



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on Enlargement and the Stabilisation and Association Process

*3150th GENERAL AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 28 February 2012*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council recalls the Commission's Opinion of October 2011 on Serbia's application for membership and the Council conclusions of 5 December 2011. In accordance with the European Council conclusions of 9 December 2011, the Council has examined and confirmed that Serbia has continued to show credible commitment and achieved further progress in moving forward with the implementation in good faith of agreements reached in the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue including on IBM, has reached an agreement on inclusive regional cooperation and has actively cooperated to enable EULEX and KFOR to execute their mandates. In the light of its examination, the Council recommends to grant Serbia candidate status and looks forward to the confirmation of this decision by the March European Council.

As regards Kosovo* the Council recalls its conclusions of 5 December 2011. Without prejudice to Member States' position on status, or any future decisions to be taken by the Council, the Council takes note of the intention of the Commission to launch a feasibility study for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Union and Kosovo.

The Council urges both sides to continue to take forward the implementation of all the agreements reached to date.

* 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.

P R E S S

Declaration by the Commission to the minutes of the Council

The Commission's feasibility study will examine whether the political, economic and legal criteria for the Stabilisation and Association Agreement are fulfilled. The launch of the feasibility study for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Kosovo* is without prejudice to the legal status and Member States' positions on the recognition of Kosovo.

* 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.

Declaration by the Commission to the minutes of the Council

Respect for and protection of minorities is an important element of the EU accession criteria. As reported in its Opinion of October 2011, the Commission is of the view that, while the legal and institutional framework for respecting and protecting minorities is in place in Serbia, implementation needs to continue to be further improved. It will continue to closely monitor Serbia's efforts in this regard and will report in the 2012 Progress report which is scheduled for October 2012.

Declaration by the Commission to the minutes of the Council

The Commission confirms that it will monitor that Serbia maintains the necessary degree of compliance with the membership criteria, including consistent implementation of adopted legislation, with particular attention to the rule of law and to improving business environment, as referred to in § 51 of the December 2011 General Affairs Council conclusions, and will report in the 2012 Progress report. The implementation of agreements reached in the framework of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue will also be kept under review."
