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## EUROPEAN UNION

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Vienna, 4 July 2011

### **EU statement in response to the address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia in his capacity as Chair of the South-East European Cooperation Process, the Central European Initiative, and the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, H.E. Vuk Jeremić**

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The European Union warmly welcomes H.E. Vuk Jeremić back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his address. We would like to congratulate Serbia on its role as Chairman-in-Office of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), President of the Central European Initiative (CEI), and Chairman of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (All).

Mr Chairperson,

The EU is convinced that regional co-operation should play a crucial role in strengthening political stability, security and economic development. Therefore, regional co-operation and good neighbourly relations are essential parts of the EU enlargement process. We welcome the efforts of the SEECP, the CEI, and the All aimed at bringing the countries of Europe closer together.

The European Union will continue to provide practical support for regional co-operation, including through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, and

through the advice and shared experience of those EU Member States who are also members of the SEECP, the CEI, and the All.

We would be interested in an assessment of Mr Jeremić regarding how the OSCE and the SEECP, the CEI, and the All can best complement each other's activities.

Mr Chairperson,

The European Union reiterates its strong commitment to the European perspective of the Western Balkans, and the processes of political, economic and social reform, and reconciliation that are essential to the future prosperity and security of the region. Democracy, the rule of law, and human rights must remain at the heart of those processes, supported by a vibrant and independent civil society and media.

We welcome the intensification of regional co-operation in the Western Balkans during the last year, notably through important efforts aimed at finally resolving the outstanding issue of refugees and IDPs in the region; tackling organised crime through cross-border co-operation; and promoting reconciliation. Serbia continues to play an important role in each of those areas, and we note with satisfaction Serbia's decision to make the fight against organised crime one of its priorities during its leadership of the SEECP, the CEI, and the All.

The EU welcomes the positive developments that have taken place recently in the region: notably the arrest and transfer to the Hague Tribunal of Ratko Mladic, which constitutes a positive step for international justice as well as for Serbia's EU perspective, the launch of the structured dialogue with Bosnia and Herzegovina and the start of the Belgrade-Priština dialogue. We want to see this progress built upon and we want to see concrete results from the Belgrade-Priština discussions as soon as possible. We welcome progress achieved at the fifth meeting of the dialogue on 2 July 2011, underline the importance of implementing the agreements reached at this meeting and urge the parties to

continue to engage constructively and flexibly with a view to reaching agreements on all other relevant issues as soon as possible. Of particular significance is the closing of accession negotiations with Croatia, which brings a new momentum to the European Perspective of the countries in the region. At the same time, important challenges remain, in particular the need for the prompt formation of state-level government in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and for the political dialogue and electoral reform in Albania.

For our part, the European Union will remain strongly committed to working in partnership with the region to help it realise its European Perspective.

We would like to conclude by wishing Serbia success in its role as Chairman-in-Office of the SEECP, President of the CEI, and Chairman of the All.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA\*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ICELAND\*\*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, the European Free Trade Association countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ARMENIA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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

\*\*Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and the European Economic Area.