



EUROPEAN UNION

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Remarks by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton following the Foreign Affairs Council

Today, I briefed the Council on the progress in the dialogue for normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina.

I am extremely pleased that the text initialled on Friday was already endorsed by the Kosovo assembly and government as well as unanimously by the government of Serbia.

I want to once again praise the courage, the leadership and the determination of the two Prime Ministers and their teams over the last six months. They are leading their countries away from the past and into the future.

The agreement is also a fantastic signal for the region - an incentive for all countries in the region to make similar steps.

We have discussed of course the situation in Syria and because the humanitarian situation is extremely alarming, the Council today adopted a decision that will allow the Syrian National Coalition to take advantage of the oil and gas reserves under its control.

Three types of transactions will now be possible: imports of oil and petroleum products; exports of key equipment and technology for the oil and gas industry; and investments in the Syrian oil industry.

We have made the energy sector our priority to ensure that the changes have a rapid impact.

Meanwhile, we continue to do all we can to work towards a political solution, and we support the work of Special Envoy Brahimi.

We looked at how to enhance our support to Lebanon and Jordan. They are receiving thousands of refugees every day as you know. Lebanon now has a million refugees - a quarter of the population.

P R E S S

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We support and we pay tribute to all those working in the humanitarian field and want to underline the points made in the recent press communique adopted by the UN Security Council in New York, which called for the respect of international humanitarian law.

Today, we closed a very long chapter in our relations with Myanmar/Burma by lifting political and economic sanctions. Only the arms embargo remains in place.

We know that much remains to be done: on human rights, democracy, fighting poverty, and achieving lasting peace. We do not underestimate the challenges.

But we believe that now it is time to engage more and to help the transition move ahead. All these challenges can be better addressed in an open democratic society. We look forward to working closely with the government and all other stakeholders. The people want democracy, peace and prosperity. They deserve it. Their journey has begun and we want to be a part of it.

This is why we are organizing an EU-Myanmar/Burma Task Force in November to support and help them both economically and politically.
