



Spanish Presidency of the European Union

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EU statement in response to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, H.E. Antonio Milošoski

The European Union warmly welcomes H.E. Mr. Antonio Milošoski at the Permanent Council. We congratulate him and his country for the assumption of the six-month Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and we thank him for his address.

Mr. Chairman, the EU has consistently reiterated its commitment to the European perspective of the Western Balkans, in line with the Thessaloniki agenda and in accordance with the Copenhagen criteria and the Stabilization and Association Process conditionality. It is in this framework that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has been granted the status of candidate country. The conclusions of the General Affairs Council of December 2009 welcomed the progress made by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in a number of important areas, and that the country had substantially addressed the key priorities of the accession partnership. Furthermore, the Council added that maintaining good

neighborly relations, including a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution on the name issue, under the auspices of the UN, remains essential. The successful completion of the dialogue on visa liberalization launched in March 2008 and the visa exemption for citizens of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia when entering the EU/Schengen area clearly indicate the advantages of moving closer to the EU.

The European Union has taken note of the priorities of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for its six month Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, which clearly shows its readiness and willingness to assist the efforts of the new Secretary General of the Council of Europe, who has brought fresh dynamism to the Organization by launching a reform process. The EU highly values cooperation with the Council of Europe and supports work in tandem between the two organizations in their shared aim to protect and promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law both in Europe and beyond. The EU looks forward to the planned address of Secretary General Jagland to the Permanent Council.

Your visit gives us another occasion to recall some of the major issues on which the OSCE and the Council of Europe are working together. The European Union, the Council of Europe and the OSCE share, promote and defend the same values. Despite structural differences, all three are equally engaged in promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We believe that these are essential to creating lasting peace and stability.

In this context, we consider that the three main thematic areas which Minister Milošoski presented as the priorities of his country's

programme during its Chairmanship promote the commitments, norms and values not only of the Council of Europe, but also of the EU and the OSCE.

The EU supports the role of the Council of Europe as one of the leading forces for integration on the European continent. We, therefore, welcome as one of these three priorities, the need to strengthen and reinforce the human rights protection at national level and at the level of the Council of Europe. The EU believes that we need to incorporate the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights into our national systems and, to this end, welcomes the idea of the Council of Europe's Chairmanship to organize a Conference in order to promote this issue.

We agree that an inclusive Europe cannot be imagined without integrating persons belonging to national minorities in European societies. In this respect, the EU also appreciates the second priority of the new Chairmanship, which focuses on multiculturalism in Europe and on the effort to achieve more integrated and cohesive societies, with full respect of all types of diversities that exist in our countries.

The EU also supports the approach of the new Chairmanship to promote youth participation in the region of South-East Europe. We regard this priority as one of the Council of Europe's contributions to the "International Year of Youth", as proclaimed under the UN General Assembly Resolution 64/134.

We reiterate our belief that the OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, in carrying out its mandate and in coordination with other

international organisations on the ground, should continue to assist the country to implement legislation and comply with its international commitments. The Mission's current mandate remains a sound basis for work and we encourage the host country's authorities to take full advantage of the OSCE assistance in the ambitious still ongoing process of reforms.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, we would like once again to thank H.E. Minister Milošoski for addressing the Permanent Council today. We wish him and his country every success in the demanding and delicate role of chairing the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, as well as in their efforts to meet the criteria and requirements that will lead the country closer to the EU.

Los países candidatos TURQUÍA y CROACIA; los países del Proceso de Estabilización y Asociación y los países candidatos potenciales, ALBANIA, BOSNIA Y HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO y SERBIA; 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.

*Croacia sigue perteneciendo al proceso de Estabilización y Asociación.