



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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President of the European Commission

**Statement by President Barroso following his meeting
with the Prime Minister of Serbia, Mr Ivica Dačić**

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Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to meet Prime Minister Dačić today, and in particular on the eve of the European Council which I am hopeful will bring good news for Serbia.

As you know, the European Commission has recommended the opening of accession negotiations back in April, because we have assessed that Serbia has met all the necessary conditions - and has notably addressed the key priority of improving relations with Kosovo.

Yesterday, the General Affairs Council followed this proposal and recommended to open negotiations with Serbia, subject to the confirmation by this week's European Council, where I will also make this case.

To open accession negotiations with Serbia is a historic decision – historic decision for Serbia, historic decision for Europe too.

I want to congratulate the Prime Minister, his government and the people of Serbia for opening the door to the next important phase in Serbia's European path. Prime Minister Dačić has worked hard to achieve this, in particular through his commitment to reach the historic agreement in the dialogue with Pristina.

This agreement paves the way for a better future of all citizens in Serbia and Kosovo. And it reflects a European spirit: we are not weaker because we talk and try to reach compromise; on the contrary - we are stronger because we build bridges.

I therefore welcome Belgrade's continued engagement with Pristina, with the adoption of the implementation plan last May and visible efforts invested to implement the agreement on the ground. It will be of crucial importance, Prime Minister, that Serbia maintains and deepens this dialogue all along the way.

Serbia's determination to reform and work with its neighbours in a spirit of reconciliation is thus delivering.

It also sends an important message to all other parts of South Eastern Europe on the eve of Croatia's accession. And I know that the Prime Minister of Serbia together with the President of the Republic of Serbia are going to be present there in Zagreb for that very important occasion. Another important gesture I think with an important meaning.

Of course vital reforms in many areas will have to be sustained and deepened over time, most notably regarding the rule of law, which is absolutely essential. Progress in the normalisation of relations with Kosovo will also need to continue steadily.

Today, the Prime Minister, in a very open and friendly conversation, assured me of his complete commitment to this task. And the accession negotiations, once opened, will give us ample instruments to monitor such progress and anchor Serbia's efforts to produce lasting results.

Prime Minister,

My message to you and to the people of Serbia at the eve of very good and historic news is clear: the Commission stands by Serbia in this European journey. We support the Serbian people realizing their European perspective which they want and they fully deserve.

I thank you for your attention.