

EU-Croatia Stabilisation and Association Council
23 March 2010
Speaking Points at Press Conference

- **Croatia came a long way since it started negotiations in 2005.** It is now in the finishing line towards the conclusion of its accession negotiations. But as any long-distance runner knows, **the last 100 meters are the most difficult one.**
- **The to-do list is still substantial:** public administration reform, judicial reform, fight against corruption, minority rights, refugees return, investigation and prosecution of war crimes and full cooperation with the ICTY.
- We welcome **Croatia's full commitment to tackle these issues.** It takes political will and determination to deal with such a wide range of difficult issues, but I believe that none is in short supply in Croatia.
- **Accession to the EU is a demanding task.** It requires a country to be well prepared before it joins and afterwards, so that it can fully benefit from the EU membership, while also bringing its active contribution to the EU. That's why in EU accession preparations **quality is more important than speed.**
- A high-quality enlargement process is the best argument in favour of this policy. The Commission will make sure that with each and every new accession, the **EU becomes not only larger but also stronger.**
- I believe this is possible in Croatia's case, given the **commitment of the Prime Minister and her team,** including the Chief Negotiator, to pursue vigorously the reform process towards achieving the goal of EU membership.