

Brussels, 15 March 2010

Towards sustainable reforms and tangible benefits on the road to Europe

As the European Union's Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy I look forward to working with the people of Kosovo in ensuring sustainable reforms and tangible benefits on the road to Europe. I have personally experienced how enlargement can change societies for the better. I am convinced that EU membership is key for the future of the region.

Kosovo can be proud of the progress achieved to date. In the second year following the declaration of independence the legal framework has been significantly strengthened and political stability has been maintained. Last year, for the first time, Kosovo organised an election process. It was conducted in an orderly manner and with the participation of all communities.

However, challenges remain. The security situation, albeit stable, is still fragile. Consolidating the rule of law throughout Kosovo requires further efforts. Organised crime, money laundering, public administration reform are all areas in need of persistent attention. During my mandate, I expect to see a consistent push for reconciliation among Kosovo's communities. The path is clear – the EU Member States have re-affirmed on a number of occasions that Kosovo shares the European perspective of the region. It is now for Kosovo to make this a reality.

The people of Kosovo are the most important broker of reform. I am strongly committed to ensure that the European perspective brings real benefit to the people. Authorities need to be held constantly accountable by those who elect them and who live by the rules they establish. This is the most fundamental link in any society. I call on the people of Kosovo to be engaged and attentive. The Commission and its partners EULEX and the EU Special Representative are here to help. We will support you on your path.

This year will be key for Kosovo. Last December, the EU member States welcomed our communication "Kosovo – Fulfilling its European Perspective" and gave a green light to our proposals. We are now moving forward with measures related to trade, visas and the Stabilisation and Association Process dialogue. They must be accompanied by consistent delivery on required reforms by Kosovo's authorities. We also expect the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. It is important that this opportunity be used to create a positive dynamic of regional cooperation and constructive dialogue. Kosovo should benefit from the perspective of eventual visa liberalisation once all conditions are met.

These objectives will feature high on my agenda during my mandate with a view of anchoring Kosovo firmly in the European perspective. There is a unanimous agreement in the EU that this goal is worth pursuing. I expect a concerted effort on the part of all people in Kosovo to make this a reality. And I look forward to be part of that journey together with you.

Štefan FÜLE

EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy