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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 828th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

Vienna, 9 September 2010

In response to the report by H.E. Ambassador Robert Bosch, Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania

The European Union (EU) welcomes His Excellency Ambassador Robert Bosch, Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, and thanks him for his exhaustive report.

We appreciate the active and tangible work accomplished during the past year. We consider that the Presence should continue to play a major role in consolidating the reforms in which the country is currently engaged, as envisaged by its mandate. In this regard, the EU supports the general objective of the Presence, namely, to promote democratization and to strengthen the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to a national minority or a vulnerable group, in accordance with OSCE principles, norms and commitments.

The EU encourages the Presence to focus in particular on the areas that have been identified as key to the Albanian Government's reform programme: legislative reform, strengthening judicial independence, electoral reform, good governance and regional administrative reform, greater involvement of civil society in the decision-making process, respect for gender parity and enhanced freedom of the media.

Taking into account the Albanian Government's improved capacity in some areas, such as cross-border management, the EU notes with satisfaction the intention of the Presence to reduce its activities in those areas.

The EU would like to underscore the need to continue assisting the Albanian authorities in combating organized crime, including cross-border crime, trafficking in human beings and corruption. In this regard, we highly appreciate the specialized capacity-building efforts carried out with law enforcement institutions.

We also encourage the four project offices in the field to continue their assistance in all areas covered by the mandate. The Presence should continue to fully utilize the capacity of the relevant OSCE institutions in providing targeted assistance, developing closer co-operation with other field operations in the region, and co-ordinating work with other relevant international partners in order to avoid duplication and optimize the results.

Mr. Chairperson,

The EU would like to express its concern at the freezing of the political dialogue in Albania following the legislative elections of 28 June 2009 and the consequences that this situation may have for the above-mentioned reforms and for the work of the OSCE Presence. It is high time to find a solution to the current crisis. The EU encourages the resumption of a constructive dialogue between the parties. In this context, we regret that the mediation initiative launched by the European Parliament in June 2010 did not receive sufficient support to enable the Albanian Government and the opposition to overcome their differences. We note that it is incumbent upon the two parties to find – rapidly, transparently and with full respect for the Albanian Constitution – the solutions and avenues necessary for the country to move forward on the path to its rapprochement with the EU.

Lastly, the EU warmly thanks Ambassador Robert Bosch and his entire team for the good work accomplished throughout his mandate. We wish him every success in his new endeavours in Pristina.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* and Iceland, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Liechtenstein and Norway, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Andorra, align themselves with this statement.

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