

Spanish Presidency of the European Union

**OSCE Special Permanent Council No. 816
Vienna, 21st June 2010**

EU statement in response to the address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, H.E. Vuk Jeremić

The European Union extends a warm welcome to H.E. Vuk Jeremić, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, to this special meeting of the Permanent Council, and thanks him for his address.

Your Excellency,

When you last addressed the Permanent Council in September 2008, the EU drew attention to the benefits of a deepening relationship between the European Union and Serbia, leading to membership, for the people of Serbia. Following the decision by the European Union's Foreign Affairs Council last week, when our ministers agreed to submit the Stabilisation and Association Agreement to their national parliaments for ratification, we take this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to Serbia's European perspective. The European Union's Foreign Affairs Council also took note that Serbia applied for membership of the European Union on 22 December 2009 and welcomed Serbia's commitment to EU

integration. The Council decided to return to the membership application.

Building on recent progress, including the decision on visa liberalization last December, Serbia can accelerate its progress towards the EU, including candidate status, as soon as all necessary conditions are met. The EU underlines that full co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) remains an essential element of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. In this respect, the EU has noted the positive assessment of Serbia's co-operation with the ICTY by the Chief Prosecutor, Serge Brammertz. This further illustrates the commitment of the Serbian authorities to contribute to peace and stability in the Balkans region. At the same time, the arrest and transfer to The Hague of Ratko Mladić and Goran Hadžić, the remaining indictees, is still outstanding and further progress towards this goal is still required.

Three weeks ago, a high-level meeting on the Western Balkans was held in Sarajevo under the auspices of the Spanish Presidency of the EU. The participation of representatives of all the countries of the region was a welcome indication of the development of good neighbourly relations which are a fundamental element of the Copenhagen criteria and the Stabilisation and Association Process conditionality. The conference also illustrated the progress achieved in the area of political and economic reform since the conflicts of the 1990s. The EU would like to commend the organisers and participants in the conference for their willingness to contribute to the ongoing process of further stabilisation and reconciliation on the basis of the principles of inclusiveness and regional ownership.

More recently, on 6 June, elections were held to the newly-established National Minority Councils in Serbia. The EU is pleased to note the assessment of the OSCE Mission to Serbia that the elections were conducted in a generally calm atmosphere, notwithstanding some technical issues. The EU believes that the new Councils have an important role to play in enabling national minorities to engage in the political process and should provide the framework enabling them to pursue their interests in areas such as education and language through the democratic process.

The European Union also welcomes the close co-operation and constructive dialogue between the Serbian authorities and the OSCE Mission in Serbia. The Mission has made a significant contribution in helping Serbia to drive the democratic reform process itself. In this context, the EU continues to support the Mission's engagement throughout Serbia in those activities which aim to promote the implementation of OSCE commitments and which are valuable in their own right. We particularly value the Mission's work on the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and multi-ethnic activities in South Serbia, and we also welcome its increasing focus on the Sandžak/Raška region. We encourage the Serbian government to work closely with the OSCE Mission to continue their good work there in both these areas.

Your Excellency, we have listened very carefully to your comments today about Kosovo and the forthcoming advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. We hope that after the publication of this opinion the relationship between Belgrade and Pristina will enter a new phase and that both sides will make all possible efforts to

launch necessary dialogue. These are issues of critical importance to reconciliation and future stability in the Balkans and to the security of Europe as a whole. We encourage all interested parties to work together constructively, especially in addressing the real challenges which face all communities on the ground. For our part, the EU continues to play a leading role in ensuring the stability of Kosovo, including through the fully operational EULEX Kosovo, the EUSR and its contribution to an international civilian office as part of the international presences. We commend the progress achieved in promoting the rule of law since the official deployment of EULEX, the European Union's largest civilian mission, which also operates within the status-neutral framework of the UNSCR 1244.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, we would like once again to thank Foreign Minister Jeremić for addressing the Permanent Council today. We wish him and his country well with their political and economic reforms, and in their efforts to meet their strategic objective of EU accession.

Los países candidatos TURQUÍA, CROACIA*, la ANTIGUA REPÚBLICA YUGOSLAVA DE MACEDONIA* e ISLANDIA; los países del Proceso de Estabilización y Asociación y los países candidatos potenciales BOSNIA Y HERZEGOVINA y MONTENEGRO; el país de la Asociación Europea de Libre Comercio y miembro del Espacio Económico Europeo, NORUEGA; al igual que GEORGIA, se suman a esta declaración.

*Croacia y la Antigua República Yugoslava de Macedonia siguen perteneciendo al proceso de Estabilización y Asociación.