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In preparation for the General Affairs Council to be held on 13 December 2022, delegations will find attached draft Council conclusions on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process, as prepared by the Presidency following discussions in the Permanent Representatives' Committee. This text is submitted to the Council for examination with a view to approval.

ANNEX

PUBLIC

DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON ENLARGEMENT AND STABILISATION AND ASSOCIATION PROCESS

1. The Council takes good note of the Communication from the Commission of 12 October 2022 on the EU Enlargement Policy containing the reports on Montenegro, Serbia, Türkiye, North Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo*, as well as referring for the first time to Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova (hereinafter: Moldova) and Georgia. Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine and the new geopolitical reality underline the paramount importance of EU enlargement policy as a strong anchor for peace, democracy, prosperity, security and stability on our continent and a strategic priority.

2. The Council reaffirms its commitment to enlargement in line with the renewed consensus on enlargement approved by the European Council on 14 and 15 December 2006 and subsequent Council conclusions. The Council continues to expect partners to take ownership and demonstrate the credibility of their commitments and political will through implementation of necessary reforms and tangible progress on the fundamentals. Securing solid and irreversible achievements in the areas of rule of law, the economy, the functioning of democratic institutions, and public administration reforms remains decisive for meeting the requirements of EU membership and represents a long term investment into peace, democracy, prosperity, security and stability in Europe. The Council reiterates that embracing and committing to core EU values and to the European perspective is a firm strategic choice, essential for all partners aspiring to EU membership. Full alignment with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy is part of this strategic choice.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

3. Recalling the Thessaloniki Agenda and the Sofia, Zagreb and Brdo Declarations, the Council reiterates the EU's full and unequivocal commitment to the EU membership perspective of the Western Balkans. The future of the Western Balkans and their citizens lies within the European Union. The EU will continue to strengthen and intensify its engagement at all levels to support the region's political, economic and social transformation, including through continued assistance based on tangible progress on the rule of law and socio-economic reforms, as well as on partners' adherence to EU values, rules and standards. In this context, the Council is looking forward to the full implementation of the Economic and Investment Plan and the Green and Digital Agendas for the Western Balkans, both important tools for bridging the socio-economic gap, improving infrastructure and connectivity, and supporting the region's green and digital transition while building resilience and energy independence. The EU has steadily enhanced its policy engagement with the Western Balkans, focusing on key areas of joint interest such as migration, justice and home affairs, the economy and the single market, energy, transport and digital policy, health, civil protection, social policy, education, and research and innovation, as well as on foreign affairs, security and defence.

   The Council remains committed to further expanding this fruitful engagement, as demonstrated most recently by the EU-Western Balkans Summit in Tirana on 6 December and the Tirana Declaration, to which all partners aligned.

   Türkiye remains a candidate country and a key partner in many areas of joint interest.

4. The Council recalls the historic importance of the decision of the European Council of 23 June 2022 to recognise the European perspective and grant the status of candidate country to Ukraine and Moldova. The European Council likewise recognised the European perspective of Georgia and confirmed its readiness to grant the country candidate status once the priorities specified in the Commission's opinion on its membership application have been addressed.

PUBLIC

5. The future of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia and of their citizens lies within the European Union.

6. The Council acknowledges the considerable efforts that **Ukraine** demonstrated in the recent months towards meeting the objectives underpinning its candidate status for EU membership. The Council welcomes Ukraine's reform efforts in such difficult times, and encourages the country to continue on this path and fulfil the conditions specified in the Commission's opinion on its membership application in order to advance towards future EU membership.

   The 8th EU-Ukraine Association Council in September 2022 recognised the substantial progress Urkaine made so far in its reform process, took note of the action plan prepared by Ukraine on the implementation of the steps included in the Commission's opinion, and underlined the importance of full and effective implementation.

   The Council invites the Commission to prepare a roadmap outlining next steps to ease Ukraine's access to the EU Single Market, using the full potential of the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with Ukraine.

7. The Council acknowledges the considerable efforts of **Moldova** in pursuing its objectives underpinning its candidate status and encourages the country to continue with its reform agenda and fulfil the conditions specified in the Commission's opinion on its membership application in order to advance towards future EU membership. The Council puts emphasis on further deepening of the EU´s sectoral cooperation with Moldova and its integration in the EU internal market, on the basis of enhanced implementation of the Moldova-EU Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). The Council looks forward to the holding of the 7th EU-Republic of Moldova Association Council as soon as possible.

PUBLIC

8. The Council acknowledges important steps made by **Georgia** in its reform process, as highlighted also in the 7th EU-Georgia Association Council in September 2022. The Council encourages Georgia to continue on its reform path and to fully address the priorities specified in the Commission's opinion on its membership application in order to be granted candidate status. The Council puts emphasis on further deepening of the EU´s sectoral cooperation with Georgia, on the basis of enhanced implementation of the Georgia-EU Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA).

9. The Council recalls that the Commission has been invited to report on the fulfilment of the conditions specified in the Commission's opinions on the respective membership applications as part of its regular enlargement package in 2023. Without prejudice to this comprehensive regular reporting, the Council takes note of the Commission's intention to provide an update in spring 2023.

10. In line with previous Council conclusions, and in the framework of the Copenhagen political criteria and of the Stabilisation and Association Process, which remains the common framework for relations with the Western Balkans, the Council reaffirms the need, in accordance with the 2006 renewed consensus on enlargement, for fair and rigorous conditionality and the principle of own merits. In this context, the Council stresses the importance of ensuring that the EU can maintain and deepen its own development, including its capacity to integrate new members. The Council welcomes that the revised enlargement methodology is now being applied to the four negotiating countries: Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and North Macedonia, making the accession process more focused on fundamental reforms, more predictable and based on objective criteria and rigorous positive and negative conditionality, as well as reversibility. It looks forward to exploring its full potential, in particular "phasing-in" to individual EU policies, the EU market and EU programmes, while ensuring a level playing field and being subject to progress on reform priorities.

PUBLIC

11. Recalling the European Council conclusions of June 2022, the Council encourages the further advancement of gradual integration between the European Union and partners already during the enlargement process in a reversible and merit-based manner. The Council welcomes the sectoral measures already taken in this regard, in line with the revised enlargement methodology. In this context, the Council takes note of the mapping of the existing and potential integration measures and looks forward to examining proposals for further implementation of such measures, in particular in areas of mutual interest.

