

Spanish Presidency of the European Union

**OSCE Permanent Council No. 796
Vienna, 4th March 2010**

EU statement in response to the Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, Ambassador Dimitrios Kypreos

The European Union would like to welcome Ambassador Kypreos to the Permanent Council for the first time in his capacity as Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia and thanks him for the comprehensive report on both the political context in which the Mission operates and the Mission's own activities in support of the host Government.

Further to Serbia's submission of a formal application for EU membership on 22 December 2009, the EU would like to reiterate its commitment to Serbia's European perspective. The further development of the relationship between Serbia and the EU, leading to membership, will bring real benefits to the people of Serbia. Other specific EU-related developments in the past year include the opportunity to take advantage of visa-free travel to Schengen countries since 19 December 2009 and the entry into force of the Interim Trade Agreement with the EU on 1 February.

We are pleased to see that the Head of Mission paints a generally positive picture of the broader developments in Serbia over the last 12 months: the country enjoys a degree of political stability unknown in the post-transition period and has been able to withstand the worst effects of the global economic crisis. Whilst outstanding challenges remain, notably in relation to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, prosecution of war crimes, and intermittent regional tensions, Serbia has now, in the words of the Head of Mission, 'graduated' from some of the OSCE's assistance programmes, which bears witness not only to Serbia's progress but also to the valuable partnership between the host country and the OSCE.

In this context, the OSCE Mission has been instrumental to progress in some areas such as policing and forensics, with Serbian institutions assuming greater responsibility. But the OSCE's continuing engagement remains necessary for the progress to be solidified and to ensure that a lack of financial resources or human capacity at the national or local level does not undermine the implementation of many of the new laws that have been passed and threaten the otherwise stable political situation.

The EU welcomes developments in the reform of Serbia's judiciary, but takes note of the reservations voiced by the professional associations of both judges and prosecutors. Transparency in this process is vital to ensuring the wider credibility of reforms.

The EU will continue to support the Mission's engagement in building strong rule of law institutions in Serbia, and attributes special importance to the setting up of the Judicial Training

Academy. The EU also fully supports the Mission's increasingly strategic approach in assisting Serbia to combat organized crime as well as in promoting further reform of the police service. The close relationship between the Mission and the Ministry of the Interior is crucial and should facilitate greater ownership by the authorities of their responsibilities in this regard.

We recognize the progress achieved in domestic investigation of war crimes and war crimes trials, as well as in cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), as underlined by General Prosecutor Brammertz in his last report issued in December. But we are concerned to see that the public opinion poll commissioned by the Mission in 2009 shows declining support for both domestic and ICTY trials. The EU strongly supports the enhancement of public information and outreach efforts on war crimes, and stresses the importance for the Serbian authorities of demonstrating their full cooperation with the ICTY, including through their efforts to secure the arrest and transfer to The Hague of the remaining indictees at large, Ratko Mladic and Goran Hadzic, and we encourage Serbian authorities to keep up this momentum.

The EU commends the Mission's contribution to preparing the elections to the National Minority Councils and encouraging members of the minority populations to register and vote. This is the Serbian government's key policy for preserving and promoting the identities of Serbia's ethnic minorities and encouraging their participation in the country's political and social life. We fully support efforts to enhance minority participation and to achieve genuinely multi-ethnic local government throughout Serbia. In particular, the Mission's presence in southern and south-western Serbia remains

essential for continued security, stability and development in these regions. We are increasingly concerned by recent security incidents in southern Serbia, as highlighted in the Mission's spot report, and stress the importance of continuing attention being paid to promoting confidence and security between communities there.

The EU also supports the Mission's efforts to promote a free, vibrant and professional media sector. We concur with the Head of mission that further improvement of the legal framework governing media is needed.

We welcome the Mission's continued promotion of regional co-operation and reconciliation. In this context, the region's governments and international organizations should maintain their focus on the plight of refugees and IDPs. Work in this area is crucial for long-term stability. The international community's support to this process, including through the work of the OSCE Mission, is essential for helping map out practical steps for building regional trust on outstanding issues.

Moving forward, the EU fully supports the Mission's plans to continue the process begun in 2009 of gradually shifting away from assistance in legislative drafting towards support for and monitoring of implementation, to ensure that the significant progress achieved to date is irreversible.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the Head of Mission and his staff for their professionalism and commitment, and repeat once again our full support for the Mission's assistance to the host country in achieving its strategic objectives, implementing its OSCE

commitments and fulfilling its potential in the economic and political development of the region as a whole.

Los países candidatos TURQUÍA y la ANTIGUA REPÚBLICA YUGOSLAVA DE MACEDONIA*, los países del Proceso de Estabilización y Asociación y los países candidatos potenciales, ALBANIA y MONTENEGRO, los países de la Asociación Europea de Libre Comercio y los miembros del Espacio Económico Europeo, ISLANDIA, LIECHTENSTEIN y NORUEGA, al igual que UCRANIA, la REPÚBLICA DE MOLDAVIA y GEORGIA se suman a esta declaración.

*La Antigua República Yugoslava de Macedonia sigue perteneciendo al proceso de Estabilización y Asociación.