediterranean (CMI) is held in Tunis, with the fight against terrorism as the main item on the agenda. Representing the northern part of the Mediterranean, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Malta are present, and for the four southern countries, Morocco, Algeria, Libya and Tunisia (conference known as the '4+5'). For the first time, Mauritania participates as an observer country. In addition to the fight against terrorism, all the security problems in the western Mediterranean are examined, such as combating organised crime, the movement of people and illegal immigration, civil protection and cooperation between local authorities. The presidency, previously held by Malta, is to pass to Tunisia at the beginning of the conference.

Algeria

- On 20th June, the Algerian army states that Nabil Sahraoui, one of the leaders of the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC), and three of his main aides have been killed in a huge anti-terrorist operation in the region of Kabylia.

Morocco

- On 8th June, King Mohammed VI reshuffles the government and re-appoints Driss Jettou as Prime Minister.
- On 8th June, the Independent reports that Spain has sent 9 small planes

to Morocco to help it combat the plague of locusts, which is ravaging the south of the Maghreb and threatening Europe.

European Union

- Between 10th and 13th June, the 25 EU Member States elect a new European Parliament, in which the parties opposed to future federation of the EU make sizeable gains. In 23 of the 25 Member States (excluding Spain and Greece), the parties in power gain a smaller proportion of votes than in the national general elections. In spite of these changes, the traditional political groups maintain their dominant positions in the new parliament, made up of 732 MEPs, with the European People's Party and European Democrats (PPE-DE) in the lead, followed by the Socialist Group in the European Parliament (PSE) and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE). The overall turnout is only 44.2%, causing great apathy in the former Communist republics which have just joined the EU.
- On 14 June, the Foreign Ministers agree to create a European Defence Agency, responsible for promoting co-operation between the 25 Member States in research and military purchases.
- On 17th and 18th June, the heads of state and government hold a summit during which the 25 Member States finally agree on the text of the European constitution, which is to be ratified by all the Member States by the end of 2006. On 23th June, the Spanish and Portuguese governments announce that they will be holding referendums on the constitution. During the summit, the 25 states launch the Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East, established to construct a "common area of peace, prosperity and progress," through the promotion of democracy, human rights and economic reform as part of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the EU Neighbourhood Policy.
- On 25th June, in order to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of European citizens, Pat Cox, the President of the European Parliament, requests the European Court of Justice to

rescind the agreement between the EU and the United States under which the 25 Member States undertake to supply the U.S. with personal information on all passengers travelling on transatlantic flights.

- On 29th June, during an extraordinary summit in Brussels, José Manuel Durao Barroso, the Portuguese Prime Minister at the time, is unanimously appointed President of the European Commission, to take over from Romano Prodi on 1 November.

Miscellaneous

- From 8th to 10th June, the members of the G-8 meet to mainly discuss the U.S. reform plan, called the 'Greater Middle East initiative', the new version of the U.S. plan which had provoked the wrath of the Arab countries, since the first plan did not envisage consultation with Arab countries and made no reference to solving the Israeli-Arab conflict. The new plan proposes reforms in the context of the resolution of the conflict and proposes the creation of high-level multilateral forums to promote democratic reforms, strengthen education, especially of women, and to support regional micro-finance projects. Middle Eastern reactions vary. Jordan, even though is of the opinion that the plan takes the region's priorities into account, opposes any reform coming from outside.

July 2004

Portugal

- On 9th July, following the official resignation of Prime Minister José Manuel Barroso, who had been appointed to the position of President of the European Commission, Jorge Sampaio, the Portuguese president, opposes the holding of new parliamentary elections, claiming that they will destabilise the country. He appoints Pedro Santana Lopes, the mayor of Lisbon, who succeeded Mr Barroso at the head of the Social Democrat Party (PSD), as the new prime minister. On 17th July, the new government takes office. Some members of Mr Barroso's cabinet refuse to join the new cabinet, disagree-

ing with Mr Santana's socialist approach.

- Starting on 25th July, 14 of Portugal's 18 districts face forest fires, which burn 10,000 hectares. Spain, Greece and Italy send planes to help Portugal.

Spain

- On 6th July, the public hearings of the parliamentary committee with the brief to investigate the 11th March attacks in Madrid begin. The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), currently the ruling party, accuses the People's Party (PP), the ruling party when the attacks took place, of having tried to influence the Spanish elections held three days after the attacks by suggesting that the Basque terrorist group (ETA) was responsible for the attacks. The PP accuses the PSOE of having organised illegal demonstrations on the eve of the elections. The Madrid Chief of Police declares that up until the eve of the elections, the PP was insisting that ETA was responsible, whereas the police had been pointing to the Islamic fundamentalist leads from the morning of 12th March.

France

- On 16th July, Alain Juppé, the former Prime Minister, resigns as head of the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), following his conviction in January for illegal party funding.
- On 25th July, José Bové, the environmentalist, and 1500 activists attack genetically modified crops, destroying an experimental field of genetically modified corn in Toulouse.
- On 27th July, four of the seven French detainees, captured in Afghanistan at the end of 2001 and held in the U.S. base at Guantanamo (Cuba), are released and placed in police custody in France.

Italy

- On 3rd July, Giulio Tremonti, the Finance Minister and a member of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's party, Forza Italia (FI), resigns after the National Alliance party (AN), supported by the Democratic Union of the Centre party (UDC), has threatened to withdraw from

the government coalition in protest at the draft budget for 2005. On 16th July, Dominico Siniscalco, an advisor close to Mr Tremonti and not a member of any political party, is appointed to the vacant post.

- On 9th July, the government adopts a package of financial reforms, thus avoiding criticism from the EU on a planned budget deficit in 2004.
- On 12th July, the UDC, one of the four parties in the government coalition, votes with the opposition parties to change the Board of national television channel RAI.
- On 19th July, the Minister for Reform and Decentralisation and head of the Northern League (LN), the populist right-wing party, resigns in protest against the failure of the decentralisation programme.
- On 28th July, the Chamber of Deputies gives a vote of confidence on the controversial pension bill, designed to reduce annual expenditure by 0.7%. The bill also envisages raising the retirement age from 57 to 60, starting in 2008.

Malta

- On 3rd July, the Foreign Minister, elected scarcely three months earlier, resigns in protest at the criticisms he has received from various quarters, including his own party.

Slovenia

- On 5th July, the National Assembly (parliament) accepts the decision by Prime Minister Anton Rop to dismiss Dimitrij Rupel, the Foreign Minister. The following day, the Parliament approves Ivo Vajgl's appointment to the post.

Croatia

- On 22nd July, Michel Barnier, head of the French diplomatic service, meets his Croatian counterpart, Miomir Zuzul, in Zagreb. He congratulates Croatia on its efforts to join the European Union and describes it as an example for all the countries in the Balkan region.
- On 16th July, Goran Hadzic, the former leader of the Croatian Serbs during the Serbo-Croatian war (1991-1995), is indicted by the International

Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) of crimes against humanity for the persecutions of Croatian civilians and for the massacre which took place at Vukovar hospital.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 12th July, the EU Foreign Ministers takes the formal decision to take over from NATO's stabilisation force (SFOR) at the end of 2004. The EU's military force will consist of 7,000 men.
- On 23rd July, representatives from across Europe gather in Mostar for the official reopening of the Stari Most bridge, destroyed in November 1993 by bombardment from the Croatian forces and rebuilt by the international community. Sulejman Tihic, the Muslim head of the joint Bosnian presidency, describes this opening as a "victory for peace" and "a victory for Bosnia as a multi-ethnic and multicultural society."
- On 29th July, putting an end to one of the ICTY's longest cases (eight-year long), the ICTY's Court of Appeal reduces the sentence given to Tihomir Blaskic, Bosnia's Croatian general, from 45 years' to nine years' imprisonment, having acquitted him of the main crimes of which he had been convicted.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On 5th July, the day Slobodan Milosevic, the former Yugoslavian President, is due to begin his defence before the ICTY, his hearing is postponed for health reasons. On 6th July, a panel of three judges states that there is no evidence to demonstrate that Mr Milosevic is too ill for the trial to continue, and they demand that Mr Milosevic begin his defence on 14th July. The panel also asks the court to name one or more counsels who might represent Mr Milosevic, if necessary. On 12th July, the defence of Mr Milosevic is once again deferred for the same reasons and on 16th July the panel decides to postpone the hearings until after the summer recess.
- On 11th July, Boris Tadic, leader of the Democratic Party (DS), becomes the new President of Serbia.

Macedonia

- On 26th July, thousands of people

demonstrate in front of the Sobranje (Parliament) in protest against the government's plans to reduce the number of administrative districts from 123 to 80.

Albania

- On 2nd July, in Tirana, five western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro) sign a memorandum of agreement reaffirming the region's commitment to cooperation on migration, asylum and refugee issues. The five countries agree to set up a rotating presidency for the regional Forum; the presidency is to be held by Albania until June 2005. A permanent Secretariat is to be created in October in Skopje, the Macedonian capital.

Greece

- On 13th July, Greece and Turkey sign a cooperation agreement on security, with the aim of making the south-east of Europe a region of peace and tranquillity.
- On 22nd July, the Ministry of Culture building in the centre of Athens is bombed. The attack intensifies concerns regarding safety on the eve of the Olympic Games.

Cyprus

- On 1st July, a Turkish Cypriot politician is officially received for the first time in the United Kingdom. Mehmet Ali Talat, the Prime Minister of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), is received by Jack Straw, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who confirms the United Kingdom's commitment to putting an end to the TRNC's economic isolation and promises the Turkish Cypriots assistance in implementing EU policies, in order to bring the TRNC closer to the EU.

Turkey

- On 2nd July, an assassination attempt on Hikmet Tan, the mayor of Van, the Kurdish town in the east of the country, is seen as a sign of renewed separatist fighting. The Turkish authorities accuse the Kurdish rebels, but the

Kurdistan People's Congress (Kongra-Gel) deny any involvement.

- On 5th July, the Grand National Assembly (Parliament) rejects an amendment to the Criminal Code which would have permitted students wearing the veil to enter university.

Syria

- On 21st July, the *Financial Times* reports that Syria has freed 28 Islamic fundamentalist political prisoners. According to the Syrian Human Rights Association, these prisoners belong to the Muslim Brotherhood, an illegal movement, and to the Islamic Liberation Party.

Lebanon

- On 19th July, Ghalib Awwali, a veteran Hezbollah leader, is killed in a car-bomb attack in Beirut. Hezbollah accuses Israel, who denies any involvement.
- On 29th July, the UN Security Council approves Resolution 1553 (2004) extending the mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon until 31st January 2005.

