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MEPs welcome Kosovo ruling

An EFA press release by MEPs Alyn Smith (Scottish National Party) and Frieda Brepoels (N-VA)

MEPs from the EFA Group in the European Parliament have welcomed today's International Court of Justice ruling confirming the legality of Kosovo's 2008 independence declaration.

Scottish National Party MEP **Alyn Smith** commented:

"While this decision alone is not determinative of the actual independence of Kosovo, it is of crucial importance in bringing to an end the belligerence and unrest that plagues the area.

"Unfortunately, both the Kosovan and Serbian governments have defiantly refused to alter their position on Kosovan secession, regardless of today's outcome, therefore this decision may not be of quite the same significance as a domestic political instrument, as it is as an international precedent. However, we should be hopeful that this will encourage greater engagement of all concerned with the peace process.

"It is crucial for the stability of the region as a whole that neighbouring governments, especially Serbia, recognise that not only is Kosovan independence legal, it is a necessary step in building the stability of the region.

"When I was in Pristina meeting people from across the political spectrum, as well as civil society and the international organisations active on the ground, it was clear to me that the people of Kosovo, of all ethnicities, were united in their enthusiasm to build their nation."

Flemish nationalist MEP **Frieda Brepoels** (N-VA) said:

"Independent status for Kosovo is the only way to achieve proper stability in the Balkans. Kosovan independence is a logical culmination of the autonomy movement that arose following the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. Today's ruling is therefore very important from a practical point of view, in particular with regard to Kosovo's long term stability and economic development."

Sixty nine countries have already recognised Kosovo's independence including the majority of EU member

states. Five countries (Spain, Romania, Greece, Cyprus and Slovakia) have not.

Brepoels added:

"Kosovo's situation is unique and independence is the best guarantee of a positive future. Unfortunately several nations seem to fear that recognising Kosovo's independence would set a precedent for other regions and stateless nations seeking greater autonomy or independence. This is no reason not to seek the best solution for Kosovo, including the prospect of EU membership.

"Following today's ruling it is high time that the five remaining EU member states move swiftly to respect Kosovo's right to self determination and recognise their independence. The Belgian EU Presidency should pursue this matter with the member states concerned."

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