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**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Secretariat**

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Conference Services

Please find attached the statement by Ambassador Arsim Zekolli, Permanent Representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, on behalf of the delegations of the SAP countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - on the signature of SAA and Interim agreement between the European Union and Montenegro, delivered to the 682nd Meeting of the Permanent Council on 18 October 2007.

**Statement delivered by Ambassador Arsim Zekolli,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Macedonia,
on behalf of the delegations of the SAP countries – Albania,
Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia, on the signature of
SAA and Interim agreement between EU and Montenegro**

Permanent Council Meeting No.682, 18 October 2007

The delegations of the SAP countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Republic of Macedonia, on whose behalf I am speaking, are honored to share the historic moment underlined by the delegation of Portugal in the name of EU.

We congratulate Montenegro on the long path it has successfully followed in gradually achieving its strategic goal to become full member of the EU, by signing the Stabilization and Association Agreement. The success of Montenegro is success of every country in the region.

This historic moment would indeed give a boost and an encouragement to the country, to the region, and to the further increase of Montenegro's constructive role. Montenegro is an important factor for stabilization in South East Europe and we value its engagement in a wide range of regional activities and initiatives.

The Agreement will bring concrete benefits to the citizens and the enterprises in Montenegro and prepare the country's integration into the EU. It foresees the enhanced cooperation in the economic field; this means more trading opportunities, creating jobs and economic development. The agreement also foresees enhanced cooperation in other fields such as environmental protection, justice and security, acting as a catalyst for further reforms.

The full implementation of a SAA represents for each country an essential step towards integration into the EU. Montenegro, together with all the Western Balkan countries, has a clear European perspective, as it was reconfirmed at successive European Councils. We highly value the determination of the EU to continue the process of the integration of the countries of the Western Balkans into the European Union as one of the priorities. The signing of the SAA with Montenegro is clear indication and great encouragement in this process.

Economic development, enhanced political stability and security due to good neighborly relations, regional co-operation and deeper integration into the EU, progress in the process of political and economic reforms, the ability to respect the Copenhagen criteria, are the factors, that will determine not only the brighter future of Montenegro but will bring benefit, stability, security, economic development to the region and to the united European continent.

Mr. Chairman, our countries wish Montenegro all success in their tenure on the path of rapprochement to the full membership in the European Union.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.