Joint Statement by 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 on Serbia

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, made today the following statement:

"We are very encouraged by the progress made by Serbia over the recent years and months. We would like to congratulate President Tadic, his government and the Serbian people for this.

The decision of the European Council today is recognition of this progress made. It is also a clear sign that the EU wishes to welcome Serbia into its ranks and looks forward to further intensifying its cooperation with Serbia.

We are very satisfied with Serbia's full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the considerable progress towards fulfilling the accession criteria and the requirements in the Stabilisation and Association Process. In particular, we appreciate the difficult reforms made to the rule of law and justice system. These are enormous achievements.

We are equally encouraged by the progress made in the ongoing EU facilitated dialogue. The latest agreement reached only a week ago, and recent positive signals on the implementation of previous agreements indicates that we are moving firmly in the right direction.

We are looking forward to see Serbia progressing on the path to the European Union in the near future and are confident that Serbia can now make the final steps and ensure that the decision to grant candidate status in February can be taken."

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