

PRESS RELEASE**EUROCHAMBRES President meets President of Serbia:
“Chambers can drive economic growth”**

EUROCHAMBRES' Presidency meeting, held in Belgrade on 9 February, was inaugurated by Boris Tadić, President of the Republic of Serbia, who confirmed the importance of economic development, and the need to invest in education, innovation, internationalisation and business creation in the Western Balkan region. These are the same priorities outlined in the Manifesto of European Chambers.

EUROCHAMBRES' President Pierre Simon also pointed at full economic recovery in the Western Balkans as a central condition to facilitate integration with the EU. M Simon said: *“While the macro-economic indicators in the region are favourable, what is missing is a boost of private entrepreneurship. Chambers of Commerce can play a crucial role in making that happen, as already shown through the close cooperation between EU and Western Balkan Chambers, in the framework of our PARTNERS* project.”*

A great push to economy would also derive from a solution on the question of Kosovo. If a political settlement is reached, it will translate into a tremendous boost to foreign investors' confidence in Serbia, Kosovo and the region at large. The improvement of the business climate, in turn, will foster the EU membership ambition of the Western Balkan countries, all of which enjoy either the candidate or the potential candidate status.

In this respect, EUROCHAMBRES welcomes yesterday's EU Council conclusions on the Western Balkans, particularly in so much as they urge Belgrade and Pristina to intensify efforts to agree on a final status for Kosovo.

* PARTNERS (Project of Assistance to Regional Trade and Networking for Economic Recovery and Stability) was a two-year project of EUROCHAMBRES under the EU CARDS Regional Programme for the development of national and regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry in the Western Balkan region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro). It was launched at the beginning of 2004. EUROCHAMBRES is expected to continue the PARTNERS project in 2007-2008.

*FURTHER INFORMATION: Ms. Micol Martinelli, tel.: +32 2-282 08 63, martinelli@eurochambres.eu
PRESS CONTACT: Ms. Guendalina Cominotti, tel.: +32 2-282 08 66, cominotti@eurochambres.eu*

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