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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Ambassadors visit Shkodra to closely monitor current developments**

*Upon his invitation, Ambassadors Montobbio on behalf of the EU Presidency and Lohan on behalf of the EU Delegation accompanied President Topi today to the Shkodra region. The European Union showed its solidarity to those affected by the floods in northwest Albania through the quick deployment of expertise and aid.*

The Head of the Delegation of the European Union, Ambassador Helmuth Lohan, together with the President of the Republic Bamir Topi, the Spanish Ambassador Manuel Montobbio and the Ambassador of the United States John Withers, visited today the villages of Obot and Ana e Malit, along with Ajasëm neighbourhood. Accompanied by the local authorities, the President of the Republic and the ambassadors learned first hand about the current situation and how aid is being delivered and coordinated.

Ambassador Lohan also visited the government's Operations Centre in Shkodra Prefecture. Minister of Interior Basha and Ambassador Lohan discussed questions of deploying and co-ordinating relief assistance under the Community Civil Protection Mechanism.

“We in Europe feel close to you. During these days the EU solidarity has taken the form of goods, equipments and personnel, which I am sure you are making good use of today and in the future. European Union solidarity will not end today but extend beyond the emergency phase”, said Ambassador Lohan during the meeting in the government's operations center.

“The hand of EU has been very helpful”, declared Minister Basha in front of the local media, adding that on behalf of the Albanian government he would like to thank the European Union for the quick reaction to the floods crisis by sending aid and expertise through the MIC team.

Very soon after the request of the Albanian government, the European Commission activated the Community Civil Protection Mechanism through which a team of seven experts has been immediately deployed in the country and is currently assisting the Albanian government with the assessment of relief needs and the co-ordination of incoming assistance. The first assistance items from EU Member States have already arrived.

### **Background Information:**

The **Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC)** is operated by the Environment Directorate General of the European Commission. It is the operational heart of the Community Mechanism for Civil Protection. It is accessible 24 hours a day, and provides countries access to the Community civil protection platform. Any country affected by a major disaster – inside or outside the EU – can launch a request for assistance through the MIC.

During emergencies the MIC plays three important roles: serving as a communications hub for the exchange of requests and offers of assistance; providing information on civil protection preparedness and response to participating states as well as a wider audience of interested stakeholders; supporting co-ordination of the provision of European assistance.

The Team deployed to Albania has visited the region affected by the floods in order to assess the situation on the ground. The Team also assists Albania with the reception of assistance by EU Member States.

### **Overview of the assistance provided by EU Member States**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Type of assistance</b>	<b>Arrival time</b>
Austria	8 power generators, 5 high capacity pumps	11/01/2010
Italy	2 helicopters CH47 (capacity 20 persons each), medicines	10/01/2010
Slovenia	13 power generators	9/01/2010
France	11 high capacity pumps	11/01/2010
Greece	29 fire-fighters 4 vehicles, 2 rescue boats, 22 pumps	09/01/2010

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