



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

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Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

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EU statement in response to the Serbian Foreign Minister, H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić

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

Serbia has a crucial role to play in the Western Balkans, both for ensuring stability and as a motor for the economic development and prosperity of the region. The European Union wishes to deepen its relationship with Serbia, and has offered to intensify political co-operation with a view to accelerating Serbia's progress towards the EU, including candidate status. The Serbian people are part of the European family. A deepening relationship between the European Union and Serbia, leading to membership, will bring concrete benefits to the people of Serbia. The Stabilisation and Association process remains the right vehicle to take forward this relationship. The EU is committed to sign a Stabilisation and Association Agreement as soon as the necessary steps have been finalised.

Mr. Chairman, we have listened very carefully to what Mr Jeremić has said here today about the future of Kosovo. This is an issue which is of crucial importance to Serbia, to future stability in the Balkans and to the security of Europe as whole. EU Foreign Ministers met yesterday in the General Affairs and External Relations Council to discuss this matter in Brussels.

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The Council adopted the following conclusions: "On 17 February 2008 the Kosovo Assembly adopted a resolution which declares Kosovo to be independent. The Council takes note that the resolution commits Kosovo to the principles of democracy and equality of all its citizens, the protection of the Serb and other minorities, the protection of the cultural and religious heritage and international supervision. The Council welcomes the continued presence of the international community based on UN Security Council resolution 1244.

The Council notes that Member States will decide, in accordance with national practice and international law, on their relations with Kosovo.

The Council recalls the European Union's longstanding commitment to the stability of the Western Balkans region. The Council reiterates the European Union's readiness to play a leading role in strengthening stability in the region, and recalls the European Union's commitments contained in the conclusions of the European Council of 14 December 2007, as well as the agreement to Joint Actions establishing an ESDP Police and Rule of Law mission and appointing an EU Special Representative in Kosovo. The European Union will continue to cooperate with the UN, KFOR, OSCE and other international actors in order to preserve stability in the region.

The Council reaffirms its commitment to fully and effectively support the European perspective for the Western Balkans. It asks the Commission to use community instruments to promote economic and political development and to propose to the broader region concrete measures in order to advance in that direction.

The Council reiterates the EU's adherence to the principles of the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act, inter alia the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity and all UN Security Council resolutions. It underlines its conviction that in view of the conflict of the 1990s and the extended period of international administration under

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SCR 1244, Kosovo constitutes a sui generis case which does not call into question these principles and resolutions.” End quote.

The Council also condemned recent acts of violence in Belgrade, Mitrovica and other places, in particular against foreign diplomatic missions and urged respective authorities to ensure security and safety of EU citizens and their property. The Council called on Belgrade and Pristina to respect previous commitments to refrain from any activities or statements which might endanger the security situation.

The EU strongly believes that the OSCE should continue to play an important role in supporting a peaceful, democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo, with full respect for the rule of law, the protection of minorities and of Kosovo's cultural and religious heritage, as well as the highest level of internationally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms. The protection of minorities is critical for Kosovo's communities in order to feel more secure about their future and role in Kosovo society. The test of this will be at the local level, where property rights, access to services and inter-ethnic communication are key challenges.

The European Union reiterates its appreciation for the essential work done by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo through its headquarters in Pristina as well as its broad field presence. The EU continues to believe that the OSCE should maintain its current presence, which is in the interest of all the people of Kosovo, and the Serb community in particular. We made our commitment clear in our interpretative statement of 21 December 2007 on the extension of the mandate of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo.

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

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political and economic reforms, and in their efforts to meet their strategic objective of EU accession.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, as well as the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Montenegro align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

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