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Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, was in Sarajevo, Belgrade and Pristina this week for a joint visit with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.
On Tuesday 30 October, Catherine Ashton and Hilary Clinton expressed their strong joint commitment to **Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)** in Euro-Atlantic integrations. After their meeting with the BiH Presidency in Sarajevo, Catherine Ashton said: ‘We want to see a united, stable, prosperous, multi-ethnic country taking its rightful place in European and Transatlantic structures’. She added: ‘I want to underline that the EU perspective is real and has our unanimous support’ and reiterated that action is required from political leaders, looking beyond ‘domestic divisions, political rivalries and vested interests’ in order to make quick and concrete progress on the EU agenda. ‘I believe people here want the real, pressing challenges – such as the economy, jobs, the rule of law – to be addressed.’

Later that day in **Serbia**, as well as in **Kosovo** on Wednesday 31 October, Catherine Ashton and Hillary Clinton expressed support for the dialogue for the normalisation of relations between both sides, reiterating that ‘its objective is to improve the lives of people, help solve problems and bring Serbia and Kosovo closer to the EU’.

In **Belgrade**, Catherine Ashton and Hillary Clinton met President Nikolić and Prime Minister Dačić. Serbia’s important progress towards its European future and candidacy status was welcomed whilst both the President and Prime Minister were ‘encouraged to intensify reforms, in particular judicial reform’ to keep Serbia moving forward at a good pace.

During their visit to **Pristina**, and following their meeting with Prime Minister Thaçi, Catherine Ashton once again stressed: ‘The dialogue that we have begun is not easy. […] 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’. Together with politicians and people, ‘the European Union will keep working hard on this […], 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.’
MODERATOR: (In Croatian.)

PRESIDENT JOSIPOVIC: (Via interpreter) (In progress) – profile itself as a democratic (inaudible). We are today a member of NATO, soon to be a member of the EU, and this shows that the support from the American side has been very meaningful. We’ve discussed our bilateral relations that are excellent, however there is a great potential for enhancing our economic cooperation. I’m very pleased that from you, Secretary of State, I’ve heard major interest of the American side in cooperation in the economy. There is, of course, a problem of the actual openness to investment, but we are aware that the Croatian Government is preparing a number of measures to facilitate investments in Croatia, and I am sure that there will be a major number of American investors who will come and invest in Croatia.

We have discussed our cooperation within NATO, which is a very important framework for our partnership, and Mrs. Clinton has shown great interest in the Croatian assessment of the situation in the region and the possibility of Croatia as a neighboring country and soon to become a member of the EU contributing to further stabilization of the European future of the entire region. I reiterated our view that a continued enlargement process is Croatia’s vital interest and that also within the EU we should do everything for our neighbors to get support and to be tomorrow together with us in the EU. I thank the U.S. Secretary and her delegation for extremely open and constructive talk.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you very much, Mr. President, and it indeed is an honor for me to be here on my first official visit to Zagreb as Secretary of State and to celebrate the exemplary partnership between our two countries, which, as you say, dates back now 20 years. Earlier today I also had the opportunity to meet with the Prime Minister, and in both meetings we discussed a range of critical issues where our countries work side-by-side to advance peace and prosperity throughout the region. The United States is very proud to have the opportunity to work with Croatia in NATO, and we are looking forward to Croatia’s joining the European Union next year.

For more than 20 years the United States has stood with the people of Croatia to overcome the wars and destruction of the 1990s and to rebuild your country. But this is really the work of all of the people in this country, because you made a fundamental decision early on. You decided you wanted to join the transatlantic institutions and be part of Europe, a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace. So yes, today
you are not only a full member of NATO and you will be joining the European Union, but you serve as an anchor of stability and prosperity in the region and demonstrate unequivocally what people and political leaders can accomplish when they work together toward a shared goal.