12. Taking note of the overall state of current reform efforts among partners, the Council stresses the pressing need for them to focus on **fundamental reforms** to address a number of persisting structural shortcomings in the areas of rule of law, fundamental rights including freedom of expression and media freedom, the strengthening of democratic institutions and public administration reform, as well as on the economic criteria. Solid and sustained track records of reform implementation and **concrete and tangible results** in these crucial areas remain essential, and continue to determine the overall pace of the accession negotiations.

13. The Council reiterates that the **rule of law** is a fundamental value on which the EU is founded, a crucial aspect of democratic transformation which is at the heart of both the Enlargement Process and the Stabilisation and Association Process, and the key benchmark against which progress towards EU membership is assessed. It is therefore essential that partners' progress in this area is robust, tangible and irreversible. While welcoming the progress made by some partners in this area, the Council notes with deep concern that the reported overall shortcomings confirm this to be one of the main challenges. The lack of credible progress continues to relate to lack of genuine political will, shortcomings in judicial functions and independence, and widespread corruption and organised crime: all recurring key concerns which need to be addressed as a matter of high priority. In line with the revised methodology, anti-corruption policy is being mainstreamed through a strong focus in relevant chapters and clusters. The Council calls on all partners to step up their efforts, in particular with regard to public procurement, one of the areas most vulnerable to corruption.

PUBLIC

14. The Council notes with concern that most shortcomings reported last year in the area of protection of **fundamental rights** still remain largely valid, and in some cases even have worsened. While the policy framework is gradually being implemented, notably on anti-discrimination and fighting gender-based violence, systemic gaps remain. Credible, genuine measures including proper implementation to address these shortcomings are urgently needed. Existing laws must also be upheld in practice. Of particular concern are the shortcomings relating to the rights of the child and the rights and non-discriminatory treatment of persons belonging to minorities and persons in vulnerable situations, such as the Roma, persons with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex **(LGBTI)** persons and persons belonging to national minorities. On gender equality, the Council reiterates that empowerment and the full enjoyment of fundamental rights of women and girls must be ensured. The situation regarding the **freedom of expression, media freedom and pluralism** – all key pillars of a democratic society – continues to be deeply concerning, with limited or no progress reported, and in one case even continued serious backsliding. Threats, intimidation, attacks targeting media, journalists and other media actors must be resolutely investigated and addressed. Ensuring pluralism, independence of media monitoring bodies and transparency of media funding are also required to safeguard media independence and prevent undue incitements to self-censorship.

15. **Public administration reform** remains a general key challenge. While welcoming examples of positive reforms, for example in digital service delivery, the Council notes the need for depoliticisation and increasing accountability and professionalism at all levels: essential features of responsive, effective and accountable governance.

PUBLIC

16. The proper **functioning and independence of democratic institutions** – an essential element of well functioning democracies and a crucial condition for EU accession – remains a pressing challenge for most partners. The Council notes with deep concern that the absence of genuine political will continues to be a main reason for the lack of substantial progress in this area. Strong political polarisation and lack of cross-party dialogue are obstructing or undermining the proper functioning of the democratic systems and its institutions. In addition to more inclusive and constructive political dialogues, the Council notes the importance of provisions enabling civil society organisations to operate freely and participate in policy-making in inclusive and meaningful ways. The Council recalls that progress in this area also is linked to effective refom progress in other fundamental areas, notably the rule of law.

17. With regard to the **economic criteria**, the Council welcomes and shares the Commission's analysis. The Council highlights the need to accelerate structural reforms to foster sustainable recovery as well as to ensure fulfilment of the economic criteria for EU membership. Reducing vulnerability to external shocks and increasing food and energy security have become even more crucial following Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. High levels of poverty remain a problem in all partners, highlighting the need to improve the effectiveness of social protection systems and targeted social spendings. The EU reiterates its committment to continued cooperation and assistance, notably by enhancing Western Balkans' partners' resilience and involvement in EU measures in order to mitigate the negative impact of the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, in particular in crucial areas such as food and energy security and cyber threats. The EU's energy support package to the Western Balkans is of particular importance, helping to alleviate the immediate consequences of the energy crisis on the most vulnerable while advancing energy transition and diversification.

    The EU continues to stand by partners and provide assistance in particular to those fully aligned with the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy.

PUBLIC

18. Improving competitiveness, the business environment and deepening regional economic integration, would significantly increase partners'economic growth and attractiveness as destinations for investments. For the Western Balkans partners, the finalisation of the **Western Balkans Common Regional Market** is of particular importance. The Council reiterates that reforms in other fundamental areas remains essential for economic recovery and development as well as efforts to tackle corruption, improve the rule of law, enhance transparency and strengthen institutions and social dialogue also benefit the economies. In this context, the Council underlines the importance of full transparency of all investments, in particular those involving public procurement procedures. Untapping the economic potential of the partners continues to also require implementation of reforms set out in the Economic Reform Programmes and in the policy guidance jointly adopted with EU Member States. Efforts to ensure fiscal stability and to shift budgets towards more growth-oriented structures should continue, including by promoting the crucial green and digital transitions and the development of human capital.

19. The **Green Agenda and sustainable connectivity** are key to a sustainable and future-proof recovery, which will benefit both businesses and the broader public. The Council reiterates the crucial need to continue to tackle climate change in line with the EU's climate-related ambitions, to speed up alignment with EU *acquis* and strengthen implementation in the transition to climate neutral, resilient, sustainable, circular and resource-efficient economies.

20. The Council encourages partners to fully implement the measures included in the Joint Conclusions of the Economic and Financial Dialogue between the EU and the Western Balkans and Turkey of 24 May 2022, based on their respective Economic Reforms Programmes. The Council recalls that the EU continues to be by far the most important economic partner of the Western Balkans and Türkiye.

PUBLIC

21. **Good neighbourly relations** and **regional cooperation** remain essential elements of the Enlargement Process, as well as of the Stabilisation and Association Process. The Council welcomes progress made and reiterates the importance of regional cooperation.The establishment of the **Western Balkans Common Regional Market** - open, inclusive and based on EU rules and standards - remains crucial for taking full advantage of the potential of the region and of the Economic and Investment Plan, and is a stepping stone towards further integration into the EU Single Market. The Council welcomes the recent agreements on the Freedom of Movement with Identity Cards, on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications, and on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications for Doctors of Medicine, Dentists and Architects.

