

EUROPEAN UNION-: CFA 9F YUGOSLAV
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

5-6 December 2005
BRUSSELS

Final Statement
adopted unanimously on 6 December 2005

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The EU - former Yugoslav-Republic of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee held its 2nd meeting in Brussels on 5-6 December 2005 under the joint Chairmanship of Mr. Georgios Papastamkos (EPP-ED, Greece) and Mr. Andrej Zernovski (LDP, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). At this meeting, the Committee held an exchange of views with Mr Emil KIRIJAS, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, representing the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Mr Angus LAPSLEY, Deputy Head of the UK Foreign Office's Eastern Adriatic Department, representing the President-in-Office of the Council of the EU and Mr Reinhard PRIEBE, Director, Western Balkans, DG Enlargement, representing the European Commission.

The Joint Parliamentary Committee addressed the following issues:

- The relations between the European Union and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the light of the European Commission's opinion of 9 November 2005 on the application from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for membership of the European Union
- The implementation of the Constitutional Amendments and laws deriving from the Ohrid Framework Agreement
- The process of economic reforms to fulfil the economic criteria for EU membership
- The reform process in the fields of the justice, home affairs and state administration
- The role of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the stabilisation and association process
- Implementation of the CARDS programme and preparation for the IPA

The Joint Parliamentary Committee addresses the following recommendations to the institutions of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and of the European Union:

- A. having regard to the Commission opinion of 9 November on the application from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for membership of the European Union (COM(2005) 562); having regard to the Commission Analytical Report for the opinion on EU membership (COM(2005) 1425);
- B. having regard to the Commission proposal for a Council Decision on the Principles, Priorities and Conditions Contained in the European Partnership with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (COM(2005) 557);
- C. taking note of the Commission 2005 Enlargement Strategy Paper (COM(2005) 561);
- D. having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 14 April 2005 on the state of regional integration in the western Balkans (2005/0131);
- E. taking note of the European Commission Country Strategy Paper 2002-2006, and the European Commission Stabilisation and Association Report 2004 for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
- F. taking note of the recommendations made at the 1st EU- former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia JPC of 30-31 March 2005;

1. welcomes the European Commission opinion of 9 November and the overall positive assessment of the country's process towards accession; welcomes the recommendation made to the Council to grant the country candidate status; it reminds that the country's satisfactory track-record in implementing its SAA obligations is an essential element for the EU decision to grant the candidate status;
2. congratulates the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the progress made up to date; considers that the country is well on its way to comply with the Copenhagen criteria and that the opinion represents a firm basis for the Member States to decide on the candidate status during the December 2005 EU Summit ;
3. recalls from the previous JPC meeting that obtaining candidate status at the December 2005 EU summit would not only encourage the country to achieve further results in the reform process, but also strengthen stability in the region and send a clear message that progress made is rewarded;
4. welcomes the proposal for a Council Decision on the principles, priorities and conditions in the European Partnership with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; considers the partnership to continue being an important instrument for EU integration; encourages the Government and the European Commission to work together to ensure the effective implementation of EU financial assistance especially regarding future pre-accession instruments envisaged within the New Financial Perspective 2007-2013; welcomes the Decision of the Government to set up the Central Finance and Contracting Unit and the ongoing preparatory work on building administrative capacity;
5. congratulates the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the commitment shown to the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, manifested in the support of all political parties in the Assembly; stresses the importance of ensuring that the framework is efficiently enforced and to this end encourages all stakeholders involved to keep up the momentum;
6. notes with satisfaction the progress made in decentralisation and the multi-ethnicity achieved in local self-government; recognises that constitutional and legislative changes have been made to provide a high level of protection of the rights of minorities and encourages the Government to continue the effective implementation of these measures;
7. welcomes the progress made in reforming the judicial system in line with the adopted Government Strategy for Reforms in the Judiciary; stresses that further efforts are needed in this area and that increased attention needs to be paid to the continuing fight against corruption and organised crime, including trafficking; welcomes the signing of the Council of Europe Convention on money laundering, search, seizure and confiscation of the proceeds from the crime and on the financing of terrorism and of the Council of Europe Convention on action against trafficking in human beings by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; welcomes the signing of the UN

Convention on Fighting Corruption, in September this year, as an important measure in this process;

8. invites the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to take further steps to consolidate the rule of law, in particular concerning the reform of the police and efficiency of the judiciary; encourages the country to commit to amend the Constitution in line with the recommendations from the Council of Europe;
9. notes that OSCE-ODIHR found the local elections in 2005 to display a series of serious irregularities; welcomes the enactment of the unified election code in line with OSCE-ODIHR recommendations; encourages the country to commit to and continue the implementation of OSCE-ODIHR recommendations to ensure that forthcoming elections are carried out in accordance with democratic principles and with full integrity so that the irregularities are not repeated and the shortcomings identified are addressed in a timely fashion; welcomes the activities aimed at education of the electorate on voter rights and responsibilities;
10. commends the country on the substantial progress made in aligning its legislation with the acquis; notes however that capacity in a number of areas, such as the internal market and administration, still remain weak and needs to be improved; calls on the country to continue the effective implementation and in particular, the effective enforcement, of EU legislation;
11. recognises the continuing macro-economic stabilisation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, welcomes in particular the 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; however 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 as well as land and property registration need to be improved; considers these reforms to be a key in the successful transition of the country;
12. stresses that Energy and Transport policy are key fields with a view to meeting the targets of the Kyoto protocol which are shared and supported steadfastly by the EU; urges, in this regard, the government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to pay a special attention to these issues making every effort to align its legislation with the acquis and speed up its implementation;
13. points out that the present challenge regarding the acquis on environment requires long term efforts and an increased level of investment with a view to providing a concrete perspective of sustainable development to the country; it urges the European Commission to assist these efforts;
14. welcomes Erwan Fouéré as the new EU special representative as well as head of the European Commission Delegation to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia starting 1 November; congratulates his predecessors on their

accomplishments in EU-former Yugoslav-Republic of Macedonia relations; recalls previous recommendations that EU bodies in the country should make further efforts to coordinate their activities and to this end welcomes a continuing constructive cooperation between different EU bodies and the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;

15. recalls previous discussions on the importance of liberalisation of the EU Member States visa regime for the citizens of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; urges the EU to commence the dialogue on this topic with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which should be followed by concrete measures for visa liberalisation and on providing equal visa regimes to all EU Member; welcomes the Decision of the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to extend temporarily the visa free regime to all Member States and recommends to continue that practice;
16. expresses its appreciation of the successful work done by the EU Mission PROXIMA due to end in December 2005 and the cooperation provided by the national authorities;
17. welcomes the decision of the incoming Austrian Presidency to include the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the countries participating in the Stabilisation and Association Process in the presidency priorities;
18. emphasises the positive and leading role of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the process of regional cooperation in the SEE region; welcomes the commitment to contributing to foster good neighbourly relations with the countries of the region;
19. commends the work done to comply with the obligations of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and urges the Government to continue to devote sufficient resources to this process;
20. emphasises the importance of the finalising the technical process for the demarcation of the state border of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with Serbia and Montenegro, in the area adjoining Kosovo as soon as possible and prior to defining the final status of Kosovo;
21. notes that as a candidate country the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is eligible for pre-accession assistance; therefore encourages the European Commission to support the reform in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with accession oriented instruments.