

## **Ninth meeting of the International Steering Group for Kosovo**

*5 October 2009, Pristina, Republic of Kosovo*

1. The International Steering Group (ISG) thanks H.E. Foreign Minister Skender Hyseni, H.E. Mr. Sadri Ferati, Minister of Local Government Administration, and Ms. Nesrin Lushta, chairperson of the Central Electoral Commission, for their contributions. The ISG continues to encourage and to support the Republic of Kosovo's efforts to gain further international recognition and play its full part in regional cooperation. As work nears completion on the demarcation of the Kosovo-Macedonian border, we commend both sides for their determination. These border stones are also milestones of bilateral progress and regional stability
2. The ISG commends the Government of Kosovo for the significant progress made in implementing the key provisions of the Comprehensive Settlement Proposal (CSP), in particular those related to decentralization. Kosovo's goal, consistent with its European perspective, should be strong municipalities to which full managerial and executive competencies will be devolved. The ISG encourages the authorities to pursue these efforts and to devote the necessary resources. The participation of the Kosovo Serb and other non-majority communities in a multi-ethnic Kosovo remains a key objective. The ISG reiterates the importance of protecting Kosovo's religious and cultural heritage.
3. The ISG welcomes the holding of municipal elections on 15 November. These will be the first elections to be held since the Declaration of Independence. Free, fair, democratic and transparent elections with open public debate are decisive for Kosovo's progress towards a multi-ethnic society. The ISG commends all international stakeholders contributing to capacity-building and observation of the elections.
4. The ISG supports the Government of Kosovo's decision to hold elections also in those new municipalities where preparations are sufficiently advanced to allow, in accordance with the CSP, for the new municipalities to be established. In these new municipalities the Kosovo Serb community will enjoy enhanced competencies. Elections for those two municipalities which still require further preparation will be called no later than six months after 16 November 2009. The ISG urges all citizens of Kosovo to exercise their democratic rights on election day.
5. The ISG reiterates the urgent need to strengthen Rule of Law in Kosovo. It encourages further steps to deepen regional cooperation in the Rule of Law sector. It expresses its strong concern regarding recent violence directed against EULEX property and welcomes steps taken by the Kosovo authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice. The Government owes a duty to the people of Kosovo to redouble its efforts to combat corruption and organized crime, in full cooperation with EULEX. Kosovo's European

perspective is closely linked to rapid and decisive action against these evils directly affecting Kosovo's society.

6. The global financial crisis aggravates the fundamental weaknesses of Kosovo's economy. The ISG encourages the Government to exercise fiscal discipline and adopt farsighted economic policies to address such weaknesses drawing on the advice of the International Monetary Fund, in order to stimulate growth and job creation. The ISG draws the attention of the Government to the urgent need of improving the business environment and stimulating private investment through giving priority to privatization and attracting foreign direct investment. The ISG calls upon the Government of Kosovo to demonstrate its full support for the Kosovo Property Agency, including by finalizing its appointments to the Board of the KPA and ensuring the KPA's access to the records of the Kosovo Cadastral Agency.
7. The ISG reiterates its full support to the International Civilian Representative (ICR), Mr. Pieter Feith, and the International Civilian Office (ICO). The ISG has held a first round of consultations on the review of the ICR's mandate based on recommendations of the ICR, as foreseen by the CSP. This review will be carried out in light of progress towards full implementation of the CSP including the establishment of a multiethnic society, the rule of law and a free market economy. The publication of an updated ICO Mission Implementation Matrix on the ICO website ([www.ico-kos.org](http://www.ico-kos.org)) will assist the Group in its reflections.