



Rome, Ljubljana, 23 November 2009

Dear Carl,

the Western Balkans have been achieving noteworthy progress since our joint letter of 11th March 2009. The Swedish Presidency is devoting great attention to the region and we thank you for your personal involvement. We deem extremely important to emphasize the EU commitment to foster the European perspective of the whole region.

In these months the Western Balkans has indeed moved closer to EU membership. The Council invited the European Commission to start preparing an avis on Montenegro and Albania's application for the EU membership. Croatia's negotiations are now approaching their final phase. For the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the Commission recommended to open accession negotiations.

Nevertheless, the most immediate achievement is the adoption of the proposal to allow visa liberalization for the FYROM, Serbia and Montenegro. Italy and Slovenia welcome the proposal to implement the visa free regime starting from 19 December 2009. Such a decision will indeed have concrete positive impact on the citizens of the region, enabling them to travel freely within the Schengen area already during Christmas holidays. This possibility will no doubt improve the public perception of the EU role in the Western Balkans.

It is now time to focus our attention on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania. Acknowledging that these two countries are about to meet the criteria set in the roadmaps, a provisional timetable could be identified with a view to give them a clear perspective in the near future. Time is not to be wasted. We urge the European Commission to send the expert mission already in December 2009, thus enabling the new Commission to prepare an assessment as soon as possible. Our experts stand ready to join the evaluation teams. At the same time, we would also encourage other Member States to engage bilaterally, as Slovenia and Italy have already done. Our combined efforts will help Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania to fulfill the pending conditions set in the roadmaps, thus allowing them to be included into the visa free regime during the Spanish Presidency.

We are sending a copy of this letter also to our colleagues in other Member States.

With best regards,

Franco Frattini

Samuel Žbogar

H.E. Carl Bildt
Minister for Foreign Affairs
STOCKHOLM