22. Decisive efforts continue to be required to foster **reconciliation and regional stability**, including establishing definite solutions to partners' bilateral disputes and issues rooted in the legacy of the past, in line with international law and established principles, including the Agreement on Succession Issues, and the remaining cases of missing persons and war crime issues. The Council reiterates that there is no place for genocide denial, inflammatory rhetoric or glorification of war criminals, from any side. Statements and actions which negatively impact on good neighbourly relations and the peaceful settlement of disputes, must be avoided. Existing bilateral agreements, including the Prespa agreement between North Macedonia and Greece and the Treaty on Friendship, Good-neighbourliness and Cooperation between North Macedonia and Bulgaria, need to be implemented in good faith.

PUBLIC

23. Given the new geopolitical reality following Russia´s war of aggression against Ukraine, the Council strongly underlines the importance of further deepening the cooperation on foreign policy issues and the Union's expectations on partners to align with the **EU Common Foreign and Security Policy**, a key aspect of the EU integration process and a strong expression of a partner's strategic choice and place in a community of values. This is particularly relevant for issues where major common interests are at stake, such as restrictive measures at this critical geopolitical junction. The Council therefore welcomes and commends most partners for their steadfast alignment, while calling on those who have not yet done so to decisively improve their alignment including on restrictive measures, and avoid actions that go against their stated objective to join the EU. Preventing the circumvention of EU restrictive measures adopted in response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is of paramount importance.

Hybrid threats have become even more serious since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Information manipulation activities including disinformation aim to challenge the EU's credibility, undermine public trust in democratic institutions and deepening polarisation and ethnic divides. The Council recalls its increasing cooperation with partners to counter hybrid threats, in particular on cyber resilience and cyber security, including protecting critical infrastructure and food and energy security. The EU will continue deepen this cooperation and its support to partners. In this context, **strategic communication** and countering information manipulation remain of key importance. The Council calls upon all partners to clearly communicate the benefits and obligations of their path towards the EU, as well as their own commitment to EU values and related necessary reforms.

PUBLIC

24. Terrorism, radicalisation and organised crime continue to pose serious security threats to the EU and to all partners. In line with earlier European Council and Council conclusions, the Council reiterates the importance of continuing and further strengthening cooperation on **counter-terrorism**, in particular regarding the prevention and the countering of all forms of radicalisation – be it of religious, ethno-nationalist or political nature – where more efforts are needed. While noting some positive results, the Council notes that further efforts and a solid track record on final convictions and seizure and confiscation of criminal assets continue to be required in the **fight against organised crime**. The Council stresses the need for all partners to take firm and immediate action in fighting crime and eradicating **corruption**, as the overall lack of significant results increases the risk of backsliding and also feeds a sentiment of impunity and inequality. Any measure that could compromise or undermine alignment with the EU *acquis* and policies, including EU procedures and measures aimed at preventing money laundering and financing of terrorism, should be terminated without delay.

25. **Irregular migration** continues to be a key challenge, and combatting migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings remain important priorities. Sustained cooperation and coordination with the partners along the Western Balkans route, as well as the full and non-discriminatory implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement, continue to be required. The Council commends the Western Balkans partners for their generally constructive cooperation and continuous efforts and Türkiye for its continued efforts in hosting a very large refugee population. The Council also underlines the crucial importance of partners harmonising their visa policies with the EU's visa policy, and of urgently aligning with the EU list of visa-required-third countries.

26. The Council recalls the continued substantial **EU financial and technical assistance** for the Enlargement Process and the Stabilisation and Association Process, in particular through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). The Council highlights the importance of existing institution-building tools such as Twinning and TAIEX for providing targeted support to public administrations of all partners.

PUBLIC

ENLARGEMENT

MONTENEGRO

27. The Council welcomes the overall progress made in the accession negotiations so far, with all 33 screened chapters opened and 3 provisionally closed. The utmost priority for further progress in the accession negotiations, and before moving towards the provisional closure of other chapters, remains **the fulfilment of the rule of law interim benchmarks set under chapters 23 and 24**. As set out in the Negotiating Framework, progress on these chapters is essential and will continue to determine the pace of accession negotiations overall.

    The Council is concerned about the political volatility and government instability which have caused a slowdown of the accession negotiations. The Council is concerned about the Parliament's decision to amend the President's prerogatives through the adoption of legislation under the urgency procedure and underlines that all legislative acts must be in line with the constitution. The Council urges all political actors in Montenegro to demonstrate responsibility, overcome polarisation and calls on them to refrain from any action that could further deepen the institutional crisis and undermine the country's democratic institutions. Montenegrin political stakeholders should build consensus in order to restore the functionality of the democratic institutions and administration necessary to deliver on Montenegro's declared key objective of EU integration. The Council identifies the following as the most important and urgent reforms for Montenegro to undertake.

PUBLIC

28. The Council recalls the urgent need to restore the functioning and credibility of the main judicial bodies, in particular pending appointments to the Constitutional Court, and address the stagnating implementation of key judicial reforms. The independence of key institutions, in particular the judiciary, needs to be strengthened. The Council stresses that an electoral reform in line with the ODIHR recommendations remains vital for strengthening the democratic framework. The Council encourages Montenegro to increase its efforts in particular in critical areas such as **freedom of expression and media**, and the **fight against corruption and organised crime**. While acknowledging progress made, the Council underlines the need to improve Montenegro's track record of investigations, prosecutions, final convictions and seizure and confiscation of criminal assets.

    The Council also calls on Montenegro to terminate without delay any scheme or measure which could compromise or undermine alignment with the EU *acquis* and policies.

29. On **economic reforms**, the Council notes the strong rebound and steady growth of the economy and the ambitious fiscal reform programmes aimed at supporting post-pandemic recovery and other measures easing the burden on households from rising energy and food prices. The Council encourages Montenegro to implement structural reforms, reduce public debt and continue its efforts to strengthen fiscal governance and transparency.

