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NOTE

from : General Secretariat of the Council
to : Delegations

Subject: Summary of the plenary session of the European Parliament held in Brussels on
28 March 2012
Enlargement report for Kosovo - Council and Commission statements

Minister Wammen, on behalf of the Council, delivered the speech set out in [Annex I](#).

Mr Füle, on behalf of the Commission, delivered the speech set out in [Annex II](#).

The rapporteur, Ms Lunacek (Greens/EFA, AT), explained that the report should send a strong signal to Kosovo that its future was in Europe. She stressed some positive results of EU action, such as the first results of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue (agreement on border management) and the launch of the feasibility study for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between the EU and Kosovo. The rapporteur also, however, clearly stressed a number of issues on which further work was needed such as corruption, organised crime and electoral and constitutional reform, economic/social development. Ms Lunacek also stressed that the report called on the Government in Pristina to reach out to the Serbs in the north and for the Serbs in the north to implement the Ahtisaari Plan. She also called on Member States to recognise Kosovo, as it would make EU's efforts more effective.

For the political groups, the following speakers took the floor:

- Mr Posselt (EPP, DE) recalled Kosovo's historical background and said that the prospect now existed for Kosovo to be a democratic state and that the EU must assist it in this undertaking. He made clear that though he was in favour of Serbia joining the EU, Kosovo deserved fairness, and also called on all Member States to recognise Kosovo. He insisted that all agreements between Belgrade and Pristina had to be signed and implemented. Mr Posselt was against any splitting of Kosovo or any new status discussion.
- Mr Panzeri (S&D, IT) put particular emphasis on the importance of the democratic consolidation process in Kosovo. He underscored that there were still a number of problems, which had to be recognised by the Kosovar authorities and tackled by them in a resolute manner. He welcomed the agreement on regional cooperation/representation and the launch of the feasibility study on the SAA. Though he called on Kosovo to continue its efforts, he believed that the EU also had work to do (Kosovo recognition).
- Mr Kacin (ALDE, SI) said that the Parliament's report was well balanced. He defended the view that the EU should do more for Kosovo as regards visa liberalisation. He welcomed the constructive approach of Kosovo regarding the dialogue with Serbia. In his opinion, Pristina needed to reach out in good faith to the Serbian community in the north and encourage their integration in a wider Kosovo, whilst Belgrade needed to dispel ideas that the Serbian-dominated north would in some way remain a de facto part of Serbia proper. In this context he called on EU Member States to recognise Kosovo. He stressed that more needed to be done as regards the fight against corruption and organised crime.
- Mr Angourakis (GUE/NGL, EL) criticised the EU, accusing it of transforming Kosovo into a protectorate and opening a Pandora's box, creating a risk of a widespread conflict.
- Mr Provera (EFD, IT) considered that Kosovo's massive structural problems (legal system, administration, corruption, minorities, environment, organised crime, etc.) meant that EU accession was a long way away. He considered, however, that Kosovo should be assisted by the EU.

Individual interventions to a certain extent reflected the opinions expressed by the speakers from political groups. The interventions revealed diverging views between Members, who also raised a wide range of points. A number of speakers explicitly called upon the EU to support Kosovo in its efforts, and some suggested intensifying the process of visa liberalisation between the EU and Kosovo. The efforts made by Kosovo were recognised by several Members, whilst others stressed the number of significant issues which were outstanding (e.g. implementation of the rule of law, fight against corruption and organised crime, media freedom, etc.). Some speakers considered that Kosovo did not qualify to become an EU Member State. The recognition of Kosovo by Member States was raised by several speakers in different contexts.

In response to the interventions, Commissioner Füle thanked the Parliament for its support for the Commission's initiatives. He announced that over the next couple of months the Commission would prepare an in-depth analysis of Kosovo's preparedness to negotiate and conclude a SAA with the EU. Commissioner Füle said that next step would be a process based on substance and content, in which the Commission would be ready to support Kosovo. He concluded by asking the Parliament for its continued support in passing this message on, and in strengthening its engagement with Kosovo's Parliament.

Minister Wammen thanked the Parliament for its report. He said that ultimately the European prospects of Kosovo would be decided on their own merits and that there were in the hands of its leaders. Minister Wammen considered that granting Serbia candidate status should be an incentive for Kosovo. He shared the view that corruption and organised crime were serious problems in Kosovo and required further efforts by the Kosovar authorities. He concluded that the EU was committed to supporting Kosovo in making further efforts and that a pragmatic approach continued to be required.

Speech by Minister Wammen; Brussels, 28 March 2012

Mr President, on Kosovo I can state clearly that I am optimistic about the situation as it has developed since the submission of the 2011 progress report by the Commission. The Council conclusions of 28 February this year also reflect the very considerable efforts made by both Serbia and Kosovo in the EU-facilitated dialogue.