Nations around the world today are making the difficult transition to democracy, and they can look to you, they can look to Croatia, as a model. This country has taken great strides to combat corruption and uphold the rule of law, from prosecuting domestic war crimes cases to reforming your justice sector. Croatia has also made it a priority to include ethnic minorities and ensure opportunities for all of your citizens. And I would like to commend the Croatian Government, Mr. President, for leading the decade of Roma inclusion this year. Whenever Roma people cannot fully participate in their communities, whether that’s getting an equal education, electing political representatives, or having the same opportunities to contribute to the economic and political lives of their countries, whole societies lose out. Because when more people in more places can contribute their talents, that adds immeasurably to what everyone is able to do. So thank you for taking on one of Europe’s most persistent challenges.

I also want to commend Croatia’s efforts to establish a regional housing program with Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. This is a significant step toward reconciliation with honor, and the United States is proud to contribute to your efforts. More importantly, tens of thousands of refugees who are still displaced by wars can now look forward to a better future.

Of course, there is still work to do to close the chapter on refugees and other important challenges, and we strongly support efforts here in this region and in particular Croatia’s to combat corruption and organized crime, strengthen the independence of your judiciary, and privatize state enterprises in order to open up the economy. We encourage Croatia to share your experience with your neighbors, as you have a lot of lessons that can be useful to them.

Now, as the President said, to continue building a thriving, modern democracy, you need to have your economy keep growing. So we are strongly in support of any ways to improve your business environment and attract more investors, particularly investors from the United States. You have proven time and time again you have the political will and persistence to make tough choices that deliver concrete results.

I also wish to thank you, Mr. President, and through you the people of Croatia, for the contributions you have made to NATO, UN and EU peacekeeping missions around the world. In Afghanistan, more than 300 Croatian troops serve alongside Americans and others as part of the International Security Assistance Force. And I appreciate greatly the sacrifices Croatia has made and your commitment to see the security transition through with ISAF to give the Afghan people a chance to build their own institutions and secure their own country.

Now, I brought with me quite a delegation, Mr. President. I was pleased that our new Ambassador, Ken Merten, was able to get here in time for my arrival. He’s been on the job about five days. And I was particularly pleased to bring with me the highest-ranking Croatian American in the United States Government, Capricia Penavic Marshall, who is our Chief of Protocol, who has been a longtime friend and associate of mine and whose father, Frank, has regaled me with many stories about growing up in Croatia.

So it’s not only a partnership. It’s not only that we are members of NATO together. It’s not only that our soldiers serve side-by-side. It is also the bonds of friendship and family and real cultural affinity that Americans and Croatians share. And Mr. President, we look forward to celebrating Croatia’s accession to
the EU in the very near future.

Thank you very much.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) Now we’ll take questions. (Inaudible), a question to the President and the State Secretary.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) A question to the President and State Secretary: When on the first of July next year when the Croats wake up, in spite of the objections of the Slovenians, do you expect us to be a member of the EU with a special assignment in the region?

And the second question, based on – for the U.S. Secretary: Your former ambassador, when leaving Croatia, said that there is an anti-business climate in Croatia and that the U.S. has the lowest investment in Croatia compared to other (inaudible). Does the Obama Administration see any progress over the last period of years, or is this country still in an anti-business climate? Does it pervade here?

PRESIDENT JOSIPOVIC: (Via interpreter) I am quite sure that on the first of July, we will wake up in the EU next year. And I am sure that Croatia will be a successful member of the EU, which means not to benefit honey and milk, but we will have to show what we can do. It’s a major opportunity for us, but it’s up to us to show how we will take advantage of it.

We will have an important task in the region in our own interest. Croatia’s best interest is that our neighbors also accede to the EU, of course, provided that they fulfill the EU requirements. This is important to us for the sake of peace, security, but also for the economic considerations, free movement of goods, people, among the neighboring countries and friends.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, certainly in my discussions with both the President and the Prime Minister, they expressed equally the same confidence that you will be a member of the European Union. And we certainly strongly support that, as we have over the last several years.

Regarding the economic, commercial, business, and investment climate, I think it’s important in today’s world that everyone look for ways to create jobs, restore competitiveness, and spur renewed economic growth. That is particularly important here in Croatia because you have an educated workforce, you have a developed infrastructure, you have a very favorable geographic position, you are a promising destination for investment. But you also have a very high rate of unemployment for young people that could be addressed by opening up your business sector to greater competition.