30. The Council appreciates Montenegro's continued constructive commitment to further developing **regional cooperation** and advancing **good neighbourly relations**.

31. The Council strongly commends Montenegro for its consistent cooperation on foreign policy issues, and in particular its steadfast and long-standing full alignment with the **EU Common Foreign and Security Policy**, including on EU restrictive measures – a strong signal of Montenegro's strategic commitment to its EU path. It also welcomes Montenegro's continued active participation in EU missions and operations under the **Common Security and Defence Policy**.

PUBLIC

SERBIA

32. The Council welcomes the **overall progress** made in the accession negotiations so far, with 22 out of 35 negotiating chapters opened and 2 chapters provisionally closed. However, the reforms in the area of rule of law and fundamental rights must regain momentum. The Council continues to underscore that progress in these areas, as well as on the normalisation of Serbia's relations with Kosovo, as set out in the Negotiating Framework, remains essential and will determine the pace of accession negotiations overall.

33. While welcoming that the new Serbian Government affirmed EU integration as its strategic goal, the Council stresses that actions need to follow. In particular in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the Council expects Serbia to show unequivocal commitment to the EU and to stand up for our common principles and values. The Council also calls on Serbian authorities to communicate objectively and unambiguously on the EU, and to actively engage in preventing and tackling all forms of disinformation and foreign information manipulation in all media channels.

34. The Council notes the progress made by Serbia in some areas of the rule of law but also the overall limited progress and continued delays in a number of other areas. The Council encourages Serbia to demonstrate political will to further accelerate reforms and to deliver concrete and tangible results in the **fundamental areas**. The Council identifies the following as the most important and urgent reforms for Serbia to undertake.

35. Serbia should focus on meeting the interim benchmarks for chapters 23 and 24, including through implementation of the revised action plans for these chapters. The Council welcomes the successful approval of the Constitutional amendments aimed at strengthening the independence of the judiciary and underlines the importance of continued implementation. Furthermore, the independence and overall efficiency of the judiciary need to be improved. The Council underlines the need for Serbia to demonstrate political will and to step up its efforts in the fight against corruption. Serbia also needs to achieve tangible results and a convincing track record with effective investigations, prosecutions and final convictions, freezing and confiscation of criminal assets, notably as regards serious and organised crime cases.

PUBLIC

36. The Council calls on Serbia to effectively implement its media strategy action plan as a matter of priority, respecting the letter and spirit of the media strategy's objectives. The Council reiterates its serious concern about the lack of progress on improving the overall environment for **freedom of expression and the independence of the media**, also impacting voters' possibilities to make fully informed electoral choices, and calls on Serbia to address these serious concerns as a matter of urgency.

37. Serbia needs to continue to pay particular attention to the full respect of **fundamental rights**, including protection of the most vulnerable groups, as well as to the non-discriminatory treatment of persons belonging to minorities throughout Serbia. Tangible improvements are still needed in the effective exercise of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, especially in the areas of education, use of minority languages, access to media and religious services in minority languages. Active pursuit of investigations and convictions for hate-motivated crimes remains a priority. Upholding the rights of LGBTI persons, including their right to freedom of assembly and expression, also requires further improvement, as highlighted by the Serbian authorities' handling of the 2022 EuroPride. The Council welcomes that the event finally took place and that no major incidents occurred.

38. The Council stresses the need to ensure the proper **functioning of democratic institutions**. The Council notes that Serbia addressed some long-standing recommendations by the OSCE/ODIHR ahead of the presidential and early parliamentary elections held in 2022, and welcomes that all political forces participated in the elections. The Council positively notes that fundamental freedoms were largely respected during the campaign but notes the unequal conditions for contestants. The Council calls on the new Serbian government to take swift and determined action on the implementation of reforms delayed by the lengthy election process.

PUBLIC

39. The Council continues to underscore the importance of meaningful regional cooperation in the domestic handling of **war crimes**, resolving the remaining cases of missing persons and full cooperation with the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, including by fully accepting and implementing its rulings and decisions as a matter of urgency. There should be no support and public space for convicted war criminals nor for glorification or denial of their crimes.

40. On **economic reforms**, the Council positively notes the continuous progress made in developing a functioning market economy. The Council encourages Serbia to intensify the structural reforms of public administration and state-owned enterprises, with a particular focus on state-owned enterprises in the energy sector. The Council acknowledges that Serbia maintained its level of preparedness on the opening benchmarks in cluster 3 (Competitiveness and inclusive growth) and will continue its assessment thereof.

41. While taking positive note of Serbia´s support for United Nations General Assembly Resolutions adopted in response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine as well as other relevant steps, the Council deeply regrets Serbia's backsliding in alignment with the **EU Common Foreign and Security Policy**, notably the non-alignment with EU sanctions against Russia and Belarus, as well as its foreign policy actions contrary to the EU common approach. The Council underlines its strong expectation of Serbia to fulfil its commitment taken in the Negotiating Framework, and to step up its alignment with EU Common Foreign and Security positions and restrictive measures as a matter of utmost priority. The Council welcomes Serbia's continued active participation in and important contribution to EU missions and operations under the **Common Security and Defence Policy**.

42. The Council stresses the need for Serbia to fulfil its commitment to align with EU visa policy. While welcoming the positive steps taken by Serbia towards fulfilling this commitment, the Council underlines the need for continued efforts in this area, in particular with regard to third countries which present irregular migration or security risk to the EU.

PUBLIC

43. On the EU-facilitated **Dialogue**, the Council welcomes the continuation of the Dialogue and commends the High Representative and the EUSR for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and other Western Balkan regional issues for their commitment. The Council expects Serbia to engage in the EU-facilitated Dialogue in good faith and in the spirit of compromise to achieve a comprehensive legally binding agreement with Kosovo on normalisation of relations in accordance with international law and EU acquis with no further delay. This agreement should address all outstanding issues and contribute to regional stability. This is crucial so that Serbia and Kosovo can advance on their respective European paths. The Council reiterates its strong expectation that all past agreements are fully respected and implemented without delay, and that the Parties engage constructively to resolve all their bilateral disputes. The Council calls on both Parties to refrain from unilateral and provocative actions that could lead to tensions and violence, and from rhetoric that is not conducive to Dialogue. The Council reminds both Parties of their shared responsibility to ensure peace and stability.

