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PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
TO THE INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS
VIENNA

S T A T E M E N T

by Ambassador Gilbert Galanxhi
at the Special Meeting of the Permanent Council

Vienna, 19 January 2010

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

The Albanian Delegation also joins the other Delegations in warmly welcoming His Excellency Minister Moratinos to the Permanent Council.

Mr. Minister Moratinos,

We fully support all the priorities of the Spanish EU Presidency, as clearly stated today by You, Mr. Minister, and we are confident that your performance will meet the challenges you are going to face. We believe that 2009 was an historic year in the EU calendar, as well as we believe that Your Presidency will be remembered in the history of the European Union as the first Presidency charged with the hard but significant task of starting to fully implement the Lisbon Treaty, ratified on 1st December 2009. Albania wishes you all the success and the very best of luck in this challenging task, as You Mr. Minister pointed out in your speech: “for a stronger, united and efficient Europe”.

The year 2009 that we left behind was also an historic year filled with achievements for Albania and for our region, the Western Balkans. In April 2009, Albania and Croatia became fully-fledged NATO members, whereas in April 2009 Albania deposited the application for EU membership; while we notice with satisfaction that the other countries of the region have steadily advanced their respective integration agendas.

Two years and a half after the signature of the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA), the EU has assessed that Albania is performing well in the implementation of the SAA and that it is a positive example for the implementation of the Interim Agreement. Moreover, the EC 2009 Progress Report clearly confirms that our country has achieved higher standards of democracy and that Albanian government considers EU integration its absolute priority.

Albania commends the Council's latest decision to request the opinion of the European Commission on Albania's readiness to become a candidate country. We are making the necessary preparations to face the next steps of this process that we expect will turn Albania into an EU candidate country within the shortest period of time possible, based on merit and achievements.

One of the highlights of the region's achievements was the liberalization of the visa regime for Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia. We remain optimistic that within Your Presidency a just decision will be taken for my country, Albania, since it is successfully meeting the benchmarks of the roadmap.

I wish to use this opportunity Mr. Minister Moratinos to bring also to your attention the importance of including Kosova into the agenda of visa liberalization. Kosova needs and deserves the same attention and the same chances, so that its multi-ethnic population feels the touch of the EU, and performs as EU citizens. 'Equal chances in the race of life' has proven to be a right and just approach in the history of civilizations. In this context, I

would like to thank once more the European Union for giving life and meaning to the EULEX Mission in Kosova. The legitimate Government of Kosova is continuously and properly making use of the international assistance, EULEX included, for building a contemporary democratic and multi-ethnic state.

Mr. Minister,

We highly appreciate the support shown by the EU troika, as well as from our very good EU neighbors towards the enlargement process and for the integration and accession of Western Balkan countries into the EU. In this regard, we would very much welcome an EU - Western Balkan countries Summit during your Presidency. I assure You, Mr. Minister, for Albania's open and constructive cooperation. The Albanian Government is working hard to successfully meet the three immediate challenges of our integration process: 1) the timely fulfillment of EC questionnaire, 2) the conclusion of the last stages of the visa liberalization process, and 3) the implementation of the recommendations stated in the last EU Progress Report.

Mr. Chairman,

Mr. Minister,

Please allow me to take advantage of this opportunity to reiterate that Albania's bid for chairing the OSCE in 2014 remains another top priority in our agenda, and we expect support from all member states when the time for such a decision come. We would like to assure our partners and all the OSCE community that Albania is ready to fully take up the challenges and the responsibilities that the Chairmanship entails.

Finally, allow me Mr. Minister to wish You personally, as well as your country, a very successful Presidency.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.