Kosovo and EU held 1st SAA Sub-committee on Justice, Freedom and Security

Kosovo and European Union held 1st Stabilisation and Association Agreement Sub-committee on Justice, Freedom and Security

JOINT CONCLUSIONS

Officials from Kosovo and the European Commission met in Pristina to discuss developments over the past year in the areas of Justice, Freedom and Security. The discussion was held in the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) which entered into force in April 2016. In all areas, the Commission and Kosovo agreed on the importance of implementing the European Reform Agenda priorities.

The EU enquired about the planned Rule of Law Sector Review encouraging alignment with the EU acquis and best European practice. Kosovo committed to further work to reinforce the impartiality and accountability of the Justice system. The EU stressed the need to ensure transparent and merit-based appointments of members to the Kosovo Judicial Council and to strengthening courts dealing with serious crimes. The EU expressed continued concerns about the backlog of cases and encouraged to review case registration procedures.

The EU and Kosovo discussed progress relating to the track record on investigations, final court rulings and confiscations in serious organised crime and corruption cases and encourage continued prioritisation of this work and the need to focus on preventive measures. The EU underlined the importance of stepping up efforts in increasing transparency and accountability of political party finances. With a view to combatting corruption within public procurement, the steps to strengthen transparency by operationalising e-procurement were noted.

On home affairs and the fight against organised crime, views were exchanged on migration, asylum and readmission, Integrated Border Management and the roll-out of the address and civil registry systems including in the North. Focussing on the fight against organised crime and terrorism, the EU and Kosovo agreed to further strengthen work on the prevention of violent extremism and radicalisation and reintegration. The EU stressed the need for systematic efforts to monitor, prevent and combat the informal economy, money laundering, terrorist financing and other financial crimes.
The parties discussed the need to strengthen efforts and capacities to tackling crime, in particular cybercrime, drugs and arms trafficking.

On human rights and fundamental freedoms, the EU and Kosovo discussed the need to advance the development and implementation of policy, and sufficient budget allocation for human rights. The need for real efforts to ensure implementation of recommendations by the Ombudsperson, including by the Assembly, was highlighted. The EU remains concerned with regard to freedom of expression, and stressed the need for sustainable funding for the public broadcaster in line with the law and best European standards. On property rights, parties discussed the need to enforce judicial decisions. Discussions further focussed particularly on the rights of children, persons with disabilities and LGBTI community, as well as on the prison system. The EU also presented the new EU data protection regulation.

With respect for and the protection of minority communities, Kosovo agreed to implement the law on the use of languages and resolve recurring issues of inadequate budget allocated to this duty. The EU and Kosovo discussed security issues and incidents affecting non-majority communities and stressed the need to deal resolutely with such incidents to restore confidence among victims and affected communities. The situation facing Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities and the lack of progress in improving the livelihood of these most vulnerable communities, remains a concern for the EU.

**Background information**

- The Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) is the framework for the EU and the Kosovo administration to regularly discuss technical and policy issues in relation to the European agenda. The SAA bodies include the Stabilisation and Association Council, assisted by the Stabilisation and Association Committee, as well as SAA Sub-Committees, which cover a wide range of the EU *acquis*. The meetings of the SAA bodies provide direct input into the European Commission's annual reports.
- Each Sub-Committee meeting monitors and accompanies Kosovo's delivery on reforms and identifies how the EU can assist in this process.
- There are seven areas covered through sectorial meetings of sub-Committees, on Justice, Freedom and Security; Innovation, Information Society, Social Policy, Education and Culture; Trade, Industry, Customs and Taxation; Internal Market, Competition, Consumer and Health Protection; Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, Food Safety; Transport, Environment, Energy, Regional Development; Economic and Financial Issues, Statistics.
- Two other areas covered through the meetings of special groups are the reform of the public administration and normalisation of relations with Serbia.
- SA Committee and Sub-Committee meetings are co-chaired by the European Commission and Kosovo. Each meeting results in jointly agreed follow-up actions to be taken by the Kosovo authorities. The conclusions from the meetings are available [here](http://eueuropaeas.fpfis.slb.ec.europa.eu:8084/delegations/kosovo/19310/kosovo-and-eu-held-1st-sa-a-sub-committee-justice-freedom-and-security_en)