

EUROPEAN UNION - SERBIA
STABILISATION AND ASSOCIATION
PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE (SAPC)

Third Meeting
19-20 March 2015
Belgrade

DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee (SAPC) held its third meeting in Belgrade on 19-20 March 2015, co-chaired by Mr Eduard KUKAN for the European Parliament delegation and Mr Vladimir ORLIĆ for the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia delegation.

It exchanged views with:

- Ms Jadranka JOKSIMOVIĆ, Minister in charge of European Integration;
- Mr Nikola SELAKOVIĆ, Minister of Justice, on behalf of the Government of Serbia;
- Mr Christian DANIELSSON, Director General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, on behalf of the European Commission;
- H.E. Mr Ivars PUNDURS, Ambassador of Latvia to Serbia, on behalf of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The members of the Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee addressed the following subjects:

- State of play of EU-Serbia relations,
- Pre-accession assistance to Serbia - lessons learned from the European Court of Auditors' Special Report 19/2014,
- Serbia's preparations to open negotiation in chapters 23 and 24 (including a situation of national minorities),
- Dialogue on normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina,
- Regional cooperation,
- Developments in economy.

The Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee, in accordance with Rule 7 of its Rules of Procedure and Article 125 of the EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Agreement, addressed the following Declaration and Recommendations to the Stabilisation and Association Council and to the institutions of Serbia and of the European Union:

1. Encouraged opening of the negotiations' chapters in 2015 and stressed this should be done considering developments on technical level of preparations and fulfilment of the recommendations by the European Commission; took note of the importance of the political context of relations between Serbia and the EU and supported objective evaluation of the developments and efforts made in this process by the Member States of the Union; invited the Council to take into consideration the Screening Reports sent by the Commission;
2. Commended smooth implementation of the EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Agreement; invited all relevant stakeholders to provide timely and objective information on the reforms that need to be undertaken in the process of EU accession negotiations;
3. Welcomed the strong political impetus to fight corruption, and further implementation of the recommendations of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO); commended recent developments and efforts of all authorities in Serbia taken to implement the Strategy and the Action Plan on the fight against corruption for the period 2013-2018; welcomed the adoption of the law on whistle-blower protection; welcomed the fact that several investigations into high-level cases are being conducted;
4. Welcomed recent developments and efforts of all authorities in Serbia taken to implement the Strategy and the Action Plan on judicial reform for the period 2013-2018; welcomed the adoption of rules for evaluation of the work of judges and prosecutors; highlighted the need for the reform of the judiciary to be continued, so as to ensure full independence and impartiality of judges and prosecutors, as integral part of a genuine rule of law;
5. Supported Serbian Chairmanship-in-Office (CiO) of the OSCE and its constructive role and active contribution to stabilisation of the situation in eastern Ukraine, as well as constructive engagement in other CiO priority areas;
6. Welcomed the engagement of Serbia in the Dialogue on normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, welcomed the already reached agreements and strongly encouraged both sides of the Dialogue to deliver on implementation; encouraged the elected representatives of Serbian minority to participate fully in the democratic processes, including the formation of the Community / Association of Serb Municipalities; invited the European Commission and EEAS to continue their role as mediator in the Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, while emphasising the importance of transparent procedures for the opening of the Chapter 35;
7. Welcomed the adoption of the Labour Law, Bankruptcy Law, Privatisation Law and recently adopted Law on Panning and Construction, which represent

the legislative framework for structural reforms and for the improvement of business climate as well;

8. Congratulated Serbia on organising the third China-Central and Eastern Europe Summit in Belgrade; welcomed the plans for enhanced cooperation, which should be in line with European standards and policies; took note of initial agreements on projects concerning energy and infrastructure;
9. Noted that the recently published report by the European Court of Auditors (ECA) has found that the funding from the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), along with other forms of support, has helped Serbia to implement social and economic reforms and to improve its public finance management; welcomed the overall effective use of EU financial and non-financial assistance, as noted by the ECA; encouraged Serbian authorities to use EU funds more efficiently for the reform of judicial sector;
10. Stressed the importance of strong, independent war crimes prosecution and called on all representatives of the executive branch of power to cooperate fully with the prosecution; welcomed recent arrests and processing of the war crimes in Serbia;
11. Drew attention to the increased challenges for media freedom in Serbia; reiterated the importance of free media as one of the core EU values; welcomed the adoption of the set of media laws and called for their timely and consistent implementation; stressed the important role of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia in the oversight of the recently adopted media laws package and in allowing an open debate on the state of media freedoms and security of journalists and journalists' profession in Serbia; underlined that the authorities should ensure the sustainability and financial stability of the public services as well as of regional and local media; emphasised the need for complete transparency in media ownership;
12. Appreciated the constructive approach of Serbia to relations with neighbouring countries, engagement in various regional cooperation initiatives and significant contribution to economic, political and cross-border cooperation, promotion of good neighbourly relations and mutual respect; concluded that this has enabled substantial progress in both regional cooperation and closer relations with the EU;
13. Stressed the need to continue the efforts for the implementation of the legal framework on the protection of minorities, mainly in the areas of education, use of language and access to media in minority languages, called for adequate representation of national minorities in public administration, local and regional bodies, as well as in the national parliament; encouraged Serbia's commitment in drafting a specific action plan on the position of national minorities in the framework of the Action Plan for Chapter 23; welcomed the free and fair elections to the National Minority Councils and underlined their importance in the implementation of rights of national minorities; encouraged the Serbian authorities to take further measures to improve the situation of the Roma, particularly when it comes to education, housing and employment; called on the Serbian authorities to improve planning, coordination and

monitoring of implementation of Roma inclusion policies and actions at national and local level; looked forward to the Pride Parade to take place in Belgrade again in 2015;

14. Agreed that additional efforts are needed towards progressive alignment of Serbia's foreign and security policy with the EU policy; welcomed active participation of Serbia in the EU civilian and military missions.