44. The Council welcomes that Serbia's maintained its commitment in a number of **regional cooperation** initiatives and encourages Serbia to further strengthen **good neighbourly relations** and contribute to stability and reconciliation with all partners in the region.

PUBLIC

TÜRKİYE

45. The European Council on 24-25 June 2021 noted the European Union's strategic interest in a stable and secure environment in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the development of a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship with Türkiye. De-escalation in the Eastern Mediterranean needs to be sustained. The EU remains ready to engage with Türkiye in a phased, proportionate and reversible manner in a number of areas of common interest, subject to established conditionalities set out by the Members of the European Council on 25 March 2021, and in previous European Council conclusions.

    In light of the recent increase in tensions, the Council recalls that the European Council on 23-24 June 2022 expressed deep concern about repeated actions and statements by Türkiye, adding that Türkiye must respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all EU Member States. The European Council, recalling its previous conclusions and the statement of 25 March 2021, stated that it expects Türkiye to fully respect international law, to de-escalate tensions in the interest of regional stability in the Eastern Mediterranean, and to promote good-neighbourly relations in a sustainable way.

46. Bearing in mind all relevant European Council conclusions, the Council remains committed to maintaining an open and frank dialogue, to addressing common challenges and to cooperating in essential areas of joint interest such as migration, counterterrorism, public health, climate, and regional issues. The Council takes note of the continuation of High Level Dialogues between the EU and Türkiye on several of these issues.

PUBLIC

47. The Council commends Türkiye's continued significant efforts in hosting and addressing the needs of almost 4 million refugees. The continued EU assistance to refugees and host communities has been ensured in a timely manner. The **EU-Turkey Statement** of 2016 continues to deliver results . The Council recalls that the European Council on 21-22 October 2021 called on Türkiye to ensure the full and non-discriminatory implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement, including vis-à-vis the Republic of Cyprus. Effective border management, prevention of irregular arrivals, as well as the resumption of returns, continue to be priorities, in accordance with international and EU law. The full and effective implementation of the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement and cooperation in the area of justice and home affairs with all EU Member States remain essential. The Council stresses the need for Türkiye to align with the EU visa policy.

48. The Council reiterates its serious concerns about the further and deeply worrying backsliding in the areas of **democracy, rule of law, and fundamental rights**.

The systemic lack of independence and undue pressure on the judiciary continue to be a source of serious concern, as are the on-going restrictions, detentions, imprisonments, and other measures targeting journalists, academics, members of political parties, including parliamentarians, lawyers, human rights defenders, social media users, and others exercising their fundamental rights and freedoms. The Council is concerned that the newly adopted Disinformation Law could further curtail the freedom of expression and independent media in Türkiye.

The Council stresses the importance of respecting the legality and integrity of the electoral process, in particular against the backdrop of the numerous arrests, dismissals and replacements of democratically elected municipal mayors, and the targeting of opposition parties and their members.

The Council reiterates its call on Türkiye to urgently reverse the negative trends in all these areas and credibly address the many serious shortcomings identified in the Commission's report, in line with the international commitments of Türkiye.

PUBLIC

Türkiye should also step up its cooperation with the Council of Europe and its relevant bodies and institutions, address their key recommendations, fully implement the European Convention of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments to which Türkiye is a party, as well as execute all judgments of the European Court of Human Rights in line with Article 46 of the ECHR. Türkiye's continued failure to implement rulings of the European Court of Human Rights raises serious questions about Türkiye's commitments to the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights, and to its international obligations.

49. On **economic reforms**, the Council notes the serious concerns persisting over the functioning of the country's market economy. Institutional and policy coordination weaknesses undermined the credibility and effectiveness of authorities' actions, and imbalances increased significantly, resulting in financial market instability, rising inflation, a weakened lira and higher poverty. The independence of regulatory authorities, notably the Central Bank, is of particular importance.

The Council further recalls the need for Türkiye to address obligations as regards the implementation of the **EU-Turkey Customs Union**, ensuring its effective application to all Member States. The Council regrets Türkiye's continued and extensive deviations from its obligations under the EU-Turkey Customs Union and recalls that trade barriers or equivalent that are not in conformity with it should be removed without delay.

50. The Council commends Türkiye for its constructive role in facilitating the export of Ukrainian grain.

51. However, the Council deeply regrets Türkiye's non-alignment with EU sanctions against Russia. The Council underlines its strong expectation of Türkiye to step up its alignment with **EU Common Foreign and Security Policy** positions and restrictive measures as a matter of utmost priority. The Council underlines the paramount importance of preventing the circumvention of EU restrictive measures adopted in response to the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. In this respect, the Council expects that Türkiye ensures the full respect of those restrictive measures, in particular taking into account the free circulation of products, including dual use goods, within the EU-Turkey Customs Union.

PUBLIC

The Council notes with deep concern that Türkiye's foreign policy is increasingly colliding with the EU priorities under the Common Foreign and Security Policy, including regarding Syria, Libya and Operation IRINI. In line with the shared interest of the EU and Türkiye in regional peace and stability, the Council expects Türkiye and all actors to contribute positively to the resolution of regional crises.

The Council recalls its position on accession of Member States to international organisations.

52. The Council continues to expect Türkiye to unequivocally commit to **good neighbourly relations**, international agreements and to the peaceful settlement of disputes, having recourse, if necessary, to the International Court of Justice.

The Council, as stated in its conclusions of 11 December 2006, 26 June 2018 and 18 June 2019, subsequently endorsed by the European Council as well as in the Declaration of 21 September 2005, calls on Türkiye to fulfil its obligations under the Negotiating Framework, including the full, non-discriminatory implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement towards all Member States. The Council reiterates that recognition of all Member States is essential. Türkiye must stop all threats and actions that damage good neighbourly relations, normalise its relations with the Republic of Cyprus and respect the sovereignty of all EU Member States over their territorial sea and airspace as well as all their sovereign rights, including inter alia the right to explore and exploit natural resources, in accordance with EU and international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

53. Recalling previous European Council conclusions, the The EU remains fully committed to a comprehensive settlement of the **Cyprus problem**. It recalls that it remains crucial in this regard that Türkiye commits and contributes to a peaceful settlement, including its external aspects, within the UN framework, on the basis of a bicommunal, bizonal federation with political equality, in accordance with all relevant UNSC resolutions and in line with the principles on which the EU is founded and the *acquis*. The EU will continue to play an active role in supporting the process. The Council calls on Türkiye to refrain from actions that run contrary to UN Security Council Resolutions 541 and 550.

