 Joint statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton and Commissioner Štefan Füle on Albania

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, and Stefan Füle, EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, made today the following statement:

"We note with concern that there has been controversy and polarisation over decisions of the Central Election Commission and the Electoral College, including over the latest decision and reasoning by the Electoral College. The elections in Tirana were not good as they demonstrated beyond doubt that the electoral framework needs to be reformed. We recall that the Council of the EU on 20 June stressed that shortcomings in the legal framework and electoral process will need to be addressed in a comprehensive, effective and consensual manner through a thorough electoral reform, in line with all recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR. To that end, we await the final assessment by OSCE/ODIHR. In this context, we welcome the initiative by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, asking the Venice Commission for an opinion on how to avoid similar situations in future elections. We expect this to be supported by all sides in Albania as part of a serious effort to overcome the difficulties noted during the conduct of elections in Albania, most recently in 2011.

Now that the Electoral College has completed its task, it is time for political forces in Albania to overcome the political stalemate and return to a level of political dialogue that would allow the proper functioning of key democratic institutions, notably the parliament. Work on addressing the Commission Opinion's recommendations, in particular the 12 key priorities, and other key challenges needs to be pursued in an effective and inclusive way. In order to achieve progress on the EU integration path, electoral and constitutional reforms, reforms of the parliamentary rules and procedures as well as other key reforms are essential and urgent. The European Union is prepared to facilitate this task through the Seminar process begun earlier this year."

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