As you know, last December the Council welcomed Kosovo's commitment to the European agenda, including through its sustained efforts in areas such as visas, trade and the judicial system, as well as the establishment of the National Council for European Integration. The Council also welcomed the improved integration of Serbs south of the Ibar River.

At the same time, the Council noted the limited progress achieved with regard to the reform agenda in a year marked by elections, and it urged Kosovo to take the necessary steps to address the shortcomings identified in the electoral process.

Kosovo was also encouraged to improve the budgetary situation, in close cooperation with the IMF. The Council noted the need for major efforts on the part of the authorities, particularly to strengthen public administration reform and consolidate the rule of law. Evidence was needed to demonstrate that organised crime and corruption are being tackled and that progress is being made in pursuing judicial reform and protecting freedom of expression. The Council also invited Kosovo to launch an inclusive and long-term agenda for northern Kosovo.

In addition to these requirements, the Council emphasised the crucial importance of the EU-facilitated Belgrade/Priština dialogue as a process of equal importance for both Serbia and Kosovo. The Council called on both parties to engage constructively on the full range of issues, from freedom of movement of persons to customs and from the cadastre to the implementation of the integrated management for crossing points, the IBM.

This call was certainly heard in both Belgrade and Priština. Progress was made over the subsequent months, and considerable political courage was demonstrated in both capitals. These are very positive developments, which demonstrate the power of the enlargement process to promote reform.

Equally important is the fact that the EU has responded to these efforts. The visa dialogue was launched in January 2012. Furthermore, the Commission intends to launch a structured dialogue on the rule of law and a feasibility study for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Union and Kosovo. These are important incentives.

I think we all agree that Kosovo's future lies within the European Union. Solid implementation of the agreements reached between Belgrade and Priština will bring Serbia and Kosovo further on their path towards the EU.

On the other hand, many challenges lie ahead for the leadership in Kosovo, not least on the domestic agenda. Here the EU is also ready to assist. I very much hope that more resources will be put in place on the ground to support the initiatives from Brussels and from the new EUSR/Head of Delegation, who has been in place for only a few weeks.

Speech by Commissioner Füle; Brussels, 28 March 2012

Mr President, I am grateful for your kind invitation to participate in your discussion on Kosovo. I am also grateful for your support for the Commission's work on Kosovo, as confirmed by the report we will debate here today, and I am very grateful for the excellent work of your rapporteur, Ms Lunacek, in preparing this well-balanced report and ensuring broad support for it.

I have just returned from Kosovo. On Tuesday I had the pleasure of attending the very first meeting of Kosovo's Council for European Integration. The Council was set up by Kosovo's President Jahjaga in order to establish a forum for discussion and guidance on Kosovo's path to Europe.

In my speech to the Council for European Integration, I emphasised that it was essential that the Council reflect and be supported by all sides of the political spectrum in Kosovo. The Council needs to build as broad and inclusive a consensus across society as possible. Only with the support and engagement of all political forces and communities will Kosovo be able to make the efforts at reform required to move successfully towards Europe. European integration requires the support and commitment of Kosovo society as a whole. By its very nature, European integration is and needs to be inclusive.

Honourable Members, what can we do to support Kosovo on its way towards closer integration? The General Affairs Council of 28 February confirmed the Commission's intention to launch a feasibility study for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Kosovo. This marks the beginning of a new stage in the European Union's relationship with Kosovo. The Council's endorsement firmly anchors Kosovo in the European Union's policy framework for the Western Balkans. It marks a crucial step towards the establishment of contractual relations with Kosovo.

The objective of the feasibility study is to provide a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of Kosovo's readiness to negotiate and eventually implement a Stabilisation and Association Agreement, which forms the legal basis of the European Union's relations with the countries of the Western Balkans and a stepping stone towards membership. The study will focus on the political, economic and legal aspects of Kosovo's readiness for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement. My visit to Kosovo yesterday marked the start of our work.

The launch of the feasibility study was another, additional key element in the European Union's already ambitious agenda for Kosovo. Let me mention some of the key elements of this agenda. First, I hope that we will be able to issue the visa liberalisation roadmap for Kosovo later in the spring. Second, we will shortly resubmit our proposal for a framework agreement allowing Kosovo to participate in European Union programmes. Third, on 30 May, I will launch the structured dialogue on the rule of law. Fourth, we will support Kosovo's bid for membership of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, once Kosovo chooses to submit its application. Fifth, we are ready to support an inclusive and long-term agenda for the north of Kosovo.

Let me conclude by reaffirming the European Union's commitment to Kosovo. The last few weeks have shown that these are not just empty words but are backed up by concrete action. The Commission is fully engaged with Kosovo. 2012 should be a year of opportunity, and I trust I can count on Parliament's support to turn this opportunity into reality.