

EC may recognise rebel republics

By Our Foreign Staff

EUROPEAN Community foreign ministers will meet in The Hague tomorrow to consider whether to recognise Slovenia and Croatia if Belgrade does not stop hostilities against the breakaway republics, a Dutch foreign ministry official said yesterday.

"The meeting will be on Yugoslavia and on the results of the CSCE [Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe] meeting in Prague," Mr Andre Haspels said. The Dutch hold the EC presidency.

The 35-nation CSCE formally offered its good offices to restore peace in Yugoslavia and called for an immediate end to hostilities there.

Officials from the member countries last night agreed, subject to their governments' approval, on the need to send observers to Yugoslavia to

monitor a ceasefire and supervise troop withdrawals.

The decision in effect put the ball back in the court of the EC, which is already talking to Yugoslav authorities on practical measures to make a ceasefire stick.

Apart from calling for an immediate halt to the fighting, a CSCE declaration urged that all the armed forces in the country must return to their barracks "and stay there".

It stressed the need to re-establish political control over all armed forces, to provide the necessary breathing-space for discussions between the warring parties to take place.

In London, Mr Douglas Hurd, the foreign secretary, told parliament that Yugoslavia's old political system "is in an advanced state of
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