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Rehn: Serbia's SAA and Kosovo status are two separate processes

KosovoCompromise Staff

Serbia and the EU are initialing on Wednesday the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA), and EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn is using the occasion to remind Brussels' view that the negotiations on the status of Kosovo and Belgrade's association with the EU are two separate processes.

"I have good news for one of the countries in the region – Serbia – and its SAA. I have been talking with Hague tribunal chief prosecutor Carla del Ponte over the past few weeks and days, and she has pointed out progress in the search for war crimes fugitives and in sending the tribunal the necessary documents," Rehn said. He reiterated that full cooperation with the tribunal remained a condition for the SAA's signing.

Rehn said that a mutually acceptable solution must be found for Kosovo within the Troika, adding that only after the southern Serbian province's status was determined could the manner in which Kosovo would negotiate its European integration be defined.

He pointed out it was important to separate the two processes – resolving the status issue and Serbia's association with the EU, and said that "Kosovo is being handled within the U.N., while the process of association with the EU is being managed on another track."

"It would be wrong to expect Serbia or any other country to give up Kosovo for the sake of quicker admission to the EU. The political debate in Serbia should be redirected from the nationalist past to a future in Europe," Rehn added.