



PRESS RELEASE

Internet Forum on South East Europe

www.see-future.org

Q&As with Javier Solana

The Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe (CDRSEE) is pleased to share with the citizens of the Western Balkans the answers to their questions to the Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union and High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) Javier Solana.

Over 100 individuals, mostly from the Western Balkans, but also from other regions, submitted their questions to HR Solana at the site www.see-future.org. The CDRSEE collected questions for one month, made a selection, and submitted the questions directly to HR Solana. Mr. Solana's answers were received today and are available to all interested parties at http://www.cdsee.org/ask_solana.html.

In his answers Mr. Solana reconfirms that “the future of the Western Balkans is within the European Union” and that “the pace of further movement of the Western Balkan countries towards the EU lies in their own hands and will depend on each country's will and performance in implementing reforms.” He reiterates that “the journey to Europe will inevitably be long” but that “the EU will do its utmost to help.” On the final status of Kosovo, he supported the “standards before status” policy while he stresses the importance of justice, free trade as well as “the need of the Western Balkan countries to combat organised crime, corruption and illegal migration and to achieve adequate standards concerning areas such as the reform of the judiciary, capacity in border control, secure travel documents.”

HR Solana concludes: “The progressive attainment of European standards is not an instant event, but a long process. European integration implies tough choices and frequently unpopular reforms. Unlike the social costs, the results are not always immediately visible, and I can understand that there may be impatience and frustration in the region, especially amongst the young generation. But the EU will eventually honour its promises and the end result will be rewarding.”

The Internet Forum was initiated in January 2003 as a platform to discuss the issues of South East Europe leading to the ‘Reconciling for the Future’ workshop that took place in Thessaloniki in April 2003. The Forum has been sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

For more information on this project or on the other programmes and activities of CDRSEE, please contact us at +30-2310-960820 or email: reconciliation@cdsee.org.

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