

Spanish Presidency of the European Union**OSCE Permanent Council No. 793
Vienna 4th February 2010****EU statement in response to the report by the Head of
the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Werner
Almhofer**

The European Union welcomes the head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Werner Almhofer, back to the Permanent Council and would like to thank him for his comprehensive report. Once again the EU wants to express its appreciation for the valuable contribution of the Mission, through its headquarters and its broad field presence, to peace and stability in Kosovo.

The EU remains strongly committed to a peaceful, democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo with full respect for the rule of law, the protection of non-Albanian communities and of Kosovo's cultural and religious heritage. We know that OMiK plays an important role in the realization of this goal and want to ensure the Mission of our full support in its respective efforts, conducted in a status neutral manner on the basis of its existing mandate.

The European Union continues to play a leading role in ensuring the stability of Kosovo, including through the fully operational EULEX

Kosovo, the EUSR and its contribution to an international civilian office as part of the international presences. We commend the progress achieved in promoting the rule of law in the past year since the official deployment of EULEX, the European Union's largest civilian mission, which also operates within the status-neutral framework of the UNSCR 1244. The EU welcomes the designation of Ambassador Michael Giffoni who will promote the EU's role in the north of Kosovo alongside the existing European presence on the ground.

Since the completion of the reconfiguration of UNMIK last fall the Mission has increasingly assumed a broader role in monitoring the compliance with human rights standards through its extensive field presence.

In that respect, Mr. Ambassador, the EU would appreciate to hear more about your future vision for OMiK and its comparative advantage.

We strongly support the continuous exchange of information among all international actors on the ground – the OSCE, the United Nations, NATO and the European Union – to facilitate dialogue between all communities and to pursue the stabilisation of the entire region. We reiterate our call on all sides to work together to achieve long-term stability and prosperity for all people living in Kosovo and in the region.

The EU is aware of OMiK's unique position within the international presence in Kosovo. We would like to highlight the valuable contributions made by the Mission, through its close relationship to

all ethnic communities, its longstanding expertise in building local capacities and its broad field presence, in the monitoring, protection and promotion of human rights. The Mission's particular attention to non-Albanian communities is of high importance. The EU considers OMiK's protection of housing and property rights as well as of religious and cultural heritage crucial for the future development of Kosovo. We note with satisfaction that the Mission made recommendations as to the use of languages in identity and travel documents as well as the respective administrative procedure. The EU supports all efforts which aim at building bridges and making a difference in the lives of all people living in Kosovo regardless of which community they come from.

The EU also welcomes the meaningful engagement of OMiK with OSCE Institutions, such as the continuing cooperation with the HCNM regarding the access to education for Gorani children, or with ODIHR in co-hosting the OSCE Inter-Mission Trial Monitoring Conference last December which gathered participants from 12 OSCE field operations involved in trial monitoring. It is essential that OMiK continues to observe the legislative process for compliance with human rights standards and rule of law principles. In this context, we recognize the Mission's efforts to strengthen independent institutions, such as the office of the Ombudsperson and to assist to the improvement of administrative capacity and to implement principles of good governance.

The EU commends the Mission for its achievements under the democratisation programme, in working intensively and in coordination with other international stakeholders in providing technical support to the Central Election Commission during the November

2009 local elections preparation process as well as the assistance to the Electoral Complaints and Appeals Commission. Strengthening the civil society in its dialogue with the Assembly of Kosovo is of special value and enjoys our full support. We welcome the Mission's ongoing cooperation with the Independent Media Commission and the Press Council. The EU reiterates the promotion of freedom of expression and of the media as a core value of the OSCE.

The EU recalls its 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. The EU expresses its readiness to continue to support OMiK in its crucial tasks by providing financial contributions as well as seconded staff.

We would like to conclude by thanking Ambassador Almhofer and his staff for their dedicated work and wishing them all the best for the future.

Los países candidatos TURQUÍA, CROACIA* y la antigua REPÚBLICA YUGOSLAVA DE MACEDONIA*, los países del Proceso de Estabilización y Asociación y los países candidatos potenciales, ALBANIA, BOSNIA Y HERZEGOVINA y MONTENEGRO, los países de la Asociación Europea de Libre Comercio y los miembros del Espacio Económico Europeo, ISLANDIA, LIECHTENSTEIN y NORUEGA, al igual que la REPÚBLICA DE MOLDAVIA se alinean con esta declaración.

*Croacia y la Antigua República Yugoslava de Macedonia siguen perteneciendo al proceso de Estabilización y Asociación.