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Keynote Speech of Mr. Peter Feith

Ambassador, International Civilian Representative

EU Special Representative

Pristina

This is indeed a crucial time in the history of Kosovo and the region. Against the backdrop of wider developments in the world, we on the ground in Kosovo will have to work even harder to keep attention and support. We will continue to work with the authorities in Kosovo not losing momentum and building on achievements secured over the past months. Our continued collective support is imperative for Kosovo to build sustainable institutions and make progress in all core areas – including decentralization, security sector reform and strengthening of rule of law.

Let me say a word about the challenges ahead. The greatest challenge short term and long term is the inclusion of the Kosovo Serb community in all areas of civil life in Kosovo. The most important tools are decentralization and the rule of law. Everybody in Kosovo should have equal access to functioning and impartial rule of law irrespectively of where he lives.

There is a growing interest in decentralization, as it gives more sustainable autonomy rights than parallel institutions. Therefore, I believe we are standing in front of a unique possibility that should not be missed. The European Union has a role to play providing a European perspective both of Kosovo and of Serbia.

Each of these priorities, rule of law, decentralisation and security sector reform presents an element of sound administrative and governance practice, contribute to safety and security, public confidence and foreign investment, and ensure Kosovo's adherence to internationally recognized standards and human rights. I intend to apply the authority vested in me to work in these areas with the government and in close cooperation with other partners.

Thus ladies and gentlemen, looking at progress made since June, it is evident that we are working closely with the Kosovo authorities to ensure their continued commitment to their responsibilities outlined in the CSP. This is the agenda for reconciliation, reform, change and Europeanization – as opposed to attempts at maintaining the status quo and ethnic division. However, we are also aware of the challenges that still lie ahead for us and that must be addressed to ensure that progress continues unimpeded. Cohesion and cooperation among all of us is necessary if we want to do our utmost for all the people living in Kosovo and ensure that our efforts on their behalf are constant with their vision for their own future.

In conclusion, as Kosovo continues its journey, we will strive to ensure that Kosovo remains a multiethnic society, and grows economically strong and politically stable, with robustly functioning institutions that represent all Kosovo's communities. Kosovo has come a long way since 1999. Indeed, it has come a long way since June 15. Let us continue to work together for its stable and prosperous future in harmony with the progress of the rest of the region.

The ICR acknowledged further the achievements made by the Kosovo authorities:

“It has adopted a set of laws to support the implementation of the Constitution. It has established new ministries and introduced new Kosovo passports. Together with officials from Macedonia, it has completed the demarcation of the joint border. As part of decentralisation the government has now begun work on the establishment of new municipalities and has launched an information campaign to explain decentralisation to its citizens.”