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**Permanent Council No 544
10 February 2005**

**EU RESPONSE TO THE STATEMENT OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL FOR KOSOVO,
MR. SØREN JESSEN-PETERSEN**

The European Union warmly welcomes the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen on his first appearance at the Permanent Council. His visit to Vienna comes at the beginning of a year that will be crucial for the future of Kosovo. The EU also extends its warm welcome to Ambassador Fieschi.

As the "Standards for Kosovo" document states, the future of Kosovo must be one in which all people, "regardless of ethnic background, race or religion, are free to live, work and travel without fear, hostility or danger, and where there is tolerance, justice and peace for everyone". The building of a democratic and multiethnic Kosovo within Europe remains our common goal. In this vein, the EU actively supports the work of the Contact Group as well as that of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK) as its integral part.

The standards process remains the core of our policy in Kosovo. The EU welcomes UNMIK's prioritisation of standards and the emphasis on promotion of the return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPS), protection of minorities and freedom of movement. We attach special importance to the speedy implementation of the first pilot projects on decentralisation under the guidance of the Pristina-based Working Group on Local Government Reform. Substantial progress in implementing the standards is not only a condition for the process to determine the future status of Kosovo, but also a powerful tool to shape the future of Kosovo and bring it closer to Europe.

The EU commends the new government's resolve to implement the standards and acknowledges improvements made so far in some areas. Substantial further progress across all standards will be necessary in advance of the comprehensive review. Adequate attention is to be given not only to the number of rules and regulations but also to their quality and implementation.

As CiO Rupel said in Pristina on 11 January: “ Stability and progress in Kosovo go through the protection of minorities – particularly the Serbs - and their active participation in political life.” The EU therefore calls upon the Provisional Institutions for Self Government (PISG) to reach out to the minority communities at all levels, including addressing their security concerns and perceptions, and to reinforce conditions for a participation of minorities in public life. Equally, the EU calls upon the Serbs to engage actively. As we have stressed on numerous occasions, participation in the political process will be the best way to promote their legitimate concerns and to have a saying in shaping the future of Kosovo.

At the same time, we call on the authorities in Belgrade and Pristina to resume their dialogue without delay. We have noted with satisfaction Belgrade’s expression of interest in resuming participation in the working groups on missing persons and returns and on energy. We hope this will be a first step towards more constructive dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina.

The EU welcomes the transfer of competencies to the PISG, recently marked by the setting up of three new ministries. However, more powers go along with more responsibility and accountability. The EU urges the PISG to meet their responsibilities and, in this context, to make full use of OMIK’s expertise and advice in capacity building.

The EU recalls that full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) remains an essential requirement for further movement towards the EU.

Mr. Chairman, as High Representative Solana has recently confirmed, the European Union remains committed to a strong engagement in Kosovo in order to enable it to meet the European standards. The EU remains ready to contribute to this goal through its relevant mechanisms, in particular the Kosovo Stabilisation and Association Process Tracking Mechanism (STM), and the Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (CARDS) program. As the economic situation of Kosovo remains of concern, the EU will continue to support UNMIK and the PISG, in its endeavours to contribute to economic recovery and growth.

At the same time, the EU continues to strongly support the activities of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK). Over the past years, OMIK, within Pillar III, has provided a substantial contribution to the work of UNMIK through the promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law and through building local capacities in these areas. The EU is convinced that the OSCE will continue to play an important role in Kosovo. The EU shares the Special Representative’s view that as the political process develops, it will also be necessary to reconsider the structures of the international presence in Kosovo. The EU attaches great value to –all– relevant players being fully consulted in such deliberations and in contributing to all decisions which may affect them.

In concluding, the EU wishes the Special Representative, Mr. Jessen-Petersen, and his dedicated staff all the best for the challenging times lying ahead. We look forward to continuing our close cooperation and coordination with UNMIK and all other relevant actors in Kosovo in the future.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, allow me to address a few words to Ambassador Fieschi, as this will be his last visit to the Permanent Council.

For the last three years, Ambassador Fieschi has headed the OSCE Mission in Kosovo in sometimes difficult circumstances. Still, he never lost the optimism that positive changes can be brought about and the profound conviction that the assistance of the international community, and within it OMIK, can make a difference. The hard work and continued strong engagement by him personally and his dedicated team have been exemplary and deserve our credit and deep appreciation. Mr. Ambassador, on behalf of my colleagues from the European Union, let me thank you for your work and close cooperation over the past 3 years and wish you all the best for the future.

The Candidate Countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia¹ align themselves with this statement.

¹Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process