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SECOND MEETING STABILISATION AND ASSOCIATION COUNCIL BETWEEN SERBIA AND THE EU

Brussels, 17 December 2014

Joint Press Release

The Stabilisation and Association Council (SA Council) between Serbia and the European Union held its second meeting on 17 December 2014. The meeting was chaired by the Serbian side, by Jadranka Joksimović, Minister without portfolio for EU integration of Serbia. The EU Delegation was led by Edgars Rinkēvičs, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, and included Commissioner Johannes Hahn.

The SA Council welcomed the official opening of the accession negotiations with Serbia on 21 January 2014 and the ongoing screening process, where Serbian authorities have showed a good level of preparedness, and looked forward to the opening of the first negotiation chapters.

The SA Council recalled the Council conclusions of 16 December 2014, which welcomed further progress made by Serbia in 2014 in a number of important areas including in public administration reform, judicial reform, the fight against corruption and organised crime. The SA Council recalled that in order to ensure an overall balance in negotiations, progress in the rule of law would need to be made in parallel with progress in negotiations overall. It also noted with satisfaction Serbia's ambitious programme of economic and structural reforms and its active involvement in further developing regional cooperation, while encouraging Serbia to further intensify its reform process.

The SA Council noted with satisfaction that the Council conclusions of 16 December welcomed the progress in the normalisation process with Kosovo*. The SA Council noted that it was important that Serbia maintains an active and constructive engagement in the normalisation process with Kosovo and recalled that progress in the process of normalising its relations with Kosovo needed to be made in parallel with progress in negotiations overall. The SA Council expressed the expectation that the next meeting of the high-level Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina would take place as early as possible and achieve further progress in the normalisation between the two sides.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

The SA Council also recalled Serbia's obligation from the negotiating framework to progressively align with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy in the process up to accession.

The SA Council took note of the Progress Report and the Strategy paper adopted by the Commission in October 2014.

The SA Council also held an exchange of views on developments in the Western Balkans.
