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Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton after her meeting with Serbian President Nikolic

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, issued the following statement today:

"I met today with the newly elected President of Serbia, Tomislav Nikolic. The meeting provided a first opportunity for us to talk about EU - Serbia relations and I am very pleased with our discussion. I see this as a first of many such meetings.

I conveyed the message that I expected President Nikolic to continue on the European course and that the entire EU stands by Serbia in its efforts. I also underlined that in order to move forward there are a number of issues that we will need to tackle.

In this context, I was reassured to hear that President Nikolic's commitment that all the agreements reached so far in the EU facilitated dialogue with Pristina would be fully implemented. I also stressed, that as soon as a Government is formed and while there is window of opportunity, we need to move the process forward, and to be ready to tackle difficult issues. Furthermore, I reiterated the longstanding EU position that full cooperation and freedom of movements for EULEX remain key for us.

Finally, I also emphasized the importance of regional cooperation and reconciliation, and I was encouraged to hear that Serbia will continue to contribute to the stability and progress of the entire region. These are fundamental EU principles and for me there is no place in today's world for the rhetoric from the past".

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