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**Présidence française du Conseil de l'Union européenne**

**Conseil permanent 735  
16 octobre 2008**

**EU Response to the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania  
Ambassador Robert Bosch**

The EU welcomes Ambassador Robert Bosch to the Permanent Council, and thanks him for his comprehensive report.

We take positive note of the improved relationship between the OSCE Presence and the Albanian Government, and commend the continued readiness of the Presence to reflect in its programmatic work the needs and priorities of the host country. In this regard, we believe that the current mandate of the Presence provides a solid base for work. We also encourage the efforts towards a stronger emphasis on strategic planning and management.

In contrast to previous years, we particularly note the consensus that the main political parties in Albania have been developing on major issues, which, in turn, has had positive impact on reform processes. Overall, we recall the importance of outreach across the full political spectrum, contributions from the civil society, free media and respect for alternative opinions. Though uneven in some areas, the progress achieved was duly taken into account by the European Council in its decision on the European Partnership with Albania. The EU continues to be actively engaged with Albania, on the basis of the

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Stabilisation and Association Process and through the funding provided by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance.

In this context, we value the assistance provided by the OSCE Presence to the Albanian authorities and civil society in supporting the structural reforms, strengthening democratic institutions, rule of law and independence of the judiciary, promoting good governance, decentralisation, human rights protection and protection of persons belonging to minorities including minority language education, as well as developing local capacities. We also support the readiness of the Presence to assist the Albanian authorities in meeting their OSCE commitments on gender equality and freedom of the media. On this issue, we welcome the consultations launched by the Albanian government with all stakeholders regarding the draft law on radio and television.

In the area of security co-operation, we stress the ongoing support of the Presence for police reform and the activities aimed at facilitating cross-border cooperation, which is a part of the OSCE commitment under the Ohrid agreement. In this regard, we strongly encourage the Presence to continue close co-ordination with other international stakeholders to optimize the utilisation of resources.

We welcome the initiatives of the Albanian Government against corruption, organised crime, and trafficking in human beings. However, further action is necessary to ensure proper functioning of the judicial system, effective law enforcement and accountable public administration. We also note with concern that unresolved property issues have, inter alia, undermined the plans to develop a functional land market and to attract foreign investors.

In view of the challenges ahead, we emphasize the importance of having the electoral infrastructure completed well in advance of the 2009 parliamentary elections, including by amending the Electoral Code as recommended by the

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OSCE/ODIHR, and by ensuring reliable civil registration system and voter lists. It is also significant to facilitate wider voter participation in the elections, including by creating favourable conditions for persons belonging to national minorities, vulnerable groups and the disabled. We welcome the recent decisions aimed at strengthening the representation of women in the assembly and call upon all political parties to implement them, so that the 30% gender quota will be concretely translated into actual parliamentary seats won.

In conclusion we would like to assure Ambassador Bosch and his staff of our continued support and wish them success in their important work.

La Turquie, la Croatie\* et l'ancienne République yougoslave de Macédoine\*, pays candidats ; la Bosnie - Herzégovine, le Monténégro et la Serbie, pays du processus de stabilisation et d'association et candidats potentiels ; l'Islande, le Liechtenstein et la Norvège, pays de l'Association Européenne de libre-échange et membres de l'Espace économique européen ; ainsi que l'Ukraine, la République de Moldavie, l'Arménie et la Géorgie se rallient à cette déclaration.

\*La Croatie et l'ancienne République yougoslave de Macédoine continuent à participer au processus de stabilisation et d'association.

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