



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement on KFOR and its Contribution to the Stability in the Western Balkans

The EU and its Member States welcome the speakers to the FSC. We commend the Slovenian FSC Chair for bringing the topic of KFOR and its contribution to stability in the Western Balkans to the attention of this Forum.

We value the continued focus of the FSC Chairmanships on regional security issues and value the attention given to security and stability in the Western Balkans. As High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini stated on the occasion of the adoption of the European Commission's strategy for the Western Balkans in February this year: "The Western Balkans are part of Europe: we share the same history, the same geography, the same cultural heritage and the same opportunities and challenges today and in the future. We have a common interest in working more and more closely together to guarantee to our people economic and social development, and security."

In fact our meeting today takes place only a day ahead of the EU-Western Balkans summit in Sofia, underlining the importance the EU attaches to the region and its European perspective. The summit will seek to: reaffirm the EU's commitment towards its Western Balkans partners and reiterate the region's belonging to the European family; strengthen connectivity within that region and with the EU in all its dimensions: transport, energy, digital, economic and human; and work more closely together to tackle common challenges, such as security, migration, geopolitical developments and good neighbourly relations.

We thank once again the FSC Chair for the opportunity to exchange views on this important topic and the speakers for presenting the work of KFOR in support of wider inter-

national efforts to build peace and stability in Kosovo* and beyond. KFOR, over the past years, has contributed to guaranteeing a safe and secure environment in Kosovo, for all communities, including through the protection of cultural and religious heritage. Its presence projects stability across the whole Western Balkans. Throughout Kosovo, KFOR is cooperating and coordinating closely with the EU and other international actors to promote a stable, democratic, multi-ethnic and peaceful Kosovo.

The EU continues to play a leading role in strengthening stability in the region and to assist Kosovo in the path towards sustainable stability. The EU will continue to support Kosovo's socio-economic development as part of its European reform agenda including through financial and technical assistance. We recall that progress in the EU facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina is an essential requirement for both in order to advance on their respective paths towards the EU, in line with the European perspective of the region, and we urge both sides to constructively engage in this process.

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 member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and ARMENIA align themselves with this statement.

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

* 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.