We see potential for increasing trade and investment between Croatia and the United States. And as I discussed with the Prime Minister and the President, we urge Croatia to make necessary reforms: to increase transparency, to reduce bureaucratic hurdles wherever you can, to continue with privatization in an appropriate fashion, to make it easy to start a new business, to encourage young people to be entrepreneurs, to look for energy independence, which will give you advantages vis-a-vis the rest of Europe because of your long coastline, to explore liquefied natural gas and deepening your port.

We stand ready to assist in any way. We already have several business development programs in place. Last year, we brought people together from the United States and across the region for an annual business and investment conference known as the Brown Forum, named in honor of the late former Commerce Secretary Ron Brown. So we stand ready to encourage American investment in Croatia. And I must say we
think that there’s a great potential here, but there do have to be continuing economic reforms which, if undertaken and implemented, will give Croatia a significant advantage vis-a-vis the rest of Europe, particularly southern Europe and especially the Balkans.

So we don’t urge you to do this for us, we urge this to do it for you, but we think it will also benefit American businesses and investors because they will find Croatia a very attractive place to do business with all of the assets you have.

MODERATOR: Andy.

QUESTION: Secretary, if I could ask you about Syria. Mr. Brahimi’s attempt at a ceasefire has evidently failed, and the violence is increasing again. What are your views on what needs to be done now to bring the violence down?

And turning to next week’s opposition conference in Doha, what gives you confidence, if you have any at all, that this could produce the beginnings of a government in waiting where the SNC has failed to do that? And are you sure that your key allies, including Turkey, are ready to swing behind whatever is the outcome of Doha? Thank you.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well Andy, those are all very important and timely questions. And I want to start by thanking Croatia for their assistance in dealing with the extremely difficult problems presented by both Syria and Iran.

Look, I sincerely regret, but I, unfortunately, was not surprised by the failure of the latest ceasefire attempt. Despite its reported commitment to the UN Special Envoy, Mr. Brahimi, the Assad regime did not suspend its use of advanced weaponry against the Syrian people for even one day. And the shelling in the suburbs of Damascus was as bad last weekend as at any time in the conflict.

So while we urge Special Envoy Brahimi to do whatever he can in Moscow and Beijing to convince them to change course and support stronger UN action, we cannot and will not wait for that. Instead, our efforts, and those of our partners in the EU and the Arab League, are focused on pressuring the regime through increasing and tightening sanctions, meeting the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people who are displaced, assisting those countries that they seek refuge in, and helping the opposition unite behind a shared, effective strategy that can resist the regime’s violence and begin to provide for a political transition that can demonstrate more clearly than has been possible up until now what the future holds for the Syrian people once the Assad regime is gone.

So we are working very hard with many different elements from the opposition – yes, inside Syria as well as outside Syria. Some of you might remember I hosted a meeting in New York during the UN General Assembly. We facilitated the smuggling-out of a few representatives of the Syrian internal opposition in order for them to explain to the countries gathered why they must be at the table. This cannot be an opposition represented by people who have many good attributes but have, in many instances, not been inside Syria for 20, 30, or 40 years. There has to be a representation of those who are on the frontlines, fighting and dying today to obtain their freedom.

And there needs to be an opposition leadership structure that is dedicated to representing and protecting all Syrians. It is not a secret that many inside Syria are worried about what comes next. They have no love lost for the Assad regime, but they worry, rightly so, about the future. And so there needs to be an
opposition that can speak to every segment and every geographic part of Syria. And we also need an opposition that will be on record strongly resisting the efforts by extremists to hijack the Syrian revolution. There are disturbing reports of extremists going into Syria and attempting to take over what has been a legitimate revolution against a repressive regime for their own purposes.

So the Arab League-sponsored meetings, starting in Doha next week, will be an important next step. I have been constantly involved with my counterparts, both in the EU and in the Arab League, in particular with the hosts of the meeting next week in Qatar. We have recommended names and organizations that we believe should be included in any leadership structure. We’ve made it clear that the SNC can no longer be viewed as the visible leader of the opposition. They can be part of a larger opposition, but that opposition must include people from inside Syria and others who have a legitimate voice that needs to be heard. So our efforts are very focused on that right now. Thank you.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) This completes the statements for the press. Thank you.

