Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, announces the start of EULEX Kosovo

Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) today announced that the EULEX mission in Kosovo will start its mandate on Tuesday 9 December 2008.

"I very much welcome the declaration of initial operational capability for the EULEX mission in Kosovo. The mission can now start its work.

The EULEX mission is deployed in order to assist Kosovo in its progress towards reaching European standards in the areas of police, justice, customs and correctional services. The mission will be crucial for the consolidation of rule of law in Kosovo, and furthermore, the development of rule of law and strengthening of multi-ethnic institutions will be to the benefit of all communities in Kosovo. The mission is proof of the EU’s strong commitment towards the Western Balkans and it will contribute to the enhancement of stability in the whole region."

EU Member States were today informed by the EU Civilian Operations Commander, Mr Kees Klompenhouwer, that the EULEX mission has reached its initial operational capability and will accordingly assume its responsibilities in the area of rule of law throughout Kosovo as of 9 December 2008. The mission will implement its mandate in conformity with the Council Joint Action of 4 February 2008.

Attached: updated factsheet EULEX Kosovo
Background
The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) is the largest civilian mission ever launched under the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The central aim is to assist and support the Kosovo authorities in the rule of law area, specifically in the police, judiciary and customs areas. The mission was launched by the EU Council on 16 February 2008 and reached its initial operational capability in early December 2008. This has allowed the mission to start its work.

EULEX Kosovo will not replace UNMIK but rather support, mentor, monitor and advise the local authorities while exercising executive responsibilities in specific areas of competence.

Mandate and objectives
The objective of EULEX Kosovo is to support the Kosovo authorities by monitoring, mentoring and advising on all areas related to the rule of law, in particular in the police, judiciary, customs and correctional services. This means that the mission will assist the Kosovo institutions, judicial authorities and law enforcement agencies in their progress towards sustainability and accountability and in further developing and strengthening an independent multi-ethnic justice system and multi-ethnic police and customs service. The key priorities of the mission are to address immediate concerns regarding protection of minority communities, corruption and the fight against organised crime.
The European Union's European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) includes the gradual framing of a common defence policy which might in time lead to a common defence. The ESDP allows the Union to develop its civilian and military capacities for crisis management and conflict prevention at international level, thus helping to maintain peace and international security, in accordance with the United Nations Charter. The ESDP includes a strong conflict prevention component.

Based in Brussels, the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) is the permanent structure responsible for an autonomous operational conduct of civilian ESDP operations. Under the political control and strategic direction of the Political and Security Committee and the overall authority of the High Representative, the CPCC ensures the effective planning and conduct of civilian ESDP crisis management operations, as well as the proper implementation of all mission-related tasks.

"EULEX KOSOVO shall assist the Kosovo institutions, judicial authorities and law enforcement agencies in their progress towards sustainability and accountability and in further developing and strengthening an independent multi-ethnic justice system and multi-ethnic police and customs service, ensuring that these institutions are free from political interference and adhering to internationally recognised standards and European best practices…"


Next steps

After having reached initial operational capability the mission is expected to reach full deployment by the end of winter 2009. Once EULEX reaches full operational capability, the mission will have around 1900 international police officers, judges, prosecutors and customs officials and approximately 1100 local staff deployed Kosovo wide and working under the general framework of UNSCR 1244. It will be based in headquarters in Pristina and in the regions, with staff working within the judicial and police system and mobile customs teams in Kosovo in accordance with the principle of co-location.

The initial mandate is for 2 years but the mission is foreseen to be terminated when the Kosovo authorities have gained enough experience to guarantee that all members of society benefit from the rule of law.