



Statement by

**Dr Miroslav Cerar,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Slovenia**

at the The International Donors' Conference
"Together for Albania"

Brussels
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Madam President of the European Commission,
President of the European Council,
Prime Minister Rama,
Commissioners, Distinguished ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Slovenia welcomes today's International Donors' Conference to support the reconstruction efforts in Albania after the earthquake that struck the country in the end of November.

Let me start by renewing my deep condolences to Albanian government for the loss of lives in the earthquake, and my sympathy to all those who suffered its consequences.

I would like to thank the European Commission for its strong engagement and coordination of an international response to assist Albania in its reconstruction and recovery efforts. We commend DG ECHO for its rapid response and smooth coordination of the humanitarian aid and activities on the ground in the framework of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

There is a Slovenian and also Albanian saying: "V nesreči spoznaš prijatelja. / Miku i mirë njihet në ditë të vështirë". In English, a similar saying states "A friend in need is a friend indeed."

Slovenia firmly believes in the principle of international solidarity. I am proud and pleased that we have been able to assist our Albanian friends also in the past: in the aftermath of floods in 2010 and 2016, forest fires in 2012, as well as after the earthquake and floods last September.

Likewise, Slovenia did not hesitate to respond to the Albanian call immediately after the November earthquake by providing in-kind assistance to address the basic needs of those affected. In addition, two Slovenian experts – engineers joined the EU civil protection team to coordinate international assistance.

Slovenia is fully aware of the immense needs of the people in Albania. With this in mind, it is today my honour to announce an additional donation by the Slovenian Government of 300.000 EUR for the construction of a school in one of the affected areas.

In order to help strengthening the capacity of Albania to prepare and handle disaster response, we have also offered bilateral technical assistance in the form of education of medical staff. At the same time, we have also suggested closer bilateral cooperation between our Civil Protection and Disaster Relief Administrations.

Slovenia stands ready to further assist our Albanian friends, including on their path towards integration into the European family. Therefore, let me conclude by expressing our hope that a decision on the start of the accession talks with Albania will be taken by the end of next month.

Thank you.