Jordan

- On 6th July, the US federal judiciary, acting on behalf of the American people, issues a writ against the Arab Bank, regarded as one of the cornerstones of the Jordanian economy, accusing it of facilitating the transfer of funds from Saudi Arabia to Palestinian "terrorists" or their families.

Egypt

- On 9th July, the government of the Prime Minister, Atif Mohamed, presents its resignation to President Hosni Mubarak. That same day, President Mubarak appoints a new Prime Minister- Ahmad Mahmud Mohammed Nazif, until now the Minister for Communication and Information Technology. On 14th July, the new cabinet takes office.

Libya

- On 27th July, the 147 member states of the World Trade Organisation (WTO)

accept Libya's application, the first stage in the long process of gaining membership to the organisation.

Algeria

- On 17th July, Michèle Alliot-Marie, the French Defence Minister, on an official visit to Algeria, proposes to the Algerian President, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, a defence partnership between southern Europe (Spain, France, Italy and Portugal) and three Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia). It is the first time since the end of the Algerian war (1954-1962) that a French Defence Minister is visiting Algeria.
- On 20th July, Mustafa Sahel, the Moroccan Minister for Home Affairs, makes a working trip to Algiers to meet his Algerian counterpart, Yazid Zerhouni. The aim of this meeting is to look into the possibility of reopening the borders between the two countries, which have been closed since 27th August 1994. On 21st July, the two ministers agree to hold a meeting on security with the ad hoc joint security working group at some point in the last quarter of 2004. The group will be responsible for putting into place "mechanisms for effective coordination in security matters, specifically in the fight against terrorism, illegal immigration and any form of illicit trafficking"
- On 27th July, the Agriculture Ministers from the four countries of Maghreb (Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia) and five from West Africa (Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Chad) meet in Algiers and adopt an emergency plan to combat migratory locust swarms attacking crop- which have already invaded 6.5 million hectares in the region since the invasion began in September 2003.

Morocco

- From 11th to 16th July, Morocco participates as a guest country in NATO manoeuvres in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic ocean.

European Union

- On 1st July, the Netherlands takes over the Presidency of the EU for the next six-month period. Its priorities are

to obtain an agreement on the EU budget for 2007-2013 equitable to the net contributors (of which it is one), a timetable for the implementation of the single European asylum system and a 20% reduction in EU administrative barriers.

- On 13th July, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) affirms that the Finance Ministers Council (EcoFin) exceeded its powers in November 2003 when it rejected the recommendation of the European Commission that sanctions be imposed on France and Germany for failure to comply with the public deficit threshold set out in the EU Stability and Growth Pact. The Court adds that it will not reject EcoFin's decision. The decision is welcomed by the European Commission, while others criticise the decision, since it accepts that the Pact is merely a political construct.

- On 14th July, Franz Fischler, the Commissioner for Agriculture, announces future reforms to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). On 15th July, he submits his proposals for the creation of a European Rural Development Fund, to be used for non-agricultural rural development.

- On 20th July, Josep Borrell, the former Minister of Spain and member of the European Socialist Party, is elected President of the European Parliament.
- On 22nd July, the European Parliament approves, by 413 votes to 251, with 44 abstentions, the appointment of José Manuel Barroso, the Portuguese Prime Minister, as President of the European Commission, with effect from 1st November.

August 2004

Spain

- At the beginning of August, the Basque terrorist group ETA, for the first time since the Madrid bombings on 11th March, resumes terrorist activities. On 12th and 22nd August, seven bombs explode in coastal cities in the north of the country; several people are slightly injured.

- On 18th August, nine people suspected of involvement in the Madrid bombings are arrested in the Dutch town of Roosendaal.

- On 22nd August, the Socialist government informs the public of its plans to legalise all immigrants who have entered Spain illegally, if they can prove that they have been in regular employment since they arrived. It also undertakes to stop turning back boats transporting immigrants before they reach the Spanish coast.

France

- On 7th and 8th August, the Corsican independentist group *Nazione-Indipendenza* organises a 'stateless European peoples' festival in Corte, where Basque, Catalan, Occitan, Sardinian, Savoyard and Scottish representatives are present.

- On 9th August, Dominique de Villepin, the Interior Minister, describes as unacceptable the declaration by the Corsican People's Army (APC), responsible for various attacks at the end of July and beginning of August, which states that "the forces of occupation and repression" must leave Corsica or be prepared to be attacked. On 24th August, the Corsican National Liberation Front – October 22nd claims responsibility for the bombing of a government building in Ghisonaccia on 15th July.

- In August, several racist outrages occur: on 6th August, Muslim tombs in a military cemetery in Strasbourg are desecrated, on 9 August tombstones in the Jewish cemetery in Lyons are vandalised and on 22nd August a Jewish social centre in Paris is attacked. During his stay in Paris, Silvan Shalom, the Israeli Foreign Minister, welcomes the strong condemnation of the rise of anti-Semitism in France and asks for harsher application of the law for perpetrators of such acts.

- On 14th August, opponents of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), led by José Bové, clash violently with a group of farmers and volunteer researchers in favour of GMO testing as the former are destroying a field of genetically modified maize.

- On 31st August, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) states that during the second quarter of 2004 France became the prime destination for political refugees in the European Union.

Italy

- At the beginning of August, the radical Muslim group the Abu Hafs al-Masri brigade, responsible for the Madrid bombings on 11th March and linked with al-Qaeda, threatens to perpetrate an attack in Italy if the latter does not withdraw its troops from Iraq before 15th August.

- During August, the government takes controversial emergency action to prevent the national airline, Alitalia, from going bankrupt, amongst other things, asking other European airlines to stop offering cut-price tickets on competing routes. It also threatens to take legal action against British Airways, which refers the matter to the European Commission. On 10th August, the Commission adjudicates in favour of Italy. On 1st August, the Chamber of Deputies approves a loan of 400 million euros to Alitalia, on condition that the company is restructured.

- On 24th August, Dominico Siniscalco, the Finance Minister, announces his economic plan for the following four years, which aims to reduce the budget deficit and the public debt, as Italy promised the EU in June. This plan includes a major privatisation package, including the privatisation of Enel, the Italian electricity supplier.

Croatia

- On 24th August, Berislav Roncevic, the Croatian Defence Minister, and his Portuguese counterpart, Paulo Sacadura Cabral Portas, visit the Croatian naval forces' barracks and exchange their insights into the organisation of coastal monitoring and of naval forces. They also discuss the military cooperation between their countries due to start in the autumn, with Croatia to send a military delegation to Portugal. Finally, Mr Portas reaffirms his support for Croatia's accession to the EU and to NATO.

- On 27th August, Faysal Akif al-Fayiz, the Jordanian Prime Minister, visits Croatian President Stjepan Mesic on the island of Hvar. They discuss economic and cultural cooperation between the two countries as well as the growing threat of terrorism.

- On 31st August, Ljube Boskovski, the former Macedonian Minister for

Home Affairs, sought by Macedonia in connection with the murder of six Pakistanis and an Indian in 2002, is arrested near Rovinj (in northwestern Croatia).

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 9th August, another mass grave is discovered in eastern Bosnia containing the bodies of 350 Muslims who disappeared from a Serbian detention centre in Foca during the 1991-1995 war.

Serbia and Montenegro

- At the beginning of August, Laszlo Kovacs, the Hungarian Foreign Minister, threatens to make a complaint at the European level if the Serbian authorities do not put an end to the series of violent attacks on the Hungarian population of the northern Serbian province of Vojvodina.

- On 16th August, the Dane Soren Jessen-Peterson formally replaces Harri Holkeri as head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

- On 31st August, former President of Yugoslavia Slobodan Milosevic begins his defence before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). He denies all charges of war crimes brought against him and states that the real victims of the Balkan war were the Serbs.

Macedonia

- On 11th August, the Macedonian parliament adopts a law on decentralisation, which strengthens local powers and which, in practice, grants more rights to the Albanian minority.

- On 19th August, inspired by the Ohrid Agreement, three organisations claiming to represent the Macedonian minorities in Bulgaria, Greece and Albania, call on Macedonia to organise an international conference to grant them recognition in those three countries. They also demand the right to vote in Macedonian elections and easier terms for obtaining Macedonian citizenship. Bulgaria and Greece do not recognise any Macedonian minority. As far as Bulgaria is concerned, the Macedonians are Bulgarians by origin.

- On 31st August, Croatian police arrest the former Macedonian Minister for Home Affairs, who is accused of having ordered the murder of seven innocent Asian immigrants in March 2002 on the grounds that they were members of an Islamic terrorist cell.

Albania

- On 27th August, the guerrilla wing of the Nationalist Albanian Army (AKSH) announces that it will organise a referendum in Balkan states populated mainly by Albanians on the unification of an Albanian state.

Greece

- The 28th Olympic Games take place in Athens from 13th to 29th August. In spite of the many previous attacks, these pass off without incidents and with record numbers of 202 participating countries and 16,000 athletes. Greece permits security personnel from the United Kingdom, the United States and Israel to carry weapons, although it had previously opposed this.

Cyprus

- On 10th August, Dervis Kemal Deniz is appointed Minister for Economy and Tourism of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), after the nomination of his predecessor, Ayse Donmezer, has been declared unconstitutional.
- On 20th August, a new party is created in the TRNC, called the Free Thought Party, to which two former Democratic Party (DP) MPs belong.
- On 23rd August, trade between the Greek and Turkish halves of the island, suspended in 1974, resumes. This resumption of trade is part of EU measures designed to help the economy in the Turkish half to grow. The EU proposal to re-establish direct trade links between the EU and the Turkish half of the island is postponed until September, due to the strong opposition of the Greek Cypriot government.

Turkey

- On 10th August, two bombs explode simultaneously in two hotels in Is-

tanbul, killing two people and injuring 11. Responsibility for this attack is claimed by various groups, although analysis of the explosives showed it to be the work of the Kurdistan People's Congress (Kongra-Gel). On 23rd August, another bomb explodes in Antalya, killing one person and injuring another.

- On 17th August, in a symbolic gesture to reduce the influence of the army, a civilian is for the first time appointed as Secretary-General to the National Security Council. This is the Ambassador to Greece, Mehmet Yigit Alpogan.
- On 18th August, in response to European criticisms of the fact that new human rights legislation is not being effectively applied in practice, the High Council on Radio and Television (RTUK) permits three private radio stations in the southeast of the country to broadcast in the minority language Kurmanji, a Kurdish dialect. Previously, the Turkish Radio and Television Authority (TRT) had permitted TRT channel 3 to broadcast in Arabic, Zaza, Kurmanji, Circassian and Bosnian.
- On 31st July, 11 Kurds and two Turks die during a military offensive by Turkish troops against rebel positions on the Iraqi border. Since 1st July, Kongra-Gel has been adopting a more violent approach.

Syria

- On 2nd and 3rd August, the Syrian authorities free a hundred political prisoners, including one of the oldest political prisoners, Imad Shiha, member of the Arab communist movement and incarcerated since 1975. On 15th August, the Syrian Human Rights Association (HRAS) announce that three Syrian human rights activists, accused of having created a non-governmental organisation without permission, have been arrested in Damascus. On 16th August, the Syrian Security Court frees Aktham Nayssé, chairman of the Syrian Committees for the Defence of Democratic Freedoms and Human Rights (CDF), who has been held since April.
- On 13th August, General Moshe Yaalon states in the daily newspaper Yedioth that Israel might "in theory" hand back the Golan Heights to Syria without compromising the security of its northern borders and on condition that

it has concluded a peace agreement with Syria. He is the first Chief of Staff to envisage this withdrawal. A top Israeli official then states that the government's position on the matter is "unchanged."

Lebanon

- On 28th August, the government approves a constitutional amendment which permits a three-year extension to President Émile Lahoud's mandate. The latter, having served a six-year term of office and which had ended in November, had no possibility, under the constitution, of running for a second term. The Prime Minister, Rafik al-Hariri, whose disagreements with the pro-Syrian President Lahoud are well-known, opposes this amendment. However, on 27th August, Mr al-Hariri supports the amendment after a meeting with the head of Syrian military intelligence, Major-General Rustom Ghazaleh. Several Lebanese politicians, as well as the United States and France, oppose this amendment.

Jordan

- On 22nd August, Faisal al Fayez, the Jordanian Prime Minister, accompanied by his Interior Minister, Samir Habbashneh, makes an official visit to Damascus to discuss various security issues, including the accusation that Syria is allowing "terrorist elements" to slip through its borders to Iraq and Jordan. He is received by the Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad, and his colleague, Mohamed Naji Otri.

Egypt

- On 4th August, talks begin in Cairo between Egypt and Hamas on the Egyptian proposal to play a security role in the Gaza strip in the event of an Israeli withdrawal.

Libya

- On 10th August, Libya agrees to pay 35 million dollars to compensate the 163 non-American victims of the 1986 attack on a Berlin nightclub, in which three people were killed. Libya specifies that this compensation does not mean that Libya is guilty of the attack, even

though in 2001 a German regional court highlighted the responsibility of the Libyan secret service. The Libyan charity foundation run by Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's son, Sayf al-Islam, plays an important role in the negotiations and in obtaining the compensation. After the announcement of the compensation, the German government announces that it will help Libya in modernising its economy.

- On 25th August, the Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, visits Libya and meets Colonel Gaddafi. Negotiations mainly centre on methods of controlling illegal immigration from Africa and the Middle East which use Libya as a springboard on the way to Italy. A day earlier, 275 immigrants arrived on the Italian island of Lampedusa.

Tunisia

- On 17th August in Tunis, Tunisia and Lebanon sign an cooperation executive programme for the years 2004, 2005 and 2006 in the fields of higher education and scientific and technological research. The agreement envisages the exchange of skills, students and visiting lecturers, as well as the strengthening of joint research work and the organisation of training programmes.

- On 20th August, the Movement of Social Democrats (MSD), the major opposition party in Tunisia, announces its support of the candidacy put forward by the ruling party, current Head of State Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, in the presidential election due to be held on 24th October. Apart from Mr Ben Ali, three leaders of other opposition groups have already announced that they are standing for President.

Algeria

- On 5th August, General Mohammed Lamari, one of the most prominent figures of the last decade, resigns as Chief of Staff, a post he has held since 1993. According to him, this is due to health reasons; however, others point to recent differences he has had with President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. General Salah Ahmed Gais, until now commander of ground forces, is appointed as his replacement.

Morocco

- At the beginning of August, it is revealed that Morocco has decided to eliminate visas for Algerians wishing to travel to Morocco. The visa procedure was established in 1994 following an attack on a hotel in Marrakesh, with Rabat at the time blaming the Algerian security services. In retaliation, Algeria decided to close its border with Morocco.

- On 31st August, Mohamed Achaari, the Culture Minister, and his Spanish counterpart, Carmen Calvo, sign a cultural collaboration agreement between the two countries covering 2005-2006. The agreement sets out plans for joint activities in archaeology, conservation of cultural assets, film, dance, theatre, the plastic arts and the translation of literary works.

European Union

- On 12th August, the new President of the Commission announces the make-up and distribution of portfolios of the new Commission. Thirteen of the 30 members of the Prodi Commission retain positions in the new Commission.

September 2004

Portugal

- On 21st September, the Member States of the EU decide to lift the embargo and all the restrictions on the export of beef and associated animal products imposed on Portugal in November 1998, due to the high rate of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE – mad cow disease).

Spain

- On 13th September in Madrid, Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero meets the French President Jacques Chirac and the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, in order to discuss the EU budget.

- On 21st, 28th and 30th September, workers' unions organise unofficial demonstrations to protest against the government's decision to privatise the largest Spanish shipbuilding firm, Izar.

This has led to thousands of employees being laid off, although the government had promised to save their jobs.

- On 27th September, the Basque terrorist group ETA distributes a video in which it states that it will continue its attacks until Basques gain their independence.

France

- On 4th September, the Minister of Economy, Finance and Industry, Nicolas Sarkozy, launches his campaign to become chairman of the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP). The President of the Republic, Jacques Chirac, supports his candidacy after Sarkozy has promised to leave his ministerial post if he is appointed and not to use the leadership of the party to attack the government.

- On 8th September, President Chirac emphasises the "spirit of responsibility and respect" which most French Muslims are showing regarding the new law forbidding the wearing of any religious symbols in state schools. Muslim opposition to the law fell away sharply when two French journalists were abducted in Iraq and their captors demanded the repeal of the law. On 19th September, the Education Minister, François Fillon, states that of the 635 girls wearing the veil at the beginning of the school year only 101 cases are yet to be resolved. Following the expulsion of nine Sikh students for wearing turbans, on the 25th September, the Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, comes to an agreement with France permitting Sikh students to wear 'under-turbans'.

- On 17th September, violence towards North Africans in Corsica continues with the murder of a Moroccan in Ajaccio.

- On 22nd September, Nicolas Sarkozy unveils his budget, and predicts that the fiscal deficit will fall below 3% threshold in 2005. France has breached the EU Stability and Growth Pact for three successive years.

- On 23rd September, partial elections are held for a third of the seats in the Senate. The Socialist Party (PS), in the opposition, gains more seats, while the party in power, the UMP, loses its absolute majority, although it remains the largest group in the Senate.

Italy

- On 2nd September, the mayor of Sicily, Salvatore Cuffaro, a member of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's party, Forza Italia (FI), is accused of helping the mafia by supplying it with privileged information.
- On 7th September, two Italian women working for humanitarian organisations in Iraq are kidnapped in Baghdad by militants who demand the withdrawal of Italian troops from Iraq in exchange for the women's lives. The majority of Italians are opposed to the war. Silvio Berlusconi takes personal charge of the crisis and announces that he will not withdraw the troops but that he is prepared to negotiate on other points. On 28th September, the two women are freed.
- On 12th September, 800 illegal immigrants arrive on the small island of Lampedusa. The reception centre for immigrants has room for 190 people.
- On 29th September, Prime Minister Berlusconi's cabinet adopts a budget for the year 2005 which includes measures to reduce expenditure by 24 billion dollars, of which 7 billion will come from the sale of state assets.

Malta

- On 22nd September, the International Federation for Human Rights (IFHR) heavily criticises the entire Maltese policy on the management of the flow of immigrants, while also belabouring the EU for its lack of solidarity. The report particularly criticises the systematic detention of all illegal immigrants in closed centres which are overpopulated, unsanitary and ill-suited to long-term detention.

Slovenia

- On 23rd September, the Slovene Prime Minister, Anton Rop, withdraws his support for Croatia's application for membership of the EU following a border dispute incident, which exacerbates the already strained relations between the two countries. Slovenia threatens to veto Croatia's membership unless a solution to their border disagreement is found. The incident does not change the European Com-

mission's position regarding Zagreb's application to join the EU.

Croatia

- On 1st September, Great Britain ratifies the agreement on stabilisation and on the accession of Croatia to the EU, a gesture which it has until then refused to make, in protest against Zagreb's lack of cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY).
- On 26th September, during a two-day meeting in Zagreb, more than a hundred NGOs from Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia Montenegro, coming together under the banner of the 'Igman Initiative', call on the authorities of the three countries to work for the reconciliation of these fragmented former Yugoslav republics and to establish the political, institutional and material conditions necessary to ensure the return and reintegration of refugees.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 1st September, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) sentences Radislav Brdjanin, the former Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Srpska (the Bosnian-Serb enclave), to 31 years in prison for crimes against humanity and serious violations of the Geneva Convention (1949) regarding the treatment of Muslims and Croats in the Ukrainian zone between April and December 1992.
- On 16th September, the legislature of the Republic of Srpska approves the appointment of Darko Matijasevic as Minister of Interior.
- On 21st September, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), states that more than a million people have returned to their homes in Bosnia-Herzegovina after fleeing during the 1992-1995 war. Another 500,000 people are still waiting to be able to do so.
- On 22nd and 23rd September, the representatives of more than 40 donor countries and international cooperation agencies, meeting in Sarajevo under the aegis of the World Bank and the EU, promise to donate 1.2 billion dollars in order to implement a medium-term strategy supported by the EU consisting, amongst other things, of improving the

social security system and reducing unemployment. On the other hand, the donors urge Bosnia to consolidate its transition "from its post-conflict state to one of EU pre-accession," by striving to cover its own expenses.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On 2nd September, the judges at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) order the former President of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic, to accept a defence counsel, since his trial is often being postponed because of his state of health. Patrick Robinson, one of the three judges, states that Milosevic is suffering severe hypertension and that he is putting his life in danger through wanting to defend himself. Milosevic criticises the ICTY's decision, qualifying it as illegal and contrary to international law. Two of the three 'learned counsel', Steven Kay and Gillian Higgins, who were given the job of ensuring a fair trial for Milosevic, are appointed counsel. On 8th September, Milosevic refuses to meet Kay and states that the latter is not going to represent him. On 10th September, the court authorises Kay and Higgins to appeal against their appointment as Milosevic's counsel. On 15th September, the trial is adjourned for a month for counsel to prepare its defence.
- On 4th September, the EU Foreign Ministers announce that separate negotiations will take place with Serbia and Montenegro with a view to their accession. This decision is welcomed by the political leaders of both Republics.
- At the end of September, the Montenegrin members of a panel made up of Serbs and Montenegrins working to strengthen relations with the ICTY resign in protest at the failure of the Serbian government to hand over several war crimes suspects to the ICTY.
- In mid-September, we hear that from that time until the Kosovan elections on 23rd October, 2,000 soldiers are to come and swell the ranks of the NATO force in Kosovo (S-For).

