Press release | 24.02.2012

Serbia-Kosovo

Overdue agreement gives boost to both countries' EU prospects

Serbia and Kosovo today reached agreement on two crucial issues under their dialogue process, namely the status of Kosovo in regional cooperation and on border controls. Commenting on the agreement, Green foreign affairs spokesperson and draftsperson for the EP on Kosovo **Ulrike Lunacek** said:

"This breakthrough is good news for both sides and a crucial step forward in their progress towards EU accession. Kosovo will for the first time have an individual presence in international meetings (1). The agreement on border controls is also a major boost for relations between Serbia and Kosovo and will be the first binding agreement between the two states, once signed.

"The timing is of course important. If EU foreign ministers recommend granting Serbia official EU candidate status next week, it is important that the EU also take the first steps towards a stabilisation and association agreement (SAA) with Kosovo through a feasibility study. This would mark an important formal step along the road to EU membership for Kosovo."

Green foreign affairs spokesperson **Franziska Brantner** added:

"The Serbian government has now cleared the final hurdles for EU candidate status. This vindicates the decision of December's EU summit to postpone a final decision until March - to ensure Belgrade made the final push. The EU should now recognise the internal reform progress in Serbia and award Serbia candidate status. The actual beginning of membership negotiations must be linked to the normalisation of relations with Kosovo however."

(1) A compromise proposed by the EU and accepted by both sides states that Kosovo's nameplate at meetings will be followed by an asterisk. This would have a footnote attached referring to a UN Security Council resolution that makes no mention of Kosovo's independence, and a ruling by the International Court of Justice saying Kosovo's declaration of independence is legal.

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Ulrike Lunacek

EP Vice-President, Member

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