Secretary’s Remarks: Remarks With Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci and EU High Representative Catherine Ashton

10/31/2012 10:36 AM EDT

Remarks With Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci and EU High Representative Catherine Ashton

PRIME MINISTER THACI: (Via interpreter) Honorable Secretary Clinton, allow me to express my condolences and those of the Kosovar people for the consequences of the hurricane. We pray for them, and we are visit the U.S. – will soon (inaudible) after this hurricane.

Honorable Lady Ashton, Secretary Clinton, 13 years ago, Kosovo was a country that was totally devastated with over a million of its citizens driven away from their homes and thousands of people missing, many unspoken. Thirteen years ago, Honorable Secretary Clinton, you visited my citizens in refugee camps here. Those pictures are unforgettable. Today, you visit them in their own state in the independent and sovereign Kosovo. Kosovo and its citizens will be eternally grateful to the United States of America and the countries of the European Union for the powerful support that they gave to Kosovo on its long journey to freedom and independence.

Despite the significant progress we have made in – together in these 13 years of freedom and the four and
a half years of independence, today Kosovo is still not the Kosovo of our dreams. We are persistently working for a European Kosovo, for a Euro-Atlantic Kosovo. We are conscious that we need to do more. There’s a lot of work to do in the rule of law, combating corruption and organized crime. Much work is still expected from us increasing the welfare of our citizens, and (inaudible) including minority communities in the public and institutional (inaudible).

Although extraordinary success has been made in integrating Serbian citizens in the south of the country, still a challenge remains in the north. I am a Prime Minister, Prime Minister of all citizens, both the citizens in the north and in south. And I guarantee (inaudible) to all. We will work extensively in attractive development projects for our citizens in that part of the country as well. We will continue to extend our hand of cooperation and provide services to all. But despite our willingness, the presence of illegal structures financed by Serbia makes our work very difficult there.

Honorable media representatives, I assured Baroness Ashton and Secretary Clinton that the institutions of Kosovo will meet all criteria in order that we may implement the will of the citizens of Kosovo and our vision to integrate as soon as possible in the European Union and in NATO. EU integration has no other alternative. Honorable Ashton, I assure you that Kosovo will continually provide positive arguments so that your work in pushing Kosovo’s EU agenda forward will be easier. We elaborated together, together with Secretary Clinton and Baroness Ashton, that the process of normalizing relations between the State of Kosovo and the State of Serbia is a determining factor of the Europeanization of the region. Kosovo is determined in this process. But let us be clear that (inaudible) will not go back; the state of Kosovo is being consolidated and strengthened every day. Kosovo’s independence and its territorial integrity and the (inaudible) state organization are internationally recognized facts and undisputable.

There are, however, many things that are in the interest of both countries and in the interest of the citizens of both states. Dialogue is the only way forward to integrate into the EU, and it is the main determining catalyzer to integrate in this – in the EU. And normalizing relations between Kosovo and Serbia, it goes in the best interests of Kosovo, of Serbia, of the region. It is also in the best interest for powerful investment from the EU and the U.S., and also in the interest of peace and regional stability and also for the Euro-Atlantic perspective.

So citizens in Kosovo, in Serbia, and in the region, after opening this chapter, will have more hope and more confidence in the future – Euro-Atlantic future of Kosovo.

MODERATOR: Now we invite the Honorable Madam Secretary Hillary Clinton for a press statement.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you very much. And Prime Minister, I’m delighted to be back in Pristina. I am also reminded, as you did, of my visit 13 years ago to refugee camps where the people who are now proud citizens of a new, independent state had fled to save their lives. I’m not sure any people has made as much progress in such a short period of time as the Kosovar people. The United States has been with you on every step of your journey, and we will remain as your partner and your friend as you continue forward.

Ever since I visited two years ago, I’ve been looking forward to returning and continuing the conversations that I’ve had over 13 years with the leaders and people of Kosovo about the future that you are building. I’m here today with the High Representative of the European Union, Cathy Ashton, because the United States fully supports the aspirations of the Kosovar people to be integrated into Europe and the Euro-Atlantic Alliance. We believe the dialogue that the Prime Minister has begun with Cathy Ashton and the Prime Minister of Serbia is absolutely essential. It provides the path to long-term stability, prosperity, and
peace for people here and throughout the region. So we are working closely with the European Union and High Representative Ashton to advance the political dialogue that has begun.

And I personally want to commend the Prime Minister. Prime Minister Thaci took a political risk – I know a little bit about political risks – in going to this meeting in Brussels. It was the right decision. It was courageous and it was smart. I also want to commend your President. President Jahjaga has represented Kosovo very well around the world. She has changed minds and hearts about Kosovo and about your future.

My message yesterday in Belgrade is the same as my message here today in Pristina. The United States urges all parties to continue to work to implement the agreements reached to date, to reach agreements in new areas, and to advance concrete measures to normalize relations. Normalization of relations is key to future progress for both Serbia and Kosovo. But we believe in the United States that these steps taken by Kosovo are especially important for you. We think that moving toward the European Union will give you the rewards for the hard work, the sacrifice of the people of this generation and the past and future generations to come. So I urge Kosovo’s leaders to continue to carry out negotiations in good faith.

Certainly, addressing the concerns of the Kosovo Serbs will be critical. I will meet with a group of ethnic Serb returnees later today, and will convey America’s commitment to helping build a future in Kosovo and throughout the region where all people of all backgrounds have a chance to succeed.

Let me be absolutely clear, not only here in Pristina but to anyone listening or watching throughout the region: The United States is firmly committed to Kosovo’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and to seeing the rule of law extend throughout Kosovo. We oppose any discussion of territorial changes or reopening Kosovo’s independent status. These matters are not up for discussion. The boundaries of an independent, sovereign Kosovo are clear and set. I appreciate the Prime Minister saying that he is the Prime Minister of the north and of the south, and we look forward to assisting the Prime Minister, his government, and the people of Kosovo as they translate that commitment into reality in both the north and the south.

The United States is very proud of our friendship with Kosovo. We see a country that is young not only in terms of years of being a state, but in terms of demography. You have a young population. The young men and women of Kosovo whom I had a chance to meet with two years ago, when I was here, deserve to be fully integrated into Europe. And that is our goal for you. We want to continue working with you to build and strengthen your democratic institutions and advance the economic welfare of your people. I believe in Kosovo’s future, and the United States remains deeply committed to your success.

Now for me and my family, and many of my fellow Americans, this is more than a matter of foreign policy. It is deeply personal. As I was driving in from the airport last evening, I saw that enormous statue of my husband – (laughter) – standing next to the store called Hillary. (Laughter.) I had a chance to visit both of them last time. It looks like the store is doing well, which I was very happy to see. But we have a personal commitment to your success, and we also know that getting into the European Union is not easy. There have to be changes made. And it’s not only changes by the government, but also changes by the people. But we also know Kosovo’s future lies in Europe, and we are anxious to see you move as quickly as possible in that direction.

So we will stand with you as you make key reforms to improve governance that brings you closer to full Euro-Atlantic integration. We will stand with you as you work with Serbia to resolve practical problems and overcome obstacles, and we will be there for you as you take the necessary steps toward the future you so
richly deserve.

Thank you.

MODERATOR: Now I would kindly pass the floor for a press statement to Honorable Lady Catherine Ashton.

HIGH REPRESENTATIVE ASHTON: Well, thank you very much. Can I first of all say how delighted I am to be back, and especially delighted to be back with Secretary 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, a common theme has been our view of the importance of seeing the countries we visited being part of the European Union. And to the people of Kosovo, I say the same thing: Your future lies with the European Union, and we are eager to see you realize that ambition. As Secretary Clinton said, the road is not easy. Every country that comes into the European Union will tell you it gets harder before it gets easier. There are many things that need to be done. But they’re worth doing because at the end of it, you will have a country that is stronger economically, stronger politically, where the rule of law is observed correctly, 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 are to take in these regards, nonetheless you will arrive at 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’s not easy for the Prime Minister; it’s not easy for the Prime Minister of Serbia, Prime Minister Dacic, either. 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 normalizing life so that the people who live in the north can go about their daily lives feeling part of a community, feeling part in their lives of a society. And it’s about doing so by sitting down and talking, and talking openly and freely.

