



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 983
Vienna, 6 February 2014**

**EU Statement in Response to the Report by the Head of the
OSCE Mission in Kosovo, H.E. Ambassador Jean-Claude
Schlumberger**

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome H.E. Ambassador Jean-Claude Schlumberger, Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, to the Permanent Council, and thank him for his comprehensive report. We appreciate the valuable work carried out by the Mission through its headquarters and its broad field presence throughout Kosovo¹.

We continue to strongly support the building of a peaceful, democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo within Europe with full respect for the rule of law, the protection of rights of persons belonging to non-Albanian communities and cultural and religious heritage in Kosovo. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK) plays an important role in the realisation of this goal and continues to enjoy the full support of the European Union.

We commend the progress achieved so far in the implementation of the 19 April 2013 Agreement between Belgrade and Pristina in the framework of the EU-facilitated dialogue. It is crucial that the work on implementation continues in the coming weeks and months, unimpeded by and including after the forth-coming electoral processes. An agreement on judiciary should be a priority, and the Association of Serbian Majority Municipalities in Kosovo should be established right after the conclusion of the municipal elections, and in line with the provisions of the April Agreement.

We commend the OSCE, both the mission in Kosovo and the Secretariat, for its active role on facilitation of the municipal elections based on the 19 April Agreement. These elections are the first ones to have been held in a uniform way in

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence

all municipalities throughout Kosovo. The upcoming rerun in Mitrovica North on 23 February 2014 should conclude this crucial electoral process.

We note that the OSCE's successful facilitation of the Serbian presidential and parliamentary elections in Kosovo in 2012 would make it well-placed to facilitate the forthcoming Serbian parliamentary elections on March 16 2014 in Kosovo. As usual this should be based on consensus among the parties involved.

Electoral reform is a key part of Kosovo's further development and EU track. It is crucial that it is addressed urgently, if forthcoming legislative elections in Kosovo are to be held under a reformed system. Political parties need to resolve open issues and agree on reform promoting a simplified and more transparent and inclusive electoral system in the Assembly Legislation Committee. The reports by the EU Election Expert Mission of the parliamentary elections in 2010 and the EU Election Observation Mission of the local elections in 2013 provide valuable guidelines in this regard.

In the same context, we expect Kosovo authorities to continue addressing the population in northern Kosovo via confidence building and other constructive steps in close co-operation with the European Union. Therefore, we encourage OMiK to implement successful approaches, such as on local and municipal safety committees and community policing, in the municipalities of northern Kosovo.

With regard to other areas and topics dealt with by the EU-facilitated dialogue, we are encouraged by the results and progress in the implementation of previous agreements. The EU expects the two sides to continue and to accelerate their work in addressing all aspects of the relations between them, including a swift agreement in the area of judiciary as well as the full implementation of previous agreements such as on energy and telecommunications.

The essential role OMiK has been playing in the municipal elections underlines, on a more general level, the importance of the presence and work of the international community. In this context, we underline our continued support for EULEX and KFOR in their respective roles and the importance we attach to all parties co-operating with them.

In line with the relevant Council conclusions, we also recall the EU's willingness to assist in the economic and political development of Kosovo through a clear European perspective, in line with the European perspective of the region. In this context, on 17 December the Council of the European Union has taken "note of the opening of negotiations for a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA)".

With regard to the programmatic activities of the Mission, we reiterate the high value we attach to the work done in fields such as electoral reform, support for the Assembly, human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, rule of law, civil society, media freedom and public safety. We underline that for all field operations effective evaluation is essential to ensure efficient use of resources and aids the development of best practices and the process of lesson learning. We would be grateful if Ambassador Schlumberger could highlight some of the key impacts made by the mission through its programmatic work in this reporting period.

In light of the progress Kosovo and Serbia have made towards normalisation of relations, it is important that OMiK continues to undertake a thorough review of its programmes, resources, and operating model to ensure it can continue to play an effective role in the years ahead.

In this context, we reiterate our special support for OMiK's activities in the field of regional co-operation, including with the other OSCE field missions in the region, and encourage OMiK to continue with this approach.

Finally, we are looking forward to continued fruitful co-operation with OMiK, under the able leadership of Ambassador Schlumberger, and will support it in its crucial tasks. We wish you every success in your future endeavours.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.