PUBLIC

The Council condemns Türkiye's continued unilateral actions in relation to **Varosha** that run contrary to the UN Security Council Resolutions and recalls the importance of the status of Varosha and the need for full respect of UN Security Council Resolutions, in particular Resolutions 550, 789 and 1251. The Council calls for the immediate reversal of these actions and the reversal of all steps taken on Varosha since October 2020. The Council recalls in this respect the conclusions of the European Council of June 2021.

54. The Council notes with regret that Türkiye continues to move further away from the European Union and recalls its previous conclusion which noted that Türkiye's accession negotiations therefore effectively have come to a standstill and no further chapters can be considered for opening or closing.

NORTH MACEDONIA

55. The Council welcomes the holding of the first intergovernmental conference with North Macedonia on 19 July 2022: a clear recognition of the progress achieved by North Macedonia on advancing the EU reform agenda and on delivering tangible and sustained results.

56. The Council also welcomes that the Commission already has advanced its work to carry out the process of analytical examination of the EU *acquis* (**screening**) and looks forward to the completion of this process.

57. Following the local elections held in October 2021, the Council recalls the need for a comprehensive review of the **electoral legislation** and the importance for the authorities to continue to address the outstanding recommendations from OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission.

PUBLIC

58. The Council welcomes that some progress was made in the area of the **fundamentals** and in particular in the field of **rule of law**, including the fight against corruption and organised crime**,** but more efforts are needed. The Council also welcomes the government's commitment to sustain and accelerate the implementation of EU related reforms. The sustainability of these structural reforms is a long-term process, which requires continuous engagement from both the government and the opposition. In this regard, the Council encourages all parties in parliament to continue work together constructively and to build cross-party consensus focusing on making concrete steps in the negotiating process and maintaining the current reform momentum. The Council stresses the need to ensure transparency in policymaking, the inclusiveness of consultation processes and effective communication of the negotiation process.

59. In the area of the **judiciary**, the Council welcomes that some progress was made through the steady implementation of the judicial reform strategy. Building on progress already made, sustained efforts are needed to ensure the independence, professionalism and impartiality of the judicial system. The Council notes the continued efforts to fight against corruption and organised crime, including for high-level cases. The Council emphasises the need to ensure systematic implementation of the updated action plan on the judicial reform strategy and to step up the implementation of the human resources strategies for the judiciary and the prosecution. The Council emphasises the importance for the concerned institutions to follow up on the recommendations of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption which pro-actively has continued its work and has opened several cases, including against high-level officials.

    The Council calls on North Macedonia to continue its efforts to further strengthen **fundamental rights**, **media freedom** and **freedom of expression**.

60. The Council notes that limited progress has been made in the area of **public administration reform.** Ensuring respect for the principles of transparency, merit and equitable representation remains essential.

PUBLIC

61. The country has implemented a comprehensive reform of its **intelligence and security services**. The Council reiterates that the capacity for parliamentary oversight over the intelligence services needs to be strengthened.

62. The Council welcomes that North Macedonia continues to play an active and constructive role in the management of mixed **migration** flows by cooperating effectively with neighbouring countries and EU Member States. The Council stresses the need for North Macedonia to fulfil its commitment to align with EU visa policy.

    The Council welcomes the signature of the European Border and Coast Guards Frontex Status Agreement between the EU and North Macedonia.

63. On **economic reforms**, the Council encourages North Macedonia to continue efforts to further meet the requirements of the EU's internal market and to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union.

64. The Council welcomes that the 2021 census now has been completed and takes note of the results.

65. **Good neighbourly relations** and **regional cooperation** remain essential elements of the enlargement process, as well as of the Stabilisation and Association Process. The Council recalls the importance of achieving tangible results and implementing in good faith bilateral agreements, including the Prespa agreement with Greece and the Treaty on Friendship, Good-neighbourliness and Cooperation with Bulgaria.

66. The Council strongly commends North Macedonia for its consistent cooperation on foreign policy issues and in particular its full alignment with the **EU Common Foreign and Security Policy**, including on EU restrictive measures – a strong signal of North Macedonia's strategic commitment to its EU path. It also welcomes North Macedonia's continued active participation in EU missions and operations under the **Common Security and Defence Policy**.

PUBLIC

ALBANIA

67. The Council welcomes the holding of the first intergovernmental conference with Albania on 19 July 2022: a clear recognition of the progress achieved by Albania on advancing the EU reform agenda and on delivering tangible and sustained reform results.

68. The Council also welcomes that the Commission already has advanced its work to carry out the the process of analytical examination of the EU *acquis* (**screening**) and the Council looks forward to the completion of this process.

69. Following the parliamentary **elections** in April 2021, the Council underlines the importance of authorities to continue to address the implementation of outstanding OSCE/ODIHR recommendations. The Council recalls that inclusive and constructive political dialogue in the country remains crucial in order to further advance the reform momentum. The Council stresses the need to ensure transparency in policymaking, the inclusiveness of consultation processes and effective communication of the negotiation process**.**

70. The Council welcomes that Albania made progress in the area of the **fundamentals**, and in particular in the field of **rule of law**, specifically by implementing the comprehensive justice reform, which has advanced steadily, and by strengthening the fight against corruption and organised crime. The Specialised Structure for Anti-Corruption and Organised Crime Court delivered several important final decisions on high-ranking state officials. Efforts to establish a solid track record in the fight against corruption and organised crime need to intensify, including at high-level. The implementation of final court verdicts remains essential. The action plan to address the Financial Action Task Force recommendations must be further implemented.

    The Council calls on Albania to refrain from establishing any scheme or measure such as tax amnesty legislation which could compromise or undermine alignment with the EU *acquis* and policies, including EU procedures and measures aimed at preventing money laundering and tax evasion.

