



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 964
Vienna, 5 September 2013**

**EU statement in reply to the Head of the OSCE Mission in
Kosovo, H.E. Ambassador Jean-Claude Schlumberger**

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome H.E. Ambassador Jean-Claude Schlumberger, Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK), to the Permanent Council and thank him for his comprehensive report. We appreciate the valuable work carried out by the Mission through its headquarters and its broad field presence throughout Kosovo*.

We remain strongly committed to building a peaceful, democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo within Europe with full respect for the rule of law, the protection of rights of persons belonging to non-Albanian communities and of Kosovo's cultural and religious heritage. OMiK plays an important role in the realisation of this goal and continues to enjoy the full support of the European Union.

We commend the progress achieved so far in the implementation of the Agreement of 19 April between Belgrade and Pristina in the framework of the EU-facilitated dialogue. It is crucial that the work on implementation continues in the coming weeks and months as foreseen with the Implementation Plan. We call on both sides to overcome the remaining obstacles.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

We have been listening with particular interest to your report on the state of preparations for the municipal elections scheduled for 3 November and the active role of the OSCE, both the mission in Kosovo and the Secretariat, based on the 19 April Agreement. The upcoming municipal elections in Kosovo on 3 November are the first ones to be held in a uniform way in all Kosovo municipalities.

The EU welcomes the commitments of relevant parties to successful elections with the widest participation and preparations for a smooth electoral process. The European Union echoes the calls of Pristina and Belgrade, encouraging all those eligible to participate and to cast their vote in the elections.

In the same context, we expect Kosovo to continue its outreach activities for northern Kosovo in close co-operation with the European Union. Therefore, we encourage OMiK to look for possibilities to implement successful approaches, such as on local and municipal safety committees and community policing, in the municipalities of northern Kosovo.

With regard to other areas and topics dealt with by the EU-facilitated dialogue, we are encouraged by the results and progress in the implementation of previous agreements. The EU expects the two sides to continue and to accelerate their work in addressing all aspects of the relations between them, including a swift agreement in the areas of energy and telecommunications as well as the full implementation of previous agreements such as on the integrated border management, the civil registry books or Kosovo cadastral records.

The essential role OMiK is playing in the upcoming municipal elections underlines, on a more general level, the importance of the presence and work of the international community. In this context, we underline our continued support for EULEX and KFOR in their respective roles and the importance we attach to all parties co-operating with them.

In line with the relevant Council conclusions, we also recall the EU's willingness to assist in the economic and political development of Kosovo through a clear European perspective, in line with the European perspective of the region. In this context, on 28 June the European Council endorsed the conclusion by the Council on General Affairs "authorising the opening of negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement".

Given the current political context of your appearance in front of the Permanent Council, we want to cut short our observations on the programmatic activities of the Mission to a reiteration of the high value we attach to the work done in fields such as electoral reform, support for the Assembly, human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, rule of law and public safety. As you are aware, we have highlighted more detailed views on the valuable programmatic work of your Mission in your last appearance in February 2013 and during the discussions on the Programme Outline 2014.

In a challenging resource climate, OSCE operations need to be leaner and sharper in fulfilling their mandate effectively. We would, therefore, welcome initiatives and efforts of Missions to reprioritise and improve the focus of their programmatic structures and activities.

In this context, we reiterate our special support to OMiK's activities in the field of regional co-operation and encourage OMiK to continue with this approach.

Finally, we are looking forward to a continued fruitful co-operation with OMiK under the able leadership of Ambassador Schlumberger and will support it in its crucial tasks. We wish you every success in your future endeavours.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ICELAND+, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA align themselves with this statement.

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

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