

TRANSCRIPT EXTRACTS PRESS CONFERENCE REHN/ BARROT ON VISA LIBERALISATION

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Rehn (General): “For the citizens of the Western Balkans, visa free travel means no more queuing at Embassies, no more visa fees, no more collecting of supportive documents, like tickets and so on. The citizens of these countries will be able to visit family and friends in the EU, as well as spending their holidays here without having to undergo lengthy visa procedures. In a nutshell, this will mean a further Europeanization of the civil societies in the Western Balkans. It is an example that European integration is not only a matter of integrating nations but also peoples and citizens.

Rehn (Albania and BiH): “It is our common goal that Albania and BiH could follow their neighbors soon. The roadmaps that the EU gave them last year are still valid and they are still perfectly doable if the authorities in the two countries put their full will into delivering now. If Albania and BiH keep up the pace of reforms and do meet the conditions, the Commission could then make a new proposal by mid-2010. The speed of these countries' progress towards visa free travel is indeed in the hands of their own leaders now.

Barrot (General/ Serbia): “Here we are, at the eve of the effective lifting of visa requirements for these three countries for the 1st of January 2010. I would like to add that we will continue to send verification missions to check that the conditions are really met, the commitments are really respected. I have asked the Serbian government and particularly the Minister of Interior to send us a report at the latest at the end of September on the implementation of the commitments taken by the Serb government.

Rehn (Kosovo): “Concerning Kosovo, Kosovo, under UN Security Council Resolution 1244, has not been part of the present visa dialogue. For this reason and also because security concerns, like the new biometric Serbian passports issued to people residing in Kosovo under the UN Security Council Resolution 1244, these people (residing in Kosovo) will remain under the visa obligation. Let me underline that this is a purely technical decision based on security concerns in full respect of UN Security Council Resolution 1244. It is therefore a status neutral proposal.”