



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council No 1132 Vienna, 2 February 2017**

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#### **EU statement in response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Jan Braathu**

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The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome H.E. Ambassador Jan Braathu to the Permanent Council for his first report on the activities of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo<sup>1</sup>. We share his assessment that the Mission is a trusted and efficient international partner on the ground.

We appreciate the valuable work carried out by the Mission in contributing to a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo, based on respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law including rights of persons belonging to minorities.

The EU remains concerned about the protracted political stand-off in Kosovo and incidents of violence in the Assembly in 2016. We call on all political parties and local stakeholders to show responsibility and ownership and re-engage in a constructive domestic dialogue within parliament as the key forum for political debate.

We share the concern expressed by Ambassador Braathu following the tensions over the train from Belgrade destined to northern Kosovo. We welcome the Mission's intensified outreach to reduce tensions.

We welcome the recent high level meetings in the framework of the EU-facilitated Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, where the parties agreed to leave tensions behind and to focus on the work ahead. Progress in the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina is essential for both, for the European Union itself, and the Western Balkans in line with the European perspective of the region.

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<sup>1</sup>This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

We encourage continued efforts by Belgrade and Pristina to implement all agreements already reached. The EU urges both sides to accelerate progress on all outstanding Agreements implementation work. The Dialogue and the implementation of agreements reached should result in concrete benefits for the people in both Kosovo and Serbia. We trust that the Mission will contribute effectively and swiftly to the drafting of the statute of the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities, which is an essential element of the April 2013 agreement.

Despite the difficult circumstances, EU-Kosovo relations are getting stronger. The Stabilisation and Association Agreement entered into force in April 2016, and the European Reform Agenda was launched in November 2016. The EU calls on the Kosovo leadership to ensure their thorough and effective implementation.

The European Union recalls that ratification of the “State border Demarcation” agreement with Montenegro is one of the two remaining requirements for visa liberalisation to be approved by the European Parliament and Council, along with improving the track record in fighting organised crime and corruption.

The EU encourages Kosovo to further intensify its efforts to improve the rule of law, including judicial independence. We welcome the positive steps Kosovo has taken to increase the number of high-level corruption and organised crime cases being investigated and prosecuted, and encourage Kosovo to further intensify its fight against organised crime and corruption.

We support the Mission’s work in the area of democratization, in particular regarding strengthening public oversight, co-ordination and communication between central and local governance, and its activities on strengthening media reporting, the freedom of the media and safety of journalists.

The EU notes positive steps taken in fighting radicalisation, extremism and terrorism and encourages further efforts. More needs to be done in order to fight radicalisation in prisons, and to follow the activity of persons who returned to Kosovo from conflicts abroad or from prisons. We welcome the Mission’s engagement in contributing to the government’s efforts in countering radicalisation and violent extremism, and would

appreciate Ambassador Braathu's assessment of the scope of the challenge in Kosovo.

The EU also underlines the need for effective and intense regional and international cooperation in the areas of trafficking in human beings, organised crime, drug trafficking, combatting radicalisation and terrorism, the return of displaced persons and the protection of rights of persons belonging to minorities.

Effective promotion and protection of human rights throughout Kosovo should be pursued, including the full protection of cultural and religious heritage. Inter-ethnic incidents continue to undermine the normalization process. The inclusion and protection of persons belonging to minorities, including additional efforts to ensure a safe environment and safeguarding of their property rights should be addressed. In this context, we welcome the Mission's continued focus on human rights and communities through its multi departmental approach involving both its Human Rights and Communities and Democratization Departments.

Furthermore, we appreciate the Mission's work in promoting dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, inter alia by including women in reconciliation and mediation efforts. The Follow Us initiative and the OSCE Dialogue Academy are exemplary of this work.

We commend the Mission for actively contributing to the implementation of Kosovo's reform agenda and call for further efforts by the Mission to strengthen the regional approach and enhance coordination with other field operations in the region. We encourage further efforts by the Mission to strengthen the coordination with local authorities regarding the protection of rights of persons belonging to minorities. We furthermore welcome the work done in promoting gender equality.

We welcome the Mission's efforts to disengage from activities as local institutional delivery improves and would like to see that continue. We encourage the Mission to embed further a culture of evaluation into its operations to ensure that its activities remain relevant and are sustainable. We encourage you to make more use of the six

monthly reports to the PC to report on the impact of your work and on progress against outcomes.

In conclusion, we would like to thank once again Ambassador Braathu and assure him and his able team of the EU's continued support.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

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