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Press Releases, 3/7/2008

Finland recognised the Republic of Kosovo

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Upon presentation by the Government, the President of the Republic of Finland has decided today, 7 March, to recognise the Republic of Kosovo as an independent and sovereign State, and has decided on Finland's readiness to enter into diplomatic relations with the Republic of Kosovo. Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva has today informed Fatmir Sejdiu, President of Kosovo, and Hashim Thaçi, Prime Minister of Kosovo, of the decision in writing.

Kosovo proclaimed independence on 17 February and extended a request for Finland's recognition of Kosovo on the same day. Finland announced the country's intention to recognise Kosovo immediately after the EU foreign ministers had, on 18 February, agreed on a joint stand enabling development of relations between EU Member States and Kosovo on the basis of national procedures and international law.

In his letter, Foreign Minister Kanerva stressed the commitment of Kosovo to comprehensive implementation of the plan on Kosovo's status presented by UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari. Finland also emphasised respect for democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and the rights of all of Kosovo's communities, as well as the importance of good relations with neighbouring countries.

In accordance with the plan of Special Envoy Ahtisaari, the international community's presence in Kosovo will continue in the future as the European Union assumes an important role in Kosovo. The EU has decided to launch a civilian crisis management operation in Kosovo that is the largest such operation in the Union's history to date. The wide-ranging European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, EULEX Kosovo, will begin on 15 June, with the participation of about 2,000 international experts.

Finland is prepared to make a significant contribution to efforts in support of Kosovo. Finland's input for the EULEX mission will be more than 80 experts from various fields. In the KFOR peacekeeping operation, Finland will assume command of the battlegroup in its area of command, and the number of the country's peacekeepers will increase to 450 in summer 2008. In addition, in the coming years Finland will allocate 15 million euros in support for the development of Kosovo.

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