And I have to say to all of you that I believe your Prime Minister was extremely brave to come to Brussels and to be willing to come into the room and have that conversation. I also believe the Prime Minister of Serbia was brave, too. It was a good meeting. It was a first good meeting. There will be more, and soon. And its purpose will be, as I have said, to make things better. I hope you will give him your full support. I hope the Prime Minister 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, but that we will be in close contact with our friends, our partners in the United States of America, who play such a vital role in supporting not just Kosovo, but actually the European Union as a whole.

So thank you very much, Prime Minister, for all that you’re doing. Secretary Clinton, as this is our last press conference on this particular trip, what a pleasure it’s been to travel with you and to work so closely with you. And to all of you, I wish this country every possible success.

MODERATOR: Thank you. (Inaudible.)

##
Remarks by High Representative Catherine Ashton at the press point with PM Dačić and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton after their meeting together with President Nikolić

Event Date: 30/10/2012

European Commission

MEMO

Belgrade, 30 October 2012

Remarks by High Representative Catherine Ashton at the press point with PM Dačić and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton after their meeting together with President Nikolić

First of all, can I say how pleased I am to be here in Belgrade today. It is very good to be here because this follows the meetings I had with President Nikolić both in Brussels and New York, and my discussions with you, Prime Minister - I have seen you twice in the last two months, most recently about 10 days ago.

I am here today with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to express our joint commitment towards Serbia and its future in the European Union. I say again, Serbia’s future is in the EU.

In the last year Serbia has made important progress towards its European future and has become a candidate country.

Today our discussions focused on what is needed now for Serbia to move forward and to keep moving forward at a good pace. I encouraged the President and the Prime Minister to intensify reforms and judicial reforms are extremely important in that context.

As you have said, Prime Minister, we have discussed the dialogue that the EU and I are facilitating between Belgrade and Pristina. This dialogue is in the interest of both sides,
with clear objectives to improve the lives of the people, to help solve problems and, in doing so it will bring Serbia and Kosovo closer to the European Union.

I chaired a joint meeting with Prime Minister Dačić and Prime Minister Thaçi in Brussels less than two weeks ago. We agreed to continue the dialogue between the two sides and we plan to meet again soon.

It is vital that all the agreements reached through this dialogue are fully enacted by both sides. We have seen real progress recently and I would like to see this to continue.

Let me stress that the dialogue with Pristina and the normalisation of relations – which is not asking for recognition – is really important. There are no other realistic or better alternatives and things will not become easier by postponing difficult decisions.

This is good for Serbia and is good for Kosovo. It is good for your future and for the everyday lives of the people in this region.

And I do thank President Nikolić who agreed that Serbia will participate in the dialogue. And to you, Prime Minister, I pay real tribute for the contribution you have already made and I know you will make in the future.

Thank you.

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

Event Date: 31/10/2012

European Commission

MEMO

Pristina, 31 October 2012
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.
I believe people here want the real, pressing challenges – such as the economy, jobs, the rule of law – to be addressed. There is no time to waste on unproductive debates, such as those which question the statehood of this country.

Today, I've encouraged the Presidency to work together with all political forces to achieve quick and concrete progress on the EU agenda.

I believe the first priority is to put into effect the European Court of Human Rights ruling in the Sejdic – Finci case. That will allow the EU to put into force our Stabilisation and Association Agreement and BiH to take further steps in EU integration, including a credible membership application.

In June 2012, political leaders agreed a Road Map to implement the key requirements and move this country towards Europe. This Road Map remains key to show commitment to EU integration, and we want to see effective and determined action from the authorities.

The European Union is ready to provide the necessary help. You will have our continued support and advice to help your country in its European Union aspirations.

We want to see Bosnia and Herzegovina to succeed. We know it can.