Remarks by High Representative Catherine Ashton at the press point with Prime Minister of Kosovo Hashim Thaçi and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during the visit to Kosovo

Can I first of all say how delighted I am to be back in Kosovo. I am especially delighted to be back with Secretary of State Clinton – my friend Hillary – who I know has a very special place in the hearts of the people of Kosovo.

Prime Minister, it’s always a pleasure to see you and to have the opportunity to continue our work together.

On this particular trip, our common theme has been the importance of seeing the countries we’ve visited becoming part of the European Union.

To the people of Kosovo I say the same thing: your future lies with the European Union and we are eager to see you realise this ambition.

As Secretary Clinton has said, the road ahead is not easy: every country that comes into the Union will tell you that it gets harder before it gets easier and there are many things that need to be done.

But they are worth doing, because at the end of the process you will have a country that is stronger economically, stronger politically, where the rule of law is observed correctly and where human rights are fully respected. And though I would also say that all countries need to continue to be vigilant and to continue on the journey that they have undertaken, you will arrive into the European Union with great strength and I personally look forward to that day very much.

The dialogue that we have begun is not easy. It is not easy for the Prime Minister, it is not easy for Prime Minister Dačić of Serbia. And I know that for the people of Kosovo, with the history and the fears that you have, it’s not easy either.
But we commit to you that this dialogue is about making lives better. It’s about normalising life, so that the people who live in the north can go about their daily lives feeling part of a community, feeling part of society. And it’s about doing so by sitting down and talking, talking openly and freely.

I have to say to all of you that I believe your Prime Minister was extremely brave to come to Brussels, to come into the room and to have that conversation. I also believe the Prime Minister of Serbia was brave. It was a good meeting, a first good meeting, and there will be more, soon. Their purpose will be, as I’ve said, to make things better.

I hope you will give your Prime Minister your full support and that he can count on all the politicians and the people to go forward and, in doing so, to know that it’s not just the European Union that will be working hard on this. We will be in close contact with our friends, our partners in the United States of America, who have played such a vital role in supporting not just Kosovo but also the European Union as a whole.

So thank you very much for having us here and for all that you’re doing.

And Secretary Clinton, as this is our last press conference on this particular trip: what a pleasure it has been to travel with you and to work so closely with you.

To all of you, I wish this country every possible success.

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