



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council N°1088 Vienna, 4 February 2016

EU Statement in Response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, 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 Kosovo¹, to the Permanent Council, and thank him for his report. We appreciate the valuable work carried out by the Mission contributing to a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo, based on respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, particularly including rights of persons belonging to minorities. OMIK's close relationship to all communities and other international actors on the ground and its field presence give the Mission a relevant role within the international presence in Kosovo.

The European Union condemns the recent ongoing and at times violent obstruction of the Assembly of Kosovo. The EU appeals to opposition parties to respect the basic principles of democracy, including majority rule, and allow for a free and open debate in the Assembly on all issues regarding Kosovo; and to the government to better communicate the benefits of the agreements reached in the Dialogue with Belgrade, and continue to keep the offer of dialogue with the opposition open. The political dead-lock and the ongoing confrontation will have a serious negative impact on Kosovo's economic situation and the investment climate.

The signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) in October 2015 represents a significant step forward in relations between Kosovo and the EU. The EU reiterates that the political stand-off in Kosovo needs to be resolved urgently and

¹ 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.

that Kosovo swiftly needs to make progress in the implementation of all aspects of Kosovo's European reform agenda to meet its obligations under the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. The EU is committed to assist Kosovo in tackling the challenges.

While we welcome recent progress on elements of the Brussels agreement, including on recognition of diplomas and telecommunications, we are concerned about any initiatives to prevent the implementation of the 25 August 2015 agreement on key elements of the association/community of Kosovo Serb municipalities, a landmark achievement reached by the Prime Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo within the framework of the EU-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina dialogue. It is our conviction that the agreement is a major step on the path towards the normalisation of relations and contributes to a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo, and that the continued normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina must remain a key priority. The EU stands ready to continue facilitating the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue. As recently as 27 January, High Representative Mogherini and the two Prime Ministers had a further constructive meeting on the implementation of the agreements reached in the Dialogue as well as new topics for the dialogue. OMiK remains uniquely placed to make a positive impact in the North of Kosovo, and we would appreciate details from Ambassador Schlumberger on Mission achievements in the North over this reporting period.

Given the current challenges, we commend the Mission for actively contributing to the implementation of relevant aspects of Kosovo's European reform agenda: improving the rule of law, including judicial independence, the fight against organised crime and corruption, electoral reform and public administration reform, effective promotion and protection of human rights throughout Kosovo, including inter-faith dialogue and the full protection of cultural and religious heritage as well as the inclusion and protection of persons belonging to minorities and vulnerable groups are of particular importance in this context. We would welcome further information from Ambassador Schlumberger on specific measures the Mission has undertaken in this regard and their impact. The Mission's engagement with civil society, including youth organisations, contributes to fostering a pluralistic, multi-ethnic and engaging civil society sphere in Kosovo.

We welcome the focus of the mission on security and communities that contributes to reconciliation and stabilisation in Kosovo. We note with appreciation the broadly stable security situation, especially pertaining to non-Albanian communities, as well as the intensified fight by Kosovo institutions and Kosovo Police against groups having links to terrorist networks.

We underline once again the importance of regional co-operation in tackling many of the challenges evident in Kosovo, for example in the areas of trafficking in human beings, organized crime, drug trafficking, combatting radicalisation and terrorism, the return of displaced persons and the protection of rights of persons belonging to minorities. We call for further efforts by the Mission to strengthen the regional approach and enhance coordination with other field operations in the region.

We trust that the strategic review undertaken by OMiK in 2015 to develop a new strategic framework for the years 2016 -2019 will help the Mission to streamline its activities: reduce internal bureaucracy; and work collaboratively with other international actors in Kosovo. We welcome the Mission's efforts to ensure sustainability and the handover of responsibilities, wherever possible, for example in trial monitoring. We encourage the Mission to further embed a culture of evaluation into the Mission's operations, and to focus on the six months reports on impact and on progress against outcomes. Further details on Mission successes over this reporting period would be welcome.

Finally, we are looking forward to 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 ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA and the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

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