Belgrade, 11 June 2012

EU-Serbia: Commissioner Füle met new President Nikolić

Remarks by Commissioner Štefan Füle after the meeting with the Serbian President Tomislav Nikolič in Belgrade on Monday 11th June:

"What a special day to be here. I have come to participate at the inauguration of President Nikolić to express the trust we have in Serbia to remain and advance on the road to the European Union. I also came because we share the same dream to see Serbia in the European Union one day.

I appreciate that President Nikolić will come for his first official visit abroad to Brussels on Thursday, where he will meet High Representative Catherine Ashton, Council President Herman van Rompuy and President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso.

Serbia is now a candidate country and the next logical step would be the start of accession negotiations. I'd like underline that there is clarity, transparency and consistency in what is expected from Serbia so that the European Commission can recommend negotiations to start.

In December the EU Heads of State or Government agreed that the key priority is "visible and sustainable improvement in relations with Kosovo". Actually that European Council went further and its Conclusions refer to five specific points, thus not to provide anyone with differing interpretations and not going beyond this one key priority.

Apart from further normalisation of relations with Kosovo, there is also expectation that the reform process will continue. Reform efforts cannot afford any delays. Reforms need to continue in particular in the judiciary, fight against corruption, on the issue of ombudsman and improvement of the business environment.

There are a lot of expectations that Serbia will continue to play an active and positive role in regional cooperation and in pushing forward the process of reconciliation. I have been encouraged in this regard by today's discussion with the President and I look forward to working with him and with the new government."