

EUROPEAN UNION-FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC
OF MACEDONIA
JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

1st JPC meeting
SKOPJE

Final Statement

The Joint Parliamentary Committee EU-former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia held its 1st meeting in Skopje on 30 - 31 March 2005 under the joint Chairmanship of Mr Andrej ZERNOVSKI and Mr Georgios PAPASTAMKOS. At this meeting, the Committee held an exchange of views with Dr. Ljupco JORDANOVSKI, President of the Assembly of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ms. Radmila SEKERINSKA, Deputy Prime Minister, representing the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, H.E. Mr. Jean-Louis WOTZFELD, Ambassador in charge of the Western Balkans, representing the Luxembourg Presidency-in-Office of the Council of the European Union, H.E. Mr Donato CHIARINI, representing the European Commission, Ms Karolina RISTOVA, Chairperson of the Committee for European Issues of the Assembly of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Mr Erik MEIJER, rapporteur of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The JPC addressed the following issues:

- The integration of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the EU
- Internal political developments in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in particular the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement
- Process of economic reforms and regional cooperation
- Implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement
- Implementation of EU assistance
- Liberalisation of the visa regimes

In accordance with Rule 3 of its Rules of Procedure the Joint Parliamentary Committee addressed the following recommendations to the Stabilisation and Association Council, the institutions of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and of the European Union:

- A. having regard to the European Commission Country Strategy Paper 2002-2006 for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the European Commission Stabilisation and Association Report 2004 for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
1. welcomes the decisions of the Assembly of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the European Parliament to set up a Joint Parliamentary Committee to consider all aspects of relations between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the European Union and, in particular, the implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement;
 2. welcomes the consensus on accession to the EU achieved by all political parties represented in the Assembly and broadly supported by the population, and the Declaration in Support of the Strategic Interest of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia signed in Ohrid under the auspices of the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Joint Statement of the political parties for full membership of the Republic to the EU, signed by the parliamentary political parties under the auspices of the Prime minister of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
 3. welcomes the fact that the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Union and its Member States and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has entered into force on 1 April 2004; commends the work done to comply with the obligations of the Agreement and urges the Government to devote sufficient resources to this process;
 4. welcomes the Government's answers to the European Commission questionnaire on the politic and economic issues and the EU acquis; expect the Commission to deliver its opinion on the

application of former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for EU membership as soon as possible; stresses that obtaining candidate status at the December 2005 EU Summit will encourage the country to achieve further results in the reform process, and will strengthen stability in the region;

5. welcomes the adoption of the Action Plan for European Partnership as one of the instruments for EU integration;
6. welcomes the important progress made in implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and calls for continued efforts from the Government to implement fully the Framework Agreement;
7. notes the concrete efforts made to reduce ethnic tension; underlines that the creation of a new State University in Tetovo has been a highly symbolic development in this field and is recognised as an important measure to improve inter-ethnic confidence;
8. welcomes the newly founded Departments in the Ministry of the Interior and invites the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to continue its reforms of the judicial system in line with the adopted Government Strategy for Reforms in the Judiciary and to continue the fight against corruption and organised crime, including trafficking;
9. welcomes the announcement that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will sign the 2003 UN Convention on Fighting Corruption by the end of this year;
10. emphasises the importance of the final demarcation of the state border of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with Serbia and Montenegro, in the area adjoining Kosovo, prior to opening talks of the final status of Kosovo;
11. notes the continuing macro-economic stabilisation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and calls on the Government to strengthen economic growth and accelerate implementation of comprehensive structural reforms; notes that the weaknesses in the functioning of the economy, fight against corruption, business climate, competitiveness issues and the enforcement of property rights are increasingly a challenge for the successful transition of the country; however, welcomes the good results achieved in controlling inflation, and the measures taken in the privatisation area, as well as the focus on private sector development in order to create a more favourable business environment;
12. recommends introducing decentralisation of the EU assistance to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, thus enabling preparation for the effective implementation of the pre-accession instrument envisaged within the New Financial Perspective 2007-2013;
13. recognises the importance of liberalisation of the EU visa regime for the citizens of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; urges the EU to commence the dialogue on this topic, which should be followed by concrete measures for visa liberalisation; recommends the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to provide equal visa regimes to all EU Member Countries;
14. takes the view that the various EU bodies acting in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia should improve their coordination; is of the opinion, in this regard, that the European Commission should play a pivotal role in the implementation of the EU policies in the country;

15. commends the work done by the EU Mission PROXIMA and the cooperation provided by the national authorities; looks forward to its successful completion by the end of the year; provided that further reforms are supported by twinning projects;
16. recognises the leading role of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the process of regional cooperation and its strong commitment to foster good relations with all countries in the SEE region.