Albania

- On 6th September, Ilir Meta, the former Prime Minister from October 1999 until January 2002, resigns from the

ruling Albanian Socialist Party (PSS) to form a new party, the Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI), whose aim is to integrate Albanians "into a well-being and just society." Ten PSS members of the People's Assembly join the LSI.

Greece

- On 23rd September, the EU, which over the last few years has revised Greece's economic figures, warns Greece that it might face legal action for having systematically underestimated its budget deficit figures. The real figures show that Greece infringes the 3% public deficit rule in the Stability and Growth Pact every year.

Cyprus

- On 13th September, for the first time in thirty years, a college for the Greek Cypriot minority is opened at Rizokarpasso in the Turkish half of Cyprus.
- On 28th September, we hear from Greek diplomatic sources that there is a risk the meeting between representatives of the European Union (EU) and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) due to take place on 1st October in Istanbul, with the aim of strengthening links and improving understanding between Europe and the Muslim world, might be postponed because of objections made by Greek Cypriots and Greece regarding the participation of Turkish Cypriots. At the centre of the controversy lies the decision by the OIC in June to call the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) "the Turkish Cypriot state." The Dutch Presidency of the European Union has already decided not to attend and has called on the 25 Member States to do the same.
- On 30th September, the United Nations, after having carried out a study on the UN peacekeeping force's (UNFICYP) mission in Cyprus, intends to reduce its troops by a third, in view of the prevailing calm in the country.

Turkey

- On 10th September, the Criminal Court in Ankara sentences a police officer, Ahmet Bastan, to four years and five months in prison for having tortured the student Birtin Altinbas to death.

- On 13th September the trial of 69 people suspected of the November 2003 attacks in Istanbul begins. One of the suspects, Adnan Ersoz, states that al-Qaeda funded the attacks on the two synagogues, the British consulate and the HSBC bank.

- On 15th September, after various complaints from human rights groups, the Commissioner for Enlargement, Günter Verheugen, sends a mission to Turkey to investigate allegations of torture. On 7th September, Verheugen, visiting the Kurdish village of Tuzla in southeastern Turkey, warns Turkey that it will have to improve the conditions of the Kurdish minority if it wants to join the EU.

- Several bombs explode in September: on 17th September, during a concert in Mersin; on 28th September, three bombs explode in front of three branches of the HSBC bank in Izmir, Adana and Istanbul and one in front of the Turkish-American Association in Ankara.

- On 20th September, the European Commission threatens Turkey with delayed discussions on its accession to the EU if the Islamic fundamentalist party in power, the Justice and Development Party, does not give up its proposal to criminalise adultery.

- On 26th September, the National Assembly (parliament) approves reforms to the 78 year-old Turkish Penal Code. The reforms include, among other things, tougher sentences for rape, paedophilia and torture, and tougher sentences for perpetrators of "honour crimes."

Syria

- At the beginning of September, Israel threatens to take military action against Syria because of its involvement in a double suicide attack in southern Israel which killed 16 people.

- On 26th September, Izzedin Sheikh Khalil, an important member of the militant Palestinian group Hamas, is killed in Damascus in a car bomb attack. Hamas blames Israel for the attack. Israel makes no official comment on it. The Chief of Staff of the Israeli defence forces, Lieutenant-General Moshe Ya'alon, states that Israel will attack those who support terrorism, including Syria, which has always denied that

Khalil played an important role in Hamas when in Syria.

Lebanon

- On 2nd September, the UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1559 (2004) opposing the three-year extension of President Émile Lahoud's term of office. However, on 3rd September, the Lebanese National Assembly (parliament) approves the extension. The only party in power to oppose this extension is the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) and on 6th September three members of the PSP resign from the cabinet in protest. Hezbollah also supports the extension, because President Lahoud supports resistance activities.

- On 21st September, 3,000 Syrian soldiers based in Lebanon dismantle various positions in the south-east of the capital and move to the east, towards the Bekaa valley, from where it is anticipated some of them will leave Lebanon.

- On 22nd September, the Minister for Home Affairs and Municipal Affairs announces that Ismail Mohammed al-Khatib, a Lebanese man described as the head of al-Qaeda in Lebanon, and Ahmed Salim Mikati, also linked to the al-Qaeda network, have been arrested. They were preparing attacks on the Italian and Ukrainian embassies in Lebanon, as well as attacks on security and judicial targets. On 27th September, Khatib dies of a heart attack.

Jordan

- At the beginning of September, the government launches an unprecedented attack on the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood. Security forces arrest nine leading members of the movement accused of preaching in mosques without an official permit. Seven of the people arrested are freed after signing an undertaking not to give sermons without first informing the authorities. The other two refuse to sign and are detained for three days. The Muslim Brotherhood and its armed wing, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), claim that this operation is illegal and politically motivated with the intention of weakening the organisation "in view of opposing developments expected to occur in Iraq and Palestine."

Egypt

- On 8th September, the Finance Minister, Yusuf Boutros-Ghali, announces the imposition of a raft of economic reforms, including the simplification of customs procedures and an immediate reduction in import tariffs. On 21st and 23rd September, during the ruling NDP (National Democratic Party)'s annual convention, other reforms are announced, including 50% reduction in income tax and corporation tax and the privatisation and reform of the banking system under state control.

Libya

- On 1st September, Libyan television announces the creation of a new ministry, the General People's Committee for Higher Education.
- At the beginning of September, the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, visits Libya where he meets the Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, with whom he discusses the May decision of a Libyan court to sentence to death five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor convicted of having contaminated 400 Libyan children with AIDS.
- On 20th September, the American President, G. W. Bush orders the easing of restrictions on commercial and charter flights. The United States also suspends measures dating back to 1986 freezing Libyan assets worth 1.3 billion dollars held in the United States. This enables Libya to compensate the families of the victims of the 1988 Lockerbie attack at the end of September.
- On 22nd September, EU diplomats declare that the EU should lift all its economic sanctions on Libya, including the embargo on weapons.

Algeria

- On 15th and 16th September in Algiers the third informal conference of the '5+5' forum (a meeting of the five Maghreb nations and the five European nations bordering the western shores of the Mediterranean) is held. The member countries emphasise the need for increased cooperation in combating clandestine immigration in sub-Saharan Africa.

- On 26th September, the World Bank, in its report on global expansion in 2005 entitled 'A better investment climate for everyone', emphasises that the practice of giving kickbacks is almost systematic in the Algerian economy and states that 75% of the Algerian firms questioned admitted having paid bribes.

Morocco

- On 12th September, three small political parties, the National Democratic Party (PND), the Reform and Development Party (PRD) and the Citizens' Initiative for Development Party (ICD) join together to form the National Alliance Party.

European Union

- On 3rd September, the European Commission produces a report on reforms to the discredited Stability and Growth Pact. On 10th and 11th September, the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers (EcoFin) meets at Scheveningen in the Netherlands and agrees on the principle that the Pact has to be reformed, but does not manage to agree on the exceptional circumstances which could permit a government to have an excessive budget deficit. The Netherlands, Austria and the President of the European Central Bank, Jean-Claude Trichet, are strongly opposed to a relaxation of the criteria of the Pact. During the meeting, the French Economy, Finance and Industry Minister, Nicolas Sarkozy, proposes a harmonisation of taxes in order to avoid unfair competition to attract investment. The new members of the EU and the United Kingdom as well as Ireland are opposed to this harmonisation. Finally, the EcoFin Council appoints the Luxembourg Prime Minister and Finance Minister Jean-Claude Juncker as Chairman of the Eurogroup for a further two years.
- On 8th September, the EU moves a step forward towards the acceptance of genetically modified products, when the European Commission authorises the planting of 17 varieties of genetically modified maize produced by the biotechnology company Monsanto.
- On 17th September, the Defence Ministers of five European countries, Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands

and Portugal sign a 'policy declaration' outside the official proceedings of the European Defence Ministers' meeting in Noordwijk in the Netherlands, establishing a "European police force." With an anticipated initial strength of about 800, this police force will be able to act within a period of 30 days. It will be "operational before the end of the year," says its initiator, the French Defence Minister, Michèle Alliot-Marie. Its permanent Chief of Staff will be based in Italy the following month.

- On 19th September, the Italian and German Ministers propose the establishment of reception centres in North Africa, where asylum seekers will stay while their files were being processed by a European country.

October 2004

Portugal

- On 15th October, the centre-right government of Prime Minister Pedro Santana Lopes publishes its draft budget for 2005, which includes a reduction in income tax and a salary increase for public officials.

Spain

- On 3rd October, the Basque terrorist group ETA suffers a serious setback when its political leader, Mikel Albizu Iriarte, and his colleague Soledad Iparagirre, regarded as ETA's military commander and the highest-ranking woman in the organisation, are arrested in France.
- On 18th and 19th October, 8 men suspected of planning a bombing of the national court in Madrid, where the judge Baltasar Garzón works, are arrested. The judge has been investigating radical Islamic cells since the mid-90s.
- On 21st October, the Spanish legal system is criticised for having in 2002 mistakenly released Allekama Lamari, involved in the Madrid attacks on 11th March.

France

- On 6th October the trial begins of 10 people, most of them Algerians, who are accused of being part of the

Frankfurt cell, a link in the al-Qaida network, which planned to bomb the main square in Strasbourg in December 2002.

- On 9th October, the Anti-Repression Committee (CAR) organises a demonstration in Ajaccio to demand that Corsican "political prisoners" should be imprisoned on the island and not held in prisons on the mainland.
- On 19th October, the Education Minister, François Fillon, states that only 72 Muslim girls are continuing to defy the law forbidding the wearing of visible religious symbols and that nine girls have been expelled after the failure of talks with their families.

Italy

- On 5th October, the immigrants who arrived en masse on the island of Lampedusa last month are deported without having the opportunity to ask for political asylum. This decision is criticised by many human rights groups.
- On 15th October, the Chamber of Deputies (parliament) adopts the first reading of a constitutional reform project which would extend the executive powers of the President and the Prime Minister and allocate partial responsibility for health, education and police matters to the 20 regions. The law states that the Prime Minister will be directly elected and will have more power in the formation and dissolution of the cabinet.
- On 26th October by-elections are held for the 7 seats in parliament vacated by members elected to the European Parliament. Prime Minister Berlusconi's coalition loses the three seats it had to centre-left opposition parties. Berlusconi blames this loss on poor electoral turnout, while others emphasise recent economic problems and the unpopularity of Italy's presence in Iraq.

Croatia

- On 4th October, news break up that Croatia has decided to establish a fishing zone and an ecological zone in the Adriatic. Zagreb thus has abandoned, under European pressure, the idea of creating an exclusive economic area (EEA).
- On 5th October, the Puls Institute

publishes a survey showing that only 49% of Croats say they support the steps being taken by their country to join the EU, while 41% say they are opposed to them. In January 2004, 72.4% of Croats had said they were in favour of Croatian accession to the EU.

- On 13th October, the European Commissioner for Enlargement, Günter Verheugen, arrives in Zagreb, where he states that Croatia is ready to begin talks on accession to the European Union. This visit occurs as the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Carla Del Ponte, is criticising Croatia's lack of cooperation. Croatia is baulking at arresting the fugitive General Ante Gotovina, charged in July 2001 for his role in the massacre of at least 150 Croatian Serbs. Verheugen states that he does not doubt Zagreb's willingness to cooperate with the ICTY, an essential criterion in the steps to accession.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 9th October, Ljubisa Beara, a member of the Bosnian Serb army involved in the massacre of Muslims at Srebrenica, gives himself up to the Serbian authorities. He is transferred to the ICTY the next day, where he is accused of crimes against humanity and the violation of the laws and customs of war. On 12th October, during his first appearance before the ICTY, Beara calls on all other suspects of war crimes to turn themselves in too, for the good of the country. On 14th October, the Commission set up by the government of the Republic of Srpska produces its final report, which states that 7,000 Muslims were killed at Srebrenica by Bosnian Serb forces.
- On 30th October, another mass grave containing more than 405 bodies is discovered in the north-west of Bosnia. It is the second largest discovery of its kind in Bosnia so far.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On 12th October, the trial of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic resumes. Steven Kay and Gillian Higgins, the two barristers assigned to defend Milosevic, submit a letter of resig-

nation to the ICTY because Milosevic is refusing to work with them.

- On 23rd October, the election of the Kosovo Assembly (parliament) takes place, boycotted by the Serbian minority. The Albanian Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) maintains its control of the Assembly with 47 seats out of 120.

Macedonia

- On 15th October, the Foreign Ministers of Macedonia, Albania, Croatia and Serbia Montenegro and the Deputy Head of the Bosnia-Herzegovina diplomatic service hold an informal meeting in Ohrid on regional cooperation. The French Foreign Minister, Michel Barnier, joins the meeting to express his support for the intention of the countries in the region who wish to join the EU and NATO.

Albania

- On 18th October, the President of Greece, Costas Stefanopoulos, embarks on an official three-day visit to Tirana where he states that Greece will do everything possible to help Albania join the EU and NATO.

Greece

- On 11th October, a special court in Athens sentences three members of the extreme right-wing group, the Revolutionary People's Struggle (ELA) – the oldest terrorist group in the country – to 25 years in prison. They are convicted of several attempted murders and bombings of foreign companies, American military targets and government offices in Athens.
- On 15th October, the UN General Assembly elects Greece as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for two years beginning on 1st January 2005.
- On 16th October, 20 hooded extremists throw bombs at two banks and an Interior Ministry building in Athens.
- On 20th October, the European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs, Joaquín Almunia, states that Greece has been giving false information on its budget since 1997, that is, four years before joining the euro zone.

Cyprus

- On 16th October, the *Financial Times* reports that the Greek half of Cyprus is blocking the European demand to end the economic isolation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).
- On 20th October, the government of the Prime Minister of the TRNC Mehmet Ali Talat, in the minority since 26th April, resigns after several attempts to form a new government. On 21st October, President Rauf Denktaş appoints Dervis Eroglu, a former Prime Minister and leader of the National Unity Party (UBP), the second largest party at the December 2003 elections. On 30th October, after several attempts, Eroglu withdraws.
- On 22nd October, the UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1568 (2004), prolonging the mandate of the UN peacekeeping force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) until 15th June 2005.

Turkey

- On 1st October the French President, Jacques Chirac, proposes holding a referendum on Turkey's joining the EU. On 6th October, the European Commission, in its report on progress in democracy in Turkey, decides to open accession negotiations with Turkey, but gives no date for the beginning of negotiations or for accession and gives no guarantee that Turkey will become a member. In any case, the accession process is expected to last at least 15 years. Plans are made to introduce a "permanent safeguard" to limit the influx of Turkish immigrant workers into western Europe, a concession made to the European countries opposed to Turkey's accession. On 21st October, during visits across Europe to obtain the support of European countries for Turkey's accession, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish Prime Minister, criticises the decision by certain countries to hold referendums to decide on Turkey's accession, and asks to be treated like any other applicant. That same day, Cemil Cicek, Justice Minister, states that the EU cannot discriminate against Turkey with regard to freedom of movement.
- On 14th October, the Kurdish wo-

man Leyla Zana, a human rights activist, jailed for 15 years for her support of the PKK and freed in June, receives at the European Parliament the prestigious Sakharov Prize, which was awarded to her 9 years earlier.

- On 18th October, the government unveils the details of the 2005 budget. For the first time since the creation of the republic in 1923, more money is allocated to education than to the army.
- On 21st October, in the OECD on the economic reforms in Turkey, Donald Johnston, the Secretary-General, states that it is vital for Turkey to reduce its black market.

Syria

- On 3rd October, President Bashar al-Assad has a cabinet reshuffle. He appoints the man who until now has been chief of Syrian intelligence in Lebanon, Major-General Ghazi Kan'an, as Interior Minister. According to the *Middle East International* of 8th October, this appointment reflects growing interest in internal security.

Lebanon

- On 3rd October, the television network Al-Jazeera reports that the two major Shi'ite factions in Lebanon have clashed in the south of the country, with at least one death. The same day, the leaders of the two factions accept a series of measures on the field to defuse the crisis.
- At the beginning of October, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, states that 14,000 Syrian soldiers are still stationed in Lebanon and that 3,000 more have already been redeployed. According to this report, Lebanon and Syria have stated that any timetable for future troop withdrawals depends on the security situation in Lebanon and the region as a whole. On 19th October, the UN Security Council urges Syria to withdraw its troops from Lebanon.
- On 20th October, Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri dissolves his cabinet and announces that he will not be forming the next government. His resignation leads to weeks of speculation on the Syrian influence on the Lebanese government. On 21st October, the Presi-

dent appoints Umar Karami as Prime Minister and on 26th October the latter announces the make-up of his cabinet, which for the first time includes two women.

Jordan

- On 17th October, the Security Court convicts Abu Misab Zarqawi, trained in the Afghanistan camps, along with twelve others, of having plotted to launch a chemical attack on several targets in Amman, including the General Intelligence Department, the Prime Minister's offices and the American embassy. Two days earlier, the United States had added the Iraqi group, Jamaat al-Tawhid wa'l-Jihad (Unity and Jihad Group), of which Zarqawi is head, to its list of terrorist groups and had frozen its assets in the United States.
- On 24th October, King Abdullah II accepts Prime Minister Faysal Akif al-Fayiz's cabinet reshuffle.

Egypt

- On 7th October, three holiday resorts in the Sinai are bombed and 34 people killed. Half of the victims are Israelis. These attacks lead to fears of a return of the terrorist violence which affected the country in the 1990s. The Palestinian groups, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, condemn the attack and their involvement is immediately ruled out by Israel and Egypt, amongst others, because the Palestinians were in the middle of negotiations with Egypt on the future of the Gaza strip. On 25th October, the Egyptian Minister of Interior states that the person behind the attacks was a Palestinian and that he died in one of them.
- At the end of October, more than 650 opposition politicians, activists and intellectuals issue a common statement that they will try to amend the constitution to prevent President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak from running for a fifth six-year term of office.

Libya

- On 9th October, *The Independent* announces that Libya is allowing the return of former Italian colonists to the country.

- On 11th October, the EU Foreign Ministers decide to lift all economic sanctions on Libya, including the embargo on weapons as requested by Italy in order to be able to sell Libya surveillance equipment for the prevention of illegal immigration.
- On 14th and 15th October, a German Chancellor visits Libya for the first time. On 16th October, we learn from *The Guardian* that Colonel Gaddafi asked the German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder to pay compensation for the thousands of mines planted in the desert by German forces during the Second World War.

Tunisia

- On 5th October, Tunisian coastguards reports that a boat heading for Italy with 75 immigrants on board has foundered. 64 of the passengers lose their lives.
- On 24th October, President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali and his ruling party, the Democratic Constitutional Rally (DCR), win the parliamentary and presidential elections. Ben Ali wins with nearly 95% of the vote and is re-elected for the fourth time. The DCR wins 152 of the 189 seats in the Chamber of Deputies (parliament) and five opposition parties share the remaining 37 seats. Some opposition leaders claim they were subjected to harassment during the election campaign, and the Progressive Democratic Party boycotted the elections in protest. A delegation from the Arab League chaired by the Deputy Secretary-general for political affairs, Ahmed Benhuli, supervised the elections.

Algeria

- An African intergovernmental conference on terrorism is held on 13th October. In the closing statement, the 53 governments represented by experts in the field declare their agreement on a common strategy to combat terrorism and organised crime. They ask for an international conference to be organised to adopt a global code of conduct on the matter.
- On 24th October, the Algerian government states its opposition to the idea proposed by some European na-

tions that transit centres be set up in the Maghreb for illegal immigrants.

- On 31st October, the Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, in a speech given on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the start of the war of independence from France, implies that he might offer an amnesty to Islamic fundamentalist rebels wishing to lay down their weapons after more than ten years of struggle against the Algerian government. But he adds that this step would have to be approved by a referendum. It is the first time that Bouteflika has publicly come out in favour of a new amnesty. Since the previous year he has been championing a policy of 'national reconciliation' in order to definitively end the conflict.

Morocco

- On 13rd and 14th October, Moroccan security services arrest 171 illegal immigrants in various parts of the Kingdom. 105 of the immigrants come from sub-Saharan countries.
- On 14th October, Spanish Foreign Minister, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, describes the cooperation between Morocco and Spain in combating terrorism as a "model" for other countries.
- On 21st October, Human Rights Watch recognises that "Morocco has made impressive progress in human rights matters" and pronounces that there is greater tolerance for national and international human rights organisations. Although some NGOs are worried about the impact of antiterrorist measures on human rights in Morocco, Human Rights Watch states that "in the name of counter-terrorism, the protection of civil rights and fundamental liberties have suffered reverses all over the world and Morocco has been no exception to this."

