

José Manuel Durão Barroso

President of the European Commission

**Statement by President Barroso
following his meeting with Ms Jadranka
Kosor, Prime Minister of Croatia**

Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

Press Point

Zagreb, 7 April 2011

I am very pleased to be here in Croatia today.

I just had a very useful, constructive and friendly meeting with Prime Minister Kosor. Let me applaud her leadership and strong commitment to Croatia's EU integration process.

I would like to make one thing very clear at the outset: The European Commission is looking forward to welcoming Croatia as the 28th EU Member State as soon as possible.

My visit comes at a point at which accession negotiations are reaching the final phase. Conclusion is within reach. I am confident that my talks here today will help to provide extra momentum for the final efforts that still need to be done.

Croatia has made great – I would even say historic - progress over the past years.

I stressed the importance of keeping this dynamic. Croatia must tackle the last difficult reforms before the accession process can be concluded. Now is the time for Croatia to walk the final mile!

We should now use our energy and focus on the remaining issues to be solved. Croatia needs to continue its efforts and focus especially on judicial reform, fundamental rights and the fight against corruption. These are key areas on which we need to see concrete, convincing and sustainable results. Let me congratulate the Prime Minister for her personal commitment and courage, especially in the fight against corruption.

These issues are important for the accession process; but they are above all in the interest of the prosperity and well-being of Croatian citizens.

With accession, Croatia will become a partner in a highly developed political Union. It will be an integral part of the world's largest single market, which is the basis for our prosperity and growth. It will share policies for smart innovation, social inclusiveness and regional aid.

But most importantly, Croatia will become a full and equal member of the European family of nations that is the EU; a family that is united in its rich diversity and that makes each member stronger.

To conclude: EU accession is in sight. You are very close to the finishing line. But a final effort is still needed. In my six years as Commission President, I find this the most convinced and committed Croatian government for European integration.

I know that this final stretch is often the hardest. But it can be done. And with the necessary reforms, we will be a family of 28 Member States soon. My visit is meant to encourage you in this effort.