PUBLIC

71. The Council welcomes that the **vetting** process has continued to advance steadily and produced tangible results. The Council welcomes the wide vote across parties on the time-limited extension of the constitutional mandate of the vetting bodies and encourages the authorities to ensure the orderly completion of the process in the shortest possible amount of time. The Council welcomes the restored functionality of the High Court and the Constitutional Court.

72. On **fundamental rights**, the Council calls for enhanced efforts to implement a comprehensive land sector reform and to consolidate property rights in a transparent manner, including by holding consultations with all relevant stakeholders, including by addressing cases of falsification of documents and swiftly advancing the process for registration and compensation. Following the adoption of the Population Census Law, the Council looks forward to the smooth conduct of the census in full transparency and in line with international standards. The Council also welcomes the adoption of the secondary legislation on minorities and continues to urge Albania to swiftly adopt and implement the remaining by-laws relating to the 2017 framework law on the protection of national minorities, in line with European standards and with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders.

    Furthermore, the Council continues to call on Albania to make tangible progress on **freedom of expression**. The Council reiterates the importance of ensuring that any amendments to the media law are in line with the Venice Commission recommendations and international standards, should the law be further considered by parliament.

73. The Council notes that limited progress was achieved on **public administration** reform and encourages Albania to continue with determined efforts in this area. Coordination within the public administration needs improvement particularly for integrating the policy planning and budgeting processes. The setting-up of new agencies needs to be an inclusive process, and these should be subject to checks and balances.

PUBLIC

74. When it comes to **migration**, Albania's legal framework is largely aligned with the EU acquis but needs updating. The total number of unfounded asylum applications lodged by Albanian nationals in the EU increased significantly in 2021. This need to be closely monitored and addressed by the Albanian authorities. The Council stresses the need for Albania to fulfil its commitment to align with the **EU visa policy**.

75. On **economic reforms**, the Council encourages Albania to continue efforts to further meet the requirements of the EU's internal market and to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union.

76. The Council welcomes Albania's continued constructive engagement in **regional cooperation**. The Council also welcomes that Albania continued dialogue to ensure **good neighbourly relations**, which remain essential.

77. The Council strongly commends Albania for its consistent cooperation on foreign policy issues and in particular its full alignment with the **EU Common Foreign and Security Policy**, including on EU restrictive measures – a strong signal of Albania's strategic commitment to its EU path. It also welcomes Albania's continued active participation in EU missions and operations under the **Common Security and Defence Policy**. The Council commends Albania for its active engagement as a non-permanent member in the UN Security Council in promoting and defending the rules-based international order.

PUBLIC

STABILISATION AND ASSOCIATION PROCESS

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

78. Following the European Council Conclusions of 23-24 June 2022, and in light of the Commission's subsequent recommendation of 12 October 2022, the Council recommends to grant the status of candidate country to Bosnia and Herzegovina, subject to confirmation by the European Council, on the understanding that the steps specified in the Commission's recommendation are taken, in order to strengthen the rule of law, the fight against corruption and organised crime, migration management and fundamental rights. The Council looks forward to a confirmation of this decision by the December European Council. In the current geopolitical context, the Council underlines the urgency for the country to move forward on its EU path, in particular via fulfilling all 14 key priorities for the opening of EU accession negotiations identified in the Commission's Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for EU membership as endorsed by the Council in 2019. The Council also calls on all political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina to swiftly implement the commitments set out in the agreement reached on 12 June 2022 and urgently finalise the constitutional and electoral reform in line with the key priorities.

79. The Council welcomes the holding of general **elections** in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 2 October 2022. According to the preliminary findings and conclusions of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, the elections were overall competitive and well organised but marked by mistrust in public institutions and ethnically divisive rhetoric. Ensuring that elections are conducted in line with European standards is a key priority set out in the Commission Opinion. The EU expects functioning legislatures and governments to be swiftly set up at State, entity and cantonal level to focus on reforms on the EU path.

80. The Council further reiterates its unequivocal commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU perspective as a single, united and sovereign country.

PUBLIC

81. The Council urges all political actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina to refrain from and renounce provocative divisive rhetoric and actions, including questioning the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the country, and to end the glorification of convicted war criminals as well as to actively promote reconciliation.

82. The Council notes with concern the overall limited progress in **reforms**, however it welcomes the recent steps taken, including: the adoption of amendments to the public procurement law, adoption of the comprehensive strategy on public financial management by all levels of government, the appointment of four missing judges to the Constitutional Court of the Federation entity, the ratification of several agreements, including on Horizon and Creative Europe programmes, and the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism, as well as progress in the operationalisation of the cooperation with EUROPOL and the adoption of the counterterrorism strategy.

83. With reference to the institutional mechanisms which were set by the Dayton Peace Agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to undertake further constitutional and electoral reforms to ensure equality and non-discrimination of all citizens, notably by implementing the Sejdić-Finci case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). The Council reiterates its call for an inclusive process of limited constitutional and electoral reforms, through genuine dialogue and in line with European standards to eliminate all forms of inequality and discrimination in the electoral process. The Council underlines that no legislative or political step should be taken which would make the implementation of the Sejdić-Finci ruling and related ECtHR rulings more challenging or would further deepen divisions.

84. While being concerned by the lack of progress, the Council further encourages Bosnia and Herzegovina to address the reforms aiming to improve the country's legislative and institutional framework to comply with the requirements of EU membership, including by developing and adopting a national programme for the adoption of the EU acquis.

PUBLIC

85. The Council welcomes the legislative amendments to the public procurement law while expressing concern that no further progress was made in addressing the Opinion key priorities and the findings of the Expert Report on Rule of Law issues. The Council underlines the need for the authorities to reinforce the **rule of law** and take decisive steps to strengthen the prevention of and fight against corruption and organised crime. To this aim, the Council urges Bosnia and Herzegovina to adopt integrity amendments to the Law on the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council and to align its legislation on conflict of interest with European standards. The Council also recalls the need for Bosnia and Herzegovina to adopt a new law on the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council and adopt the law on Courts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Constitutional Court decisions must be fully respected.

86. The Council welcomes that the legislative and institutional framework on **fundamental rights** is largely in place and the adoption of action plans for the social inclusion of the Roma and on the rights of LGBTI persons. It calls on Bosnia and Herzegovina to significantly intensify reform efforts on human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination, notably by establishing a national preventive mechanism against torture and ill-treatment.

