

EUROPEAN UNION-FORMER YUGOSLAV  
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA  
JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

**29-30 January 2007**  
**SKOPJE**

**Final Statement**  
**adopted unanimously on 30 January 2007**

The EU - former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee held its 3rd meeting in Skopje on 29-30 January 2007 under the joint Chairmanship of Mr Aleksandar SPASENOVSKI (VMRO-DPMNE, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and Mr Antonios TRAKATELLIS (EPP-ED, Greece). At this meeting, the Committee held an exchange of views with Mrs Gabriela KONEVSKA TRAJKOVSKA, Deputy Prime Minister of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, H.E. Mr Erwan FOUÉRE, European Union Special Representative and Head of the Delegation of the European Commission, and Mrs Elisabeth Anna MÜLLER, representing the Presidency-in-Office of the Council of the European Union.

The Joint Parliamentary Committee addressed the following issues:

- The internal political situation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia following the general elections in 2006
- The process of economic reforms to fulfil the European criteria for EU membership
- The reform process in the fields of the judiciary, home affairs and state administration
- The regional cooperation after the signing of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA 2006), and the transformation of the Stability Pact in South Eastern Europe
- Facilitation of the visa regime - first step for its full liberalisation
- Evaluation of the CARDS programme for 2006 and preparation for a better use of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)

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

- A. taking note of the European Parliament resolution on the Commission's Communication on the Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006–2007 (2006/2252(INI)) of 13 December 2006;
- B. having regard to the Commission progress report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the EU Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006-2007 (COM (2006) 649) of 8 November 2006;
- C. having regard to the Council conclusion on visa facilitation and readmission agreements for the Western Balkans of 13 November 2006;
- D. taking note of the European Parliament resolution on the alleged use of European countries by the CIA for the transportation and illegal detention of prisoners, adopted midway through the work of the Temporary Committee (2006/2027(INI)) on 6 July 2006;
- E. taking note of the European Parliament resolution on the Commission's 2005 enlargement strategy paper (2005/2206(INI)) of 16 March 2006;
- F. recalling the EU/Western Balkans Salzburg Declaration of 11 March 2006;

- G. taking note of the Council decision on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the European Partnership with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (2006/57/EC) of 30 January 2006;
  - H. taking note of the European Commission Country Strategy Paper 2002-2006 for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
  - I. taking note of the recommendations made at the 2nd EU - former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia JPC of 6 December 2005;
1. welcomes the European Commission communication on Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006-2007, and the first Progress Report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia of 8 November 2006, and the assessment that the country has continued to make progress;
  2. recalls the candidate status that the European Council granted the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in December 2005, following relevant deliberations in the Council of 12 December 2005 (COM 562(2005), COUNCIL 15638/1/05), and the European Commission opinion of 9 November 2005 in which it was noted that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is well on its way to satisfy the political criteria;
  3. commends the fact that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has implemented most of the key priorities noted by the European Partnership 2005 and believes that the country has the capacity and is dedicated to step up its reform efforts in order to launch accession negotiations;
  4. commends the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the progress made to prepare for the July parliamentary elections; welcomes the further reform of the legal and institutional framework for elections in line with OSCE-ODIHR recommendations; notes with satisfaction that the electoral process was conducted largely in accordance with international standards; regrets however that there were still some irregularities in certain areas before and during the elections and calls on the parties in the government and the opposition to fully engage to prevent them in the next elections;
  5. congratulates the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the commitment shown to the implementation of the Constitutional amendments initiated by the Ohrid Framework Agreement; emphasizes the need to deepen political consensus on accelerating reforms in order to achieve accession to the European Union; stresses that the continued implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement has contributed to the country's stability and consolidating democracy and the rule of law; encourages all stakeholders involved to keep up the momentum and stresses the need for both the government and opposition political forces to maintain a constructive dialogue on the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement;
  6. welcomes the further implementation of the 2000 Law of Civil Servants and demands its full enforcement, in order to continue with the reforms in the public administration; notes that steps have been taken to improve the

management of the administration and the transparency in public decisions; further notes that the decentralization process has moved forward and public services have started to improve; emphasizes however that independence and professionalism of the state administration, as well as administrative capacity, need to be strengthened; urges the government and the municipalities to show a strong commitment to address the remaining challenges; points out that the EU has invested a great deal in building programs and underlines that a professional and merit-based administration is crucial to improve the capacity in implementation of the EU supportive Projects;