European Union

- On 1st October, the European Commission proposes the construction of five pilot reception centres for refugees in Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia in collaboration with the UN High Commission for Refugees and with the undertaking of these nations that they will respect the UN Agreements on Human Rights. France – be-

lieving that the project would destabilise the countries involved by attracting more immigrants and smugglers – and Ireland, Spain and Sweden – for human rights reasons – are opposed to the project. On 25th and 26th October, the EU Justice and Home Affairs Ministers, meeting in Luxembourg, fail to implement the first stage of the Common European Asylum System, amongst other things, because of the dispute on the reception centres in the Maghreb.

- On 26th October, Greece, Malta and Cyprus block agreement in Luxembourg on a European agreement on the penal sanctions for marine pollution, thus possibly preventing adoption of the legislation on maritime security demanded by the EU.
- On 27th October, the new President of the European Commission, convinced that the next Commission is going to be rejected by the European Parliament, decides to revise its make-up at the last minute. The new Commission is due to take office on 1st November. The European Parliament is opposed to, amongst others, the Commissioner for Justice, Liberty and Security, the Italian Rocco Buttiglione, criticised by the centre-left parties for his remarks on homosexuals, the position of women and on immigrants. On 31st October, Buttiglione withdraws from his post. The Parliament committees also criticise the appointments of the Commissioners Mariann Fischer Boel, Neelie Kroes, Laszlo Kovacs and Ingrida Udre.
- On 29th October in Rome, the 25 Member States sign the European Constitution, which will have to be ratified by the 25 countries before coming into effect on 1st November 2006.

November 2004

Portugal

- On 24th November, Prime Minister Pedro Santana Lopes carries out an unexpected government reshuffle. On 30th November, four months after the government took office, President Jorge Sampaio announces that he is going to dissolve the Assembly of the Republic (parliament) and hold early elections because of the political instability caused

by economic problems and the lack of cabinet unity.

- On 25th November, the very controversial trial opens in Portugal of 7 people, among them media personalities and the former ambassador to South Africa, accused of paedophilia.

Spain

- On 2nd November, the regional newspaper for northern Spain, the *Diario de Noticias*, publishes a letter from six imprisoned former leaders of the Basque terrorist group ETA, calling on the current leaders of ETA to end the violence. They state that the arm struggle is leading nowhere and appeal for support for Batasuna, the (banned) political wing of ETA. On 14th November, the leader of Batasuna requests peaceful negotiations with the Spanish government, but the Justice Minister, Juan Fernando López Aguilar, refuses unless Batasuna officially condemns violence.

- On 16th November, a boy of 16 is sentenced to 6 years' detention in a young offenders' centre for having acted as a go-between for a drug trafficker selling explosives to the perpetrators of the Madrid bombings on 11th March. It is the first conviction in connection with the bombings. On 29th November, former Prime Minister José María Aznar appears before the parliamentary commission inquiring into his political reaction to the Madrid bombings. Throughout an eleven-hour session he defends his decision to link the attacks to ETA.

France

- On 5th November, three Sikh boys are expelled from their school in Paris, after negotiations with their parents ordered by a court on 22nd October regarding the law forbidding the wearing of religious symbols break down.

- On 10th November, the government announces that, in order to reduce the public deficit, the publicly-owned nuclear company Areva will be privatised.

- On 14th November, the Corsican People's Army (APC) claims responsibility for the bombing of the Bordeaux city hall on 28th October and for three recent attacks in Corsica. On 22nd No-

vember, the group threatens to take action in exactly one month if Corsican prisoners are not moved into prisons on the island and if the persecution against those fighting for the cause does not cease immediately.

- On 15th November, the 'French Watergate' trial begins in Paris of 12 officials and police officers accused of illegally phone-tapping more than 150 supposed opponents of the former President François Mitterrand in the 1980s.

- On 23rd November, we learn that in the previous week, 4 people suspected of being members of the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM), responsible for the Casablanca bombings in May 2003, have been arrested.

- On 28th November, Nicolas Sarkozy is elected Chairman of the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), succeeding Alain Juppé, charged with corruption in January.

Italy

- On 7th November, 10,000 workers demonstrate in Rome against inflation, job insecurity and government expenditure on the war in Iraq. On 15th November, teachers demonstrate against a reduction in the education budget. On 24th November, it is the turn of the judges, prosecutors and defence lawyers to go on strike to protest against a draft reform of the legal system which would put the independence of the judiciary at risk.

- On 18th November, Gianfranco Fini, the deputy Prime Minister and leader of the conservative National Alliance (AN), is appointed Foreign Minister, replacing Franco Frattini, who has been appointed a European Commissioner.

- On 19th November, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi threatens to resign and hold early elections if his government does not approve his plans to reduce income tax. On 22nd November, a judge orders the arrest of Gianfranco Blasi, a parliamentary representative from Berlusconi's Forza Italia (FI) party, who received electoral support from the Mafia in return for a promise to allow the latter to control the allocation of public works contracts. 51 others are also arrested, including members of the opposition.

- On 25th November, Berlusconi obtains the support of the coalition government for his plans, but, as a concession to the AN and the Christian Democratic Centre (UDC), this reduction will not be implemented until 2006. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) warns Italy that it should first of all reduce its budget deficit (106% of GDP) before reducing taxes.

Malta

- On 24th November, the Supreme Court of Appeal confirms the cancellation of legal action against the Malta Maritime Authority and its Chief Executive Officer, Lino Vassallo, indicted for endangering life and complicity to pollute by dint of failure to ensure the seaworthy state of the Erika, wrecked on the Breton coast in December 1999.

Slovenia

- On 9th November, the parliament appoints Janez Jansa, leader of the Slovene Democratic Party (SDS), Prime Minister. On 22nd November, the SDS forms a coalition with New Slovenia (Nsi), the Slovene People's Party (SLS+SKD) and the Democratic Party of Slovenian Retired People (DeSUS).

Croatia

- On 10th November, the Justice Minister confirms he has handed over Miroslav Bralo, a member of the Croat armed forces from Herzeg-Bosna, better known as the Croatian Defence Council, to representatives of the international community in Bosnia. On 15th November, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) accuses him of serious violations of the Geneva Convention and of the laws and customs of war.

- On 15th November, for the first time since the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, a Croatian head of government visits Belgrade. The Croatian Prime Minister, Ivo Sanader, the President of Serbia and Montenegro, Svetozar Marovic, and the Prime Minister of Serbia, Vojislav Kostunica, discuss, among other things, the withdrawal of the Serbia and Montenegro army from eastern Croatia and the improvement of eco-

conomic relations and sign an agreement protecting the rights of minorities.

- On 19th November, the Defence Minister, Berislav Roncevic, confirms that in June the government had, without informing President Mesic who is the Supreme Commander of the Croatian armed forces, signed a memo giving the United States extended rights to use Croatian airspace, territorial waters and training infrastructure.
- On 22nd November, the Chief Prosecutor of the ICTY, Carla del Ponte, during a meeting with the UN Security Council, expresses doubts about the sincerity of Croatian efforts to arrest the fugitive Ante Gotovina, one of the ICTY's prime suspects.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 3rd November, the ICTY authorises the early release of the Serb Miroslav Tadic, imprisoned for 8 years in 2003 for crimes against humanity.
- On 11th November, the government of the Republic of Srpska issues an apology for the Srebrenica massacre and undertakes to arrest those responsible. On 13th November, we hear that the families of the victims of Srebrenica are going to take the governments of the Republic of Srpska and Serbia and Montenegro to court, claiming 2.6 billion in compensation.
- On 22nd November, the UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1575 (2004) authorising the EU Stabilisation Force (EU-For) to take over from the NATO Stabilisation Force (S-For). A NATO presence will remain through the establishment of its Bosnian headquarters.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On 1st November, former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic re-obtains the right to defend himself before the ICTY. The court of appeal decides that as long as he is in good health, Milosevic should be allowed to conduct his own defence. On 11th November, Milosevic requests the court to summon former US President Bill Clinton, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, former German Defence Minister Rudolf Scharping, former US Secretary of

State, Madeleine Albright and former NATO Supreme Commander Wesley Clark to appear before it.

- On 15th November, the first trial of former members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) begins before the ICTY. Until now, only Serbians have been convicted by the ICTY.

Macedonia

- On 7th November, a referendum is held by the Macedonian World Congress (SMK) and by opposition conservative parties to oppose the government's plan to reduce the number of administrative districts from 123 to 83, which would lead to 16 districts having an Albanian majority. This plan is an important part of the Ohrid Agreement of August 2001. The coalition in power, headed by the Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia (SDSM), as well as the United States, the EU, NATO and the OSCE calls on Macedonians to boycott the referendum. Since the turnout is less than 50%, the referendum is invalid. On 10th November, the government and the opposition meet at Lake Ohrid for reconciliation talks.
- On 15th November, Prime Minister Hari Kostov resigns, accusing the Albanian Democratic Union for Integration (BDI), a member of the government coalition, of nepotism, corruption and defending partisan interests. On 26th November, President Branko Crvenkovski appoints Defence Minister Vlado Buchkovski as his replacement.

Greece

- On 12th November, the Finance Minister announces the final cost of the Olympic Games: 9 billion euros, double the original budget.
- On 15th November, the Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs, Joaquín Almunia, recommends that a lawsuit be brought against Greece, which since 1997 has been hiding the fact that it is exceeding the 3% public deficit criterion laid down in the Stability and Growth Pact. He states that Greece will not be expelled from the euro zone and that it had been admitted on the basis of the best information available at the time. It will have until 2006 to reduce its deficit, whereupon

the Greek Minister of Economy and Finance, Georgios Alogoskoufis, states that Greece's house will be in order by 2005. That same day, the Minister admits that the public deficit was underestimated to enable admission to the euro zone in 2001.

Cyprus

- On 11th November, the Prime Minister of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), Mehmet Ali Talat, abandons attempts to form a new government and calls for early elections.
- On 26th November, the Health Minister of the Greek half of Cyprus, Constantina Akkeldidou, resigns after being found guilty by the district court of Nicosia of interfering in a court case.

Turkey

- On 1st November, security forces capture eight people, five of whom are members of the militant group the Revolutionary People's Liberation Front/Party (DHKP/C), while they are planning an attack on the courthouse in Elazig. On 4th November, four more members of the DHKP/C are arrested in Kocaeli. During the month, security forces come into conflict with the Kurdistan People's Congress (Kongra-Gel) in the south-east of the country, causing the death of six of the militants and the arrest of another six.
- On 25th November, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, former French President, states in an article in the *Financial Times* that he is in favour of establishing a "favoured relationship" with Turkey rather than having it join the EU, emphasising that Turkey would become the country with the greatest weight in decision-making. On 29th November, the BBC discloses a provisional EU document containing conditions for Turkey's accession, one of which is the recognition of the Greek Cypriot government. The document also states that no decision will be taken on Turkey's accession before the adoption of the 2014 budget.