87. The Council regrets the lack of progress on **freedom of expression and media**, the safety of journalists, and urges Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure the appropriate judicial follow-up to cases of threats and violence against journalists and media workers.

88. The Council expects Bosnia and Herzegovina to undertake essential steps in **public administration reform** by ensuring a professional and depoliticised civil service and a coordinated countrywide approach to policy making.

89. The Council welcomes the positive steps taken to improve **migration** management and coordination, as well as its asylum system, and encourages Bosnia and Herzegovina to decisively continue work in order to successfully tackle migration challenges. In this context, the Council takes positive note that the Council of Ministers adopted a legislative proposal on border control and encourages Bosnia and Herzegovina to adopt the strategy and action plan on migration, improve alignment with EU visa policy, as well as strengthen border management and conclude the Frontex status agreement with the EU.

PUBLIC

90. On **economic reforms**, the Council is concerned that the country remains at an early stage in establishing a functioning market economy and in terms of its capacity to cope with the competitive pressure and market forces in the EU. The Council recalls the need to ensure compliance with the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), and the regular holding of meetings of SA bodies.

91. The Council encourages Bosnia and Herzegovina to further actively engage in **regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations**.

92. The Council welcomes Bosnia and Herzegovina's significant improvement of its alignment with **EU Common Foreign and Security Policy** signalling its commitment to the EU path. The Council calls on Bosnia and Herzegovina to further improve its alignment rate and to ensure full implementation of the restrictive measures.

93. The Council welcomes the extension of the mandate of the EUFOR Althea, which continues to support the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina in maintaining a safe and secure environment for all citizens.

94. The Council reiterates the importance of continued cooperation among international actors and expresses support to the mission of the High Representative and his Office towards fulfilling the 5+2 Agenda.

PUBLIC

KOSOVO

95. The Council welcomes Kosovo's continued commitment to its European path and reiterates the importance of continued implementation of the EU-Kosovo **Stabilisation and Association Agreement** (SAA).

96. The Council welcomes continued progress with regard to strengthening democracy and the rule of law, the overall administration of justice, fight against corruption, anti-terrorism and prevention of violent extremism. It calls on Kosovo to continue to step up the fight against organised crime. In the field of the judiciary, the Council calls on Kosovo to improve the implementation of existing tools to safeguard the integrity, independence and efficiency of the judicial system, including through appropriate legislative changes, and welcomes the government's commitment to follow the Venice Commission's recommendations and to cooperate with the EU. Kosovo should further pursue public administration reform**,** stepping up efforts to put in place a professional, accountable and citizen-oriented civil service, in line with European and international standards.

97. The Council calls on Kosovo to address recurrent **election** process shortcomings and to implement related EU Election Observation Missions recommendations before the next elections due in 2025. In this context, the Council welcomes the creation by the Assembly of a multi-party *ad hoc* committee to work on these reforms. The Council encourages all political parties to work together to further strengthen the Assembly's legislative role, as well as its oversight role, and to prioritise key legislation, in particular on EU-related reforms, where multi-party support should be sought.

98. The Council welcomes Kosovo's strong condemnation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, its clear geo-strategic orientation as well as its voluntary alignment with and continued implementation of the EU restrictive measures, in particular against Russia and Belarus.

PUBLIC

99. The Council notes that Kosovo's **economy** has experienced a strong economic rebound after the pandemic but that the growth outlook in 2022 has deteriorated. Current global economic challenges highlight the need to continue to address long-standing structural problems, in particular in relation to energy security but also the lack of economic diversification, the dependence on external financial flows and the widespread informal economy, as well as challenges in the area of rule of law, including corruption.

100. The Council calls on Kosovo to swiftly approve an ambitious and forward-looking energy strategy and to increase the share of renewable sources in its energy mix. Sustained efforts are needed to ensure the security of supply, to diversify sources, to improve the functioning of the internal energy market, and to develop energy networks and energy efficiency.

101. The Council supports **visa liberalisation** for Kosovo and recognises its importance for Kosovo citizens. The Council looks forward to the swift and successful negotiation with the European Parliament regarding the necessary amendments to Regulation (EU) No 2018/1806.

102. The Council encourages Kosovo to make additional efforts to fully implement the legal framework on **fundamental rights**, in line with European standards, as well as to improve coordination and oversight. More needs to be done notably to ensure the full protection of cultural and religious heritage, the protection of the rights of persons belonging to non-majority communities, including Roma and Ashkali, displaced persons, and LGBTI persons, as well as gender equality in practice. The existing human rights mechanisms need to be further strengthened.

PUBLIC

103. On the EU-facilitated **Dialogue**, the Council welcomes the continuation of the Dialogue and commends the High Representative and the EUSR for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and other Western Balkan regional issues for their commitment. The Council expects Kosovo to engage in the EU-facilitated Dialogue in good faith and in the spirit of compromise to achieve a comprehensive legally binding agreement with Serbia on normalisation of relations in accordance with international law and EU acquis with no further delay. This agreement should address all outstanding issues and contribute to regional stability. This is crucial so that Kosovo and Serbia can advance on their respective European paths. The Council reiterates its strong expectation that all past agreements are fully respected and implemented without delay, and that the Parties engage constructively to resolve all their bilateral disputes. The Council calls on both Parties to refrain from unilateral and provocative actions that could lead to tensions and violence, and from rhetoric that is not conducive to Dialogue. The Council reminds both Parties of their shared responsibility to ensure peace and stability.

104. The Council reiterates the importance of and its support for the work of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and of the Specialist Prosecutor's Office. Continued full cooperation by Kosovo to enable them to fulfil their mandate is an important demonstration of Kosovo's commitment to rule of law and to ending impunity.

105. The Council encourages Kosovo to develop a strategy for transitional justice, including a comprehensive approach for addressing its past. The Council draws attention to the need to progress further in the internal dialogue.

106. The Council recalls the importance of Kosovo's close cooperation with the **EULEX** mission, as well as other relevant international actors.

107. The Council recalls the importance of regional cooperation and **good neighbourly relations** and encourages Kosovo to engage actively and constructively in **regional cooperation** activities.

PUBLIC