

151. We heard from many of our witnesses that the Stability Pact, in particular the Quick Start Package, was announced with a great deal of fanfare which led to high expectations of it. Stephen Wordsworth from the FCO told us that these expectations were overblown (Q 34). Clare Short went one step further and indicated that the grandiose promises made at its inception were a cause for concern because they were seen by many as too ambitious (Q 252). Chris Patten believed that:

"the expectations were less than coherently explained or analysed and that it is unfair to blame those who run the Pact for the gap between the initial rhetoric and what the Pact has usefully been able to do." (Q 65)

152. Gary Titley MEP made a similar point when he explained that the Pact had been established as a reaction to the problem of a perceived lack of co-ordination of aid efforts in the Balkan region. He thought that the Pact itself needed to be more streamlined and focused and given specific yearly tasks to achieve (Q 177).

154. The Stability Pact was launched in a manner which raised exaggerated expectations of what it might achieve. Since then, it has been viewed mostly with indifference if not scepticism. It could, and should, have been better explained at the start that it was not a new international funding organisation with financial resources of its own and an operational mandate. It is a forum bringing together 35 countries and 16 international organisations, financial institutions and regional initiatives committed to working within a common framework to promote stability and growth in the region. In that role it has sought with some modest success to promote regional co-operation and intra-Balkan trade; to focus non-EU donors on the needs of the region; and to achieve better co-ordination amongst the plethora of donors. We welcome the consensus which emerged at the Bucharest Regional Conference that the Stability Pact's role and activities should be given a focus more clearly in line with its status as a generator of international political commitment to the region and a catalyst for greater co-operation within it.

HofLords, Select Cttee.on the EU, 20<sup>th</sup> rep.