Syria

- On 9th November, the lawyer and human rights activist, Anouar Bounni, announces that the Syrian journalist

and writer Nabil Fayad has been freed after being detained for more than a month for having criticised the “corruption” of the Syrian authorities in his articles.

- On 25th November, a Syrian proposal to resume discussions with Israel without any prior conditions is described as a “propaganda manoeuvre” by the Israeli government. Israeli President Moshé Katzav, whose functions are primarily ceremonial, calls for an answer to the Syrian offer. On 30th November at Sharm el-Sheikh Syrian President Bachar al-Assad meets the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who expresses his strong support for Damascus’s proposal, but rejects the idea of playing a mediator’s role in the immediate future.
- On 29th November, in spite of a ban by the Lebanese authorities, more than 2,000 students demonstrate in Beirut against the Syrian occupation and for a “rebalancing” of Lebanese-Syrian relations. On 30th November, pro-Syrian Lebanese political parties, with the support of the government, hold a large demonstration denouncing UN Resolution 1559 demanding Syria end its meddling in Lebanon. The demonstration turns into a passionate defence of the Syrian presence in Lebanon.

Lebanon

- On 6th November, the National Assembly (parliament) passes a vote of confidence in Umar Karami’s government.
- On 7th November, Hezbollah announces that it has launched an unmanned spy plane at Israel, which is regularly violating Lebanese airspace. On 12th November, secretary-general of Hezbollah, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, announces that the organisation possesses airborne missiles capable of going deep into Israeli territory (Mirsad-1). The new Lebanese Minister of Intelligence justifies the use of these aircrafts by the fact that pressure applied by the international community has not been sufficient to put an end to repeated violations of Lebanese airspace by the Israelis.

Jordan

- On 28th November, King Abdullah

II withdraws the title of Crown Prince from his half-brother, Prince Hamzah bin Hussein, to “allow him more freedom of movement.” According to the *Financial Times*, quoting political observers in Jordan, the King has made this decision because of his fear that the 24 year-old, “is stealing his political thunder.”

Egypt

- Since 1st November, according to the Egyptian human rights organisation (EHRO) and the Human Rights Society for Assistance to Prisoners (HRCAP), nearly 120 prisoners in Abou Zaabal prison, north of Cairo, have been on hunger strike to protest against their “inhuman” conditions.
- On 2nd November, Egypt’s representative at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) describes as “utterly unfounded” allegations that the Director General of the Agency, Mohammed El Baradei, might be helping Cairo to conceal a secret nuclear programme. Egypt denies having a secret nuclear programme and states that it is applying the principle of transparency in that respect by subjecting its nuclear sites to regular inspections.
- On 18th November, three Egyptian policemen are killed by Israeli artillery fire. It is one of the most serious Israeli-Egyptian border incidents in the last ten years. Egypt describes the act as “irresponsible” and calls for a “rapid investigation” and an “explanation” for the incident. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon telephones President Hosni Mubarak to express his apologies. The Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), which oversees the application of the 1979 Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement, arrives on the scene and opens an investigation into the incident.

Libya

- On 25th and 26th November, the French President visits Libya, where he meets the Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. He is the first French Head of State to visit Libya since 1951. According to some reports, the visit is marked from the start by Gaddafi’s criticisms of French military intervention in the Ivory Coast.

Tunisia

- On 10th November, President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, re-elected in October for a further five-year term of office, reshuffles his cabinet.

Algeria

- At the beginning of November, the leader of the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC), Amari Saifi, captured in Chad in May by the rebels of the Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad (MDJT), is handed over to the Algerian authorities through the mediation of the Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi.

Morocco

- At the beginning of November, at the country’s ports, the Moroccan authorities arrest a hundred potential illegal immigrants bound for Europe.
- On 8th November, the United States adds Morocco to the list of countries who might benefit from the *Millennium Challenge Account* programme, involving American aid in return for economic and democratic reforms.
- On 13th November, we hear that King Mohammed VI of Morocco has pardoned 1,183 people on the occasion of Aid El Fitr, the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

European Union

- On 4th and 5th November, the Heads of State and Governments of the 25 EU members meet in Brussels. A group of experts, chaired by the former Dutch Prime Minister, Wim Kok, submits a report which concludes that the governments have failed in their implementation of the ‘Lisbon Strategy’, aimed at making Europe the most competitive economic zone by 2010. The 25 Member States decide to relaunch the strategy, but state that the aim is unattainable for 2010. The Member States also adopt a five-year programme with a view to strengthening the ‘area of freedom, security and justice’, but is unable to resolve the persistent problems in connection with asylum policy, including the construction of reception centres in north Africa.

- On 16th November, the EcoFin Council, meeting in Brussels, fails in its attempt to reform the Stability and Growth Pact. The Member States are not in agreement on the governmental expenditure to be excluded when calculating the public deficit: France proposes expenditure on research and development, while other states propose excluding defence expenditure or even net contributions to the European budget.
- On 18th November, the European Parliament approves the make-up of the new European Commission, by a majority of 449 votes to 159 with 82 abstentions. It is to take office on 22nd November for a five-year period. Bearing in mind the possible rejection of the first line-up of the Commission by the European Parliament, the President of the Commission, José Manuel Barroso, has had to replace the Italian and Latvian Commissioners. After it has taken office, controversy over the Commission's make-up continues. For example, the UK Independence Party, a British anti-EU party in the Parliament, criticises the appointment of the Vice-President and Commissioner for Transport, the Frenchman Jacques Barrot, convicted in 2000 for illegal funding of a party. On 25th November, the President of the EP, Josep Borrell, states that Barrot was not legally obliged to reveal his conviction. On 24th November, Barroso announces that each of the 24 Commissioners is ready to resign if he asks them to.
- On 22nd November, the defence Ministers meet in Brussels and agree, regarding the EU rapid reaction force, to set up 13 battalions of 1,500 soldiers by 2005.

December 2004

Portugal

- On 10th December, President Jorge Sampaio formally dissolves parliament and calls early elections. However, the President authorises the 2005 budget to be adopted in order to avoid political or economic instability. The budget plans controversial action, including the reduction of income tax, which will lead Portugal to violate the EU Stability and Growth Pact.

Spain

- On 3rd December, the Basque terrorist group ETA explodes bombs on five main routes leading out of Madrid, severely disrupting traffic. On 6th December, the national holiday and Spanish Constitution day, seven bombs explode in the country. All these explosions are preceded by a phone call; there are no casualties or major damage caused.
- On 13th December, the Prime Minister José Luis Zapatero states before the parliamentary commission investigating the Madrid bombings on 11th March that the Popular Party (PP), which was in power at the time of the attacks, had erased records from the Prime Minister José Maria Aznar's office from 11th to 14th March and accuses the PP of deliberately hiding evidence which pointed to militant Islamic fundamentalists. Zapatero denies that the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) had started or approved unconstitutional demonstrations on the eve of the elections. On 17th December, the Moroccan Hassan el Haski is arrested and on 21st December he is charged with the murders of the 191 victims of the Madrid bombings, 1000 attempted murders and belonging to a group of terrorists linked to the attacks.
- On 27th December, two Moroccans are arrested in Catalonia and charged with having conspired to buy explosives.
- On 30th December, the Basque regional assembly votes for a controversial motion proposing a relationship of free association with Spain, a project backed by the regional President, Juan José Ibarretxe, leader of the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV). The PSOE and the PP, the two major parties in the national parliament, both agree to oppose this motion.

France

- On 1st December, the Paris Court of Appeal rejects the appeal by former Prime Minister Alain Juppé against his conviction, but reduces his prison sentence from 18 to 14 months and his ban on holding public office from 10 years to 1 year, thus allowing him to return to politics before the presidential elections of 2007. On 2nd December, Juppé

resigns his post as mayor of Bordeaux.

- On 2nd December, the members of the Socialist Party (PS) decide to support the European constitution by 59 votes to 41. It is a victory for the current secretary of the PS, François Hollande, over former Prime Minister Laurent Fabius, who has described the constitution as antisocialist.
- On 7th December, with a view to integrating the Muslim community and developing a moderate brand of "French Islam," the Interior Minister, Dominique de Villepin, announces the creation of university courses for imams on French law, customs and language as well as courses on how to create a foundation for the funding of mosque construction.
- On 10th December, a Paris court sentences ten men of Algerian origin to prison terms ranging from one to ten years for belonging to the Frankfurt cell, part of the al-Qaeda network.
- On 13th December, the Council of State orders the firm in charge of the Eutelstat satellite to suspend transmission of the television channel Al-Manar, based in Lebanon and belonging to Hezbollah, for its anti-Semitic remarks.
- On 15th December, 4 young Muslim girls are expelled from their school in Mulhouse for refusing to take off their veils.

Italy

- On 3rd December, four Tunisians are given prison sentences for their links with the al-Qaeda network.
- On 10th December, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi is acquitted by a Milan court of the charges of corruption he had faced. He was accused of having bribed judges at the end of the 1980s/beginning of the 1990s to act in favour of Fininvest, his finance company.
- On 11th December, senator Marcello Dell'Utri, a friend and political ally of Mr Berlusconi with whom he founded Forza Italia (FI) is sentenced to nine years in prison for conniving with the Mafia.
- On 16th December, President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi vetoes a judicial reform plan which had been adjudged

unconstitutional and a risk to the independence of the judiciary.

Slovenia

- On 3rd December, Prime Minister Janez Jansa's new centre-right government is approved by the Chamber of State (parliament).

Croatia

- On 10th December, a Croatian tribunal sentences nine Croatian Serbs in absentia to prison terms ranging from three to four and a half years for crimes against civilians during the Croatian war (1991-95).
- On 13th December, Amnesty International criticises the impunity granted to Croatian perpetrators of human rights violations against Serbs during the Croatia-Serbia war in Croatia from 1991 to 1995. The report emphasises that the Serbs who have returned to Croatia have been "victims of discrimination when looking for work and accommodation and when exercising their social and economic rights."
- On 13th December, EU Foreign Ministers decide that negotiations on Croatia's accession to the EU will begin in April 2005, on condition the Croatian authorities cooperate fully with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 2nd December, the EU officially takes over the NATO peacekeeping missions in Bosnia. The operation, code-named Althea, is led by a stabilisation force (EU-For) made up of 7,000 men from 33 countries.
- On 16th December, the High Representative of the international community and the EU's Special Representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lord Paddy Ashdown, who had criticised officials of the Republic of Srpska of a lack of cooperation with the ICTY, sacks six policemen and three other officials. The same day, the United States, in concert with Ashdown, imposes a travel ban on the leaders of the three political parties in Bosnia. Several Serbian politicians resign in protest: on 16th December, the Prime Minister of the

Republic of Srpska, Dragan Mikerevic, stating that he is not prepared to accept the international community's threats and ultimatums; on 18th December, Mladen Ivanic, Vice-President and Foreign Minister of the Bosnian Council of Ministers and Borislav Paravac, the Serbian member of the collective Presidency of Bosnia; and on 20th December, Slobodan Kovac, Bosnian Justice Minister.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On 1st December, we hear of a failed attack on Serbian President Boris Tadic.
- On 3rd December, the Assembly (parliament) of the Serbian province of Kosovo re-elects Ibrahim Rugova as President of Kosovo and elects Ramush Haradinaj of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) as the new Prime Minister, even though he is under investigation by the ICTY for his activities within the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) during the war of independence of 1997-1999. Serbia demands that Haradinaj be sacked or extradited to the ICTY.
- On 3rd December, Serbia takes an important step towards full cooperation with the ICTY by handing over General Dragomir Milosevic, Commander of the Sarajevo-Romanija corps of the Bosnian Serb army in 1994.

Macedonia

- On 17th December, the Sobronja (parliament) approves the new government headed by the Prime Minister Vlado Buchkovski, Chairman of the Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia (SDSM) and up until then Defence Minister in the government of Hari Kostov, who resigned in November.

Albania

- On 21st December, the People's Assembly (parliament) approves the 2005 budget, despite criticisms from the opposition that it will increase social inequalities.

Greece

- On 1st December, the European Commission takes legal action against

Greece, which since 1997 has been submitting false information to conceal its infringement of the 3% public deficit criterion set out in the Stability and Growth Pact. The expected deficit in 2004 is 5.5%.

Cyprus

- On 10th December, the Chamber of Representatives (parliament) of the Greek half of the island approves the 2005 budget, which consists of austerity measures, including a salary and public recruitment freeze and an increase in the retirement age from 63 to 65, with a view to reducing the public deficit to 2.9% to enable entry to the euro zone by 2007.

Turkey

- On 6th December, Russian President Vladimir Putin visits Turkey and signs six agreements on defence, trade and finance. Russia is Turkey's second-largest trading partner after Germany.
- On 16th and 17th December, during a European summit in Brussels, the Heads of State and Governments decide to begin membership negotiations with Turkey on 3rd October 2005. The talks are to be conditional on, amongst other things, the respect of human rights, the recognition of the Greek Cypriot government and a "permanent safeguard clause" regarding Turkish immigrants. Initially, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan rules out the possibility of recognising the Greek half of the island, but at the last moment a compromise is found and Turkey states that it wants to sign a customs union agreement with the 25 Member States, including the Greek half of Cyprus, before the start of discussions on membership. On 17th December, Austria joins France in promising to hold a referendum on Turkey's membership of the EU. In Italy, thousands of people demonstrate against Turkey's membership.

Syria

- The Syrian Supreme State Security Court sentences two people to death for their involvement in a bombing in April in Damascus which killed two people.

Lebanon

- On 3rd December, Walid Jumblatt, Head of the Druze community, member of parliament and leader of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) and an opponent of Syria, has a meeting in Paris with the French President Jacques Chirac, who lends him his support in his fight for Lebanese independence.
- On 6th December, the Secretary-General of the Arab League, the Lebanese press union, the Union of Arab journalists and the union of Lebanese and Egyptian parties express their solidarity with the Shi'ite Lebanese Hezbollah television channel Al-Manar, whose broadcasts are under threat in France.
- From 9th to 11th December, more than 150 NGOs and civil society organisations from various parts of the world meet in Beirut as part of efforts to implement the six objectives in Education for All set out at the Dakar Forum in 2000. This Collective Consultation by NGOs on Education for All (CCNGO/EFA), a UNESCO initiative, is a key partnership mechanism to promote the participation of civil society in the follow-up of the project.

Jordan

- On 27th December, a military court acquits 13 people suspected of organising an attack against American targets in Lebanon and sentences 11 people to prison terms ranging from 6 to 15 years for possession of explosives.

Egypt

- On 12th December, a coalition of recently created opposition groups led by the Pro-Reform Movement demonstrates in the streets to demand President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak to step down at the end of his six-year term of office, which ends in October 2005, and to oppose any attempt to transfer power to his son.
- On 14th December, Egypt, Israel and the United States sign an agreement to create seven special zones (Qualified Industrial Zones) in Egypt, where goods produced with Israeli funding can have free access to the American market.

Libya

- On 22nd December, Saudi Arabia, having accused Libya of plotting the assassination of the current leader of Saudi Arabia, Prince Abdullah ibn Abdul Aziz, recalls its ambassador from Libya and orders him to leave the country. The Libyan government denies all accusations.

Tunisia

- On 2nd December, Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi meets Turkish Industry and Commerce Minister Ali Coskun. The two men discuss perspectives on bilateral cooperation in the light of the recently signed agreement between Tunisia and Turkey creating a free trade area between the two countries.
- On 8th and 9th December in Tunis an international colloquium is held on dialogue between religions, attended by nearly a hundred philosophers, theologians and professors from various corners of the world. The participants reject all theories which preach a clash of civilisations.
- On 11th December, the officially unrecognised Tunisian society for the fight against torture (ATLCT), in a report by its chairperson, the opposition lawyer Radia Nasraoui, denounces the "continued recourse" to torture in Tunisian police stations and prisons. On 12th December, the Tunisian authorities reply that conditions of detention in Tunisia "comply with international standards" and that any complaint of abuse will be investigated.

Algeria

- On 6th December, Reporters Without Borders demands that Algerian judges end the judicial harassment of Mohammed Benchicou. The authorities have already closed down the newspaper *Le Matin*.

Morocco

- On 6th December, Morocco is the first Arab country to try former detainees of the American naval base in Guantanamo. The five Moroccans are charged by a Rabat court with belonging to or supporting a terrorist group.

European Union

- On 2nd December, the Dutch Presidency of the EU once more fails to obtain the agreement of the 25 Member States on penal sanctions for acts of marine pollution – Greece, Cyprus and Malta use their vetoes to block it. However, there is unanimous agreement on the harmonisation of penal sanctions to be applied to maritime companies responsible for marine pollution.
- On 14th December, the EU completes accession negotiations with Bulgaria and Rumania, with whom treaties will be signed in April 2005, with accession scheduled for 1st January 2007.
- On 14th December, the Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs, Joaquín Almunia, announces the suspension of the disciplinary measures being applied to France and Germany, who have not complied with the 3% public deficit criterion contained in the Stability and Growth Pact for three consecutive years. The Commission accepts the two countries' budget forecasts of a deficit lower than 3%, but will monitor developments very closely and will be ready to take action in the event of non-compliance.
- On 21st and 22nd December in Brussels the Fisheries Ministers adopts new fishing quotas for 2005, maintaining the reduction in the total allowable catch (TAC) of cod, but rejecting the Commission's proposal to close a fifth of European waters to fishing to enable species to recover.

Gibraltar and Western Sahara

Gibraltar

2003

- On 3rd November, Spain closes its border with Gibraltar for several hours, in order to avoid the spread of a gastro-intestinal virus. The virus has infected 500 British passengers on a cruise ship which made a stopover in Gibraltar.
- On 28th August, the electoral commission of the United Kingdom recommends that Gibraltar be included in a region of southwest England in the

European Parliament elections in 2004, in order to put an end to this electoral anomaly. In 1999 the European Court of Human Rights had stated that the population of Gibraltar is too small to make up a constituency per se, which meant that it had been excluded from previous European elections. Spain protests against the British decision. On 18th October, *The Guardian* announces that Spain intends to take the United Kingdom to the European Court of Justice (ECJ). On 29th October, the European Commission approves the British decision, but restricts itself to a political statement (rather than taking legal action) in an attempt to persuade the two countries to settle their differences amicably.

- On 28th November elections to the House of Assembly (parliament) take place, resulting in a third successive victory for the Social Democrats (GSD), presided over by Peter Caruana. Although the GSD lost votes, the make-up of the assembly remains the same, because the electoral system limits the number of seats to eight per party.

2004

- On 10th June, the United Kingdom elects its European Parliament representatives. Gibraltar participates for the first time in the elections, with its population included in the constituency of Southwest England. The Conservative Party, which supported the retention of Gibraltar's British status, wins with 70.7% of the vote.
- From 28th to 30th June, Princess Anne, a member of the British royal family, visits Gibraltar on the occasion of the third centenary of the capture of Gibraltar from the Spanish. This visit is strongly criticised by Spain.

Western Sahara

2003

- On 2nd September the Polisario Front, following the adoption in July by the UN Security Council of a new peace agreement, releases 243 Moroccan prisoners of war. The International Committee of the Red Cross announces that 914 Moroccan prisoners of war are still being held by the Polisario Front.
- On 11th August, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, appoints Alvaro de Soto as his new special representative for Western Sahara, replacing William Lacy Swing.
- On 28th October, the UN Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 1513 (2003) extending the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Organisation of a Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until 31st January 2004.
- On 31st July, the United Nations Security Council, in its Resolution 1495, gives its support to the peace plan formulated by James Baker, the special envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan. The plan envisages Western Sahara to remain under Moroccan sovereignty for some years, after which a referendum will decide its future.

2004

- On 5th March, for the first time since the outbreak of the conflict in Western Sahara 25 years ago, the United Nations Agency for Refugees (UNHCR) organises reunions of families separated by the conflict. According to the UNHCR, 500 Sahrawis from Tindouf and 200 Moroccan Sahrawis are willing to take part in this air trip to make contact with relatives. The operation

takes place as part of the "confidence-building measures" agreed between Morocco and the Polisario Front to enable the exchange of visits, telephone communication and correspondence between refugees separated by the border.

- On 13th June, Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan's personal envoy since 1997, James Baker, resigns. In December 2003, George W. Bush had appointed him to head the diplomatic service aimed at helping Iraq reduce its foreign debt. On 15th June, Annan appoints the Peruvian Alvaro de Soto, special representative to Western Sahara since August 2003, as his new personal envoy.
- On 15th September, South Africa becomes the sixtieth country to officially recognise the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. Morocco criticises this decision and recalls its ambassador from South Africa
- On 24th February the Polisario Front, through the mediation of Qatar, releases 100 Moroccan prisoners of war captured between 1975 and 1991.
- On 25th June, the Polisario Front releases 100 Moroccan prisoners of war captured between 1975 and 1999. The number of Moroccans in captivity is now 412.
- On 29th April, the UN Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 1541 (2004) extending the UN Mission for the Organisation of a Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until 31st October.
- On 30th January 2004, the UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1523 (2004) extending the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Organisation of a Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until 30th April 2004.