



Brussels, 9 December 2005

S406/05

**Statement by
Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for CFSP,
on the occasion of the ceremony marking the end of the EU Police Mission in the
former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

Skopje, 9 December 2005

A ceremony marking the end of the EU Police Mission in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, EUPOL PROXIMA, was held today in Skopje. The mission was launched on 15 December 2003. On the occasion of the ceremony, the following message was read on behalf of EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana.

- "It is an important day today. Both for the EU and for this country. In partnership and through competent work of people on both sides, for two years, PROXIMA has been instrumental in supporting the further development of a police service based on European standards. It has not always been an easy task, but it has been a necessary one, and together you have made progress in a number of key areas that has improved public confidence in the police.
- I want to express my personal gratitude towards Head of Mission Juergen SCHOLZ and all mission members and local staff. Because of your dedication, hard work and close cooperation with local policemen and women we have been able to reach the results we had hoped for and contribute to improving the performance of the police service in this country.
- In light of the progress made time has come to end the presence of PROXIMA and the presence of EU Crisis Management Missions under the European Security and Defence Policy. The European Union's relationship with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is therefore moving from post-crisis stabilisation to pre-accession integration.
- However, the end of PROXIMA is not the end of the EU support to the broader Rule of Law area in this country. We will continue our efforts by the establishment of the EU Police Advisory Team (EUPAT) that will assist our local counterparts in the police reform efforts from 15 December and for the six months ahead. EUPAT will then hand over to a European Commission local implementation support project that will provide you with police advisors at central and local level.
- I think this evolution shows how far the country has come. It also illustrates the EU's ability to adapt its different tools to specific situations, with specific needs. We began by taking over a military operation, continued with an ESDP police mission, the ending of which we mark today, and will follow up with EUPAT and the European Commission projects.
- I will finish here by expressing to the men and women of PROXIMA my sincere thanks for the work done and by extending my best wishes to all of you for the holiday season and for the time ahead.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

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