

Dear Chairman, Dear Parliamentarians,

As Head of the integrated European Rule of Law Mission, I am pleased to have the opportunity to brief you today on the latest developments in Kosovo. I will focus my intervention on Senator Dick Marty's report and the priorities I have outlined for the Mission since I took over from Yves de Kermabon in October last year.

But let me first describe briefly the situation on the ground: the overall situation in Kosovo has remained calm during a period of substantial political activity. The recent establishment of the new Kosovo political leadership will allow us to re-vitalize our cooperation in the Rule of Law area. The three Ministers appointed for Interior, Justice and Finance are well known to me and I am confident that we will be able to work together in a constructive manner. With the institutional leadership now in place, we are launching into discussions to set common priorities in close coordination with the EUSR and ECLO for the preparation for the 2011 Progress Report. This is the best way in my view **to leverage our combined efforts, ensure implementation of necessary reforms**, and above all, **to enhance the overall consistency of EU activities in Kosovo.**

That being said, while the situation is generally calm there are also signs of fragility. For instance, one should not underestimate the risks associated with the current economic and social difficulties faced by the Kosovo population, and the perception of growing isolation and its expectations with regard to visa liberalization.

Meanwhile, the northern part of Kosovo remains marked by recurrent tensions and I sincerely hope that the Dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade, which started last week, will help bring the two communities closer to each other at the political and technical levels. EULEX will provide as much as possible to support the Dialogue facilitated by Counselor Robert Cooper.

Allow me to now turn to the follow-up for Senator Dick Marty's report. As you know, the Mission has taken very seriously the allegations raised by Mr. Marty in his report. Almost immediately after the Council of Europe adopted a resolution based on the report, EULEX opened a preliminary investigation into the allegations of the report.

This means that at this stage of the investigation there is no suspect. I would like to stress once more that EULEX prosecutors have jurisdiction over the allegations raised by Mr. Marty. In the coming weeks, EULEX intends to take the following steps:

- The Mission has **dedicated staff** which will deal solely with these allegations.
- The **highest level of security** and confidentiality will be ensured.
- Efforts are currently being made to strengthen our Witness Protection Program, which includes a specific **Witness Relocation Program**.
- The cooperation with counterparts in Belgrade and Tirana has worked to date to our satisfaction and will be maintained.

While the follow up to the Marty Report will receive the highest level of attention and support from EULEX, **I would like to make note of our two overarching priorities which I have identified since arriving in my post:**

First is the northern part of Kosovo where my priority is to maintain a stable environment. My approach to implementing this priority is two-fold: we are in the process of **expanding our footprint and normalizing our presence** in that part of Kosovo, and we are enhancing law enforcement efforts. This will allow EULEX to get a better understanding of the situation and facilitate our acceptance by the population. This also means exchanges and regular contacts between the Mission and the local leadership in order to prevent misunderstandings. In addition to this important administrative step, we will also build up confidence between us and the population by **fighting criminal structures operating in the north**. These law enforcement efforts are conducted across Kosovo, but are particularly focused on targeting the inter-ethnic criminal groups which operate on both sides of the Ibar. For example, a first significant operation was launched in February, with the full support of KFOR, and I am determined to authorize additional new operations. Following my visit to Belgrade in January, I also expect an increased commitment from the Serbian authorities to proceed with certain investigations.

My second mission-wide priority is an **enhanced commitment to prosecute and adjudicate key cases, particularly against organized crime and corruption**. I know that the Mission will be judged on its achievements in this area as well, and I am strongly dedicated to turning these words into actions. The fight against organized crime, corruption and war crimes will remain at the heart of our efforts. In some cases, I intend to work closely with local institutions. The year 2010 has been marked by numerous sensitive and complex investigations led by EULEX prosecutors.

I am confident that this hard work will bring concrete results in terms of prosecution and cases brought to trial in 2011. For the coming months, the priority will be given to organized crime, not only to improve the rule of law in Kosovo, but also in the interest of the Member States. I am confident in the commitment and the ability of the Kosovo authorities, in particular the Kosovo Police, to deliver in this important area.

Finally, I would like to stress **the importance of ensuring that the progress made by the Kosovo authorities is duly recorded**. EULEX will continue monitoring their capacity to absorb further responsibilities. I intend to report to the Member States in close coordination with the Commission on such progress, and the Mission activities will have to reflect on Kosovo authorities in such endeavor.

I expect that moving forward on these priorities over the coming year will further enhance the Rule of Law throughout Kosovo.

I thank you for your attention.