

26 April 2010

Dear Miguel,

The path aimed at fostering the Western Balkans' integration into the European Union registered many steps forward in the last few years. Western Balkans countries have indeed accelerated their reform process in order to meet the criteria and conditions set by the EU, achieving several important results.

Lately as a consequence of the visa liberalization dialogue launched by the Commission in early 2008, the people of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia are closer to our citizens. Visa liberalization has proved to be the most concrete EU deliverable, contributing to its positive image and visibility throughout the region. The process proved also that in accomplishing common national goals, the countries of the region are capable of delivering the necessary reforms.

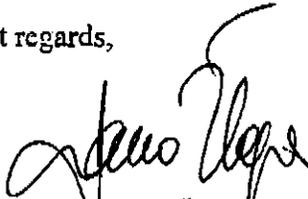
The success of these three countries has been a powerful spur also for Albania and for Bosnia and Herzegovina, strongly encouraging them to intensify their endeavours to fulfil the remaining conditions set in their road maps. Now it is important to complete the process, bearing in mind that the conditions set in the Roadmaps as evaluated by the European Commission should be fulfilled.

We would like to recall the Joint Statement adopted by the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament in November 2009, which clearly commits us to "examine a proposal for amending Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 concerning Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina as a matter of urgency." Bearing in mind lengthy co-decision procedures, we need to ensure timely work of the Council's preparatory bodies, thus enabling the European Commission to table its proposal by the end of May 2010. As a result, the political debate on amending the above Regulation would continue at JHA Council in June, thus enabling the European Parliament to conclude its work in early autumn.

In this framework we strongly support and encourage the Spanish Presidency's willingness to announce a clear way forward for the visa liberalization decision for Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina at the June Ministerial Meeting in Sarajevo.

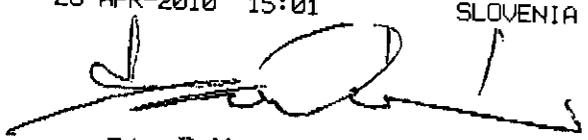
A copy of this letter was also sent to High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission Baroness Ashton, Commissioner Füle, Commissioner Malmström, Chair of AFET Albertini and to our colleagues in other Member States.

With best regards,

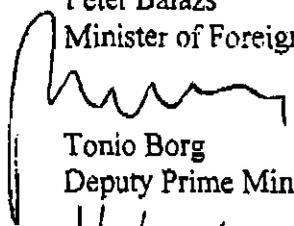

Samuel Žbogar
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Slovenia


Franco Frattini
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Italian Republic

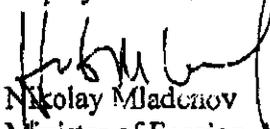
His Excellency
Mr Miguel Angel Moratinos
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Spain
Presidency of the European Union
MADRID



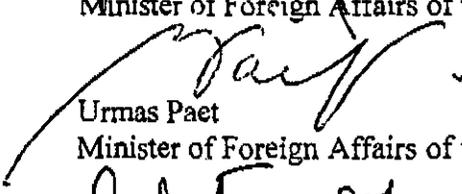
Péter Balázs
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary



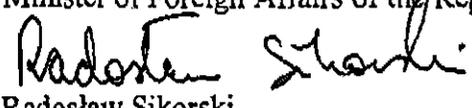
Tonio Borg
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta



Nikolay Mladenov
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria



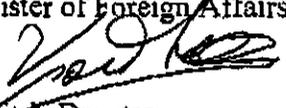
Urmas Paet
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia



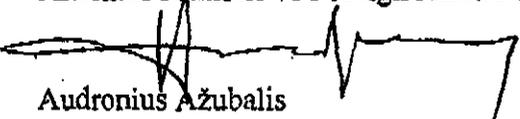
Radosław Sikorski
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland



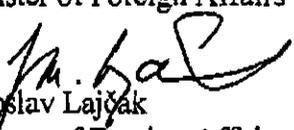
Teodor Baconschi
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania



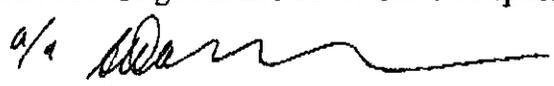
Dimitris Droutsas
Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece



Audronius Ažubalis
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania



Miroslav Lajčák
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic



Markos Kyprianou
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus