

Brussels, 13 June 2007

## Commission resumes negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Serbia

***Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn and Serbian Deputy Prime Minister and Chief Negotiator Bozidar Djelic today resumed negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with Serbia in Brussels. This official round of the negotiations will consolidate the results achieved so far and advance the Justice and Home Affairs part of the Agreement.***

When opening the talks Commissioner Rehn said: "I am delighted to see Serbia back to the negotiation table. I commend the Serbian government for the actions it has taken to meet the conditions for resuming the talks. The SAA will bring concrete trade and economic benefits for Serbia. It is a key step for Serbia on its path to the EU."

The resumption of the talks on the SAA was possible owing to the improvements in Serbia's cooperation with the Hague Tribunal. The pace and conclusion of negotiations will continue to depend in particular on Serbia's progress in developing its legislative framework and administrative capacity, and full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

The Stabilisation and Association Agreement will allow an expansion of trade with the EU, attracting investment to Serbia. That will create jobs because companies will seek to expand their activities in response to the removal of obstacles to the movement of goods. Serbian people will also see more high-quality goods in the shops at better prices, and enjoy better consumer protection.

In addition to the economic side, Serbia will benefit from wide-ranging cooperation with the EU in many policy areas such as environment, agriculture, energy and transport. The SAA will also help to tackle organised crime and trafficking across borders.

A satisfactory track record in implementing the Agreement is essential for Serbia to come closer to the EU.

Serbia started negotiations on an SAA with the EU on 10 October 2005. In the first 8 months the technical talks advanced well and large parts of the Agreement have been negotiated, but due to lack of cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague (ICTY), talks were put on hold on 3 May 2006.

On 21 January, Serbia held general elections and on 15 May 2007 a new government was formed. In its programme the new government undertook a clear commitment to achieve full cooperation with the ICTY which is a key condition for the signature of the SAA, and took concrete action to match this commitment. In line with the decision of EU Foreign Ministers of February 2007<sup>1</sup>, this has paved the way for the Commission to resume the talks on the SAA.

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<sup>1</sup> "The Council welcomed the Commission's readiness to resume negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with a new government in Belgrade provided it shows clear commitment and takes concrete and effective action for full cooperation with the ICTY."