7. notes that the adoption of a new police law met a key priority of the European Partnership; looks forward to its swift implementation; emphasizes in this regard that constructive cooperation between the government and the opposition is needed to ensure its full implementation;
8. welcomes the progress made in reforming the judicial system and notes that the constitutional and legal framework for an independent and efficient judiciary is now largely in place; stresses that successful implementation of the reform remains a major challenge and will require continuous efforts;
9. welcomes the progress made in strengthening the legal and institutional framework for fighting corruption; notes that the cooperation and coordination among the bodies involved have improved; regrets however that corruption remains widespread and emphasizes that strong political will and the full implementation of the legal framework is needed to achieve concrete results; anti-corruption reform plan should be part of a comprehensive macro-economic package; the institutions responsible for the fight against corruption should have real power and independence;
10. recommends that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia makes further progress in improving inter-ethnic relations; recognises that constitutional and legislative changes have been made to provide a high level of protection of the rights of different ethnic communities; encourages the Government to continue the effective implementation of these measures; reiterates, in this regard, that the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement is essential to foster a positive environment for further reforms;
11. notes that the country has maintained a broad consensus on the essentials of economic policies and the macroeconomic stability has been increased and welcomes the measures taken to improve the quality of human capital and to upgrade the country's infrastructure and increased inflows of foreign direct investments mainly driven by privatisation efforts; notes with satisfaction the further significant progress of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia towards establishing a fully functioning market economy; notes however that institutional weaknesses remain and calls on the Government to accelerate implementation of comprehensive structural reforms; notes that the shortcomings, as recorded by the European Commission Progress Report, in the judiciary, the labour and financial markets, and the education system need to be urgently addressed; further notes that the considerable informal sector

continues to cause major distortions in the economy; considers these reforms to be a key in the successful transition of the country;

12. commends the country on the further progress made in aligning its legislation with the EU acquis, notably concerning the internal market; notes however that capacity in a number of areas, such as agriculture, food safety, competition, environment, justice, freedom and security needs to be improved; calls on the country to continue the effective implementation and in particular, the effective enforcement, of EU legislation; emphasizes the importance of implementing adopted laws;
13. taking into account that regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations form an essential part of the process of moving towards the European Union; welcomes the readiness of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to increase the engagement in the regional cooperation process, primarily through establishment of a Regional Cooperation Council as a regionally owned forum for cooperation, the CEFTA 2006 Agreement, the Energy Community Treaty, the Agreement on a European Common Aviation Area and other forms of cooperation according to their common interest;
14. points the needs of the EU institutions to re-examine the Trans-European Network - Transport concept for building of the basic European corridors until 2020 and to integrate the area of the Stabilization and the Association process member countries, including the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, taking into consideration in particular not only the vertical, but also the horizontal integration of the region in the European transversals;
15. notes with satisfaction the considerable progress made with respect to visa policy; welcomes that visa requirements have been abolished for all remaining new Member States; highlights that with the recently adopted Law on Aliens, the legislation is largely in line with the EU acquis; encourages the country to further strengthen its administrative capacity in border control and security of documents;
16. welcomes the opening of visa facilitation negotiations between the EU and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on visa facilitation and looks forward to their conclusion by June 2007, so that the agreement may enter into force as soon as possible; underlines that the ultimate objective at this stage must be to facilitate travel to the EU for all citizens of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and the citizens of the Western Balkan countries in general;
17. calls on the European Commission to assist the country in its efforts to comply with the requirements of the European partnership;
18. emphasizes important role already played by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the process of regional cooperation in the SEE region; points out that by virtue of its multi-ethnic character of its society and continued progression towards EU membership the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia acts as a model in the Western Balkan region; stresses the

- country's constructive position on Kosovo talks; further stresses the importance of finalising the demarcation of the border of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with Serbia on the part with Kosovo, as a technical issue which should be resolved prior to the decision on the status of Kosovo;
19. commends the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for maintaining full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia; emphasizes that further progress in the reform of the judiciary is essential to prepare for the transfer of the cases to be returned by the ICTY;
  20. takes note of the report of the European Parliament's Temporary Committee on the alleged use of European countries by the CIA for the transportation and illegal detention of prisoners; urges the authorities in former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to investigate the Khaled El-Masri case without delay;
  21. notes with satisfaction that custom fees, which were considered as violating the SAA, have been abolished in line with a key priority of the European Partnership; however emphasizes that other major challenges, such as liberalizing the telecommunication market and ensuring adequate protection of intellectual property rights, remain for the country to fully meet its SAA obligations;
  22. encourages the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to continue to pursue resolutely the reforms needed to fulfil the conditions and requirements set forth in the Copenhagen criteria and in the Stabilization and Association Process for the country to start negotiations for membership of the European Union as soon as possible;
  23. notes with satisfaction that as a candidate country the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is eligible for all the components of the IPA; welcomes the preparations done by the authorities to prepare for IPA, including decentralised management of EU funds and urges the Commission to make a decision on the decentralised management and to support with all available means taking ownership of the process by the authorities of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
  24. welcomes the preparation of the NPAA, PEP and NDP by the authorities of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
  25. calls upon the EU Member States to complete the necessary institutional reforms of the EU as soon as possible so as to avoid any unnecessary delay in future EU enlargement; recalls the EU's commitment towards the Western Balkan countries; emphasises the clear European membership prospects which the EU Thessaloniki Summit in 2003 offered to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the other Western Balkan countries;
  26. calls on the European Parliament and the national parliaments of the Members States to support the further process of accession of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the EU, notably launching negotiations, in line with the individual merits of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;

27. stresses the importance for EU Member States' governments and national parliaments to be more rigorous, consistent and persuasive in informing the EU public adequately about the benefits of past and future enlargements; calls on the European Commission to work together with Member-States, the European Parliament and national parliaments in order to communicate more effectively to the public the enlargement agenda; recalls at the same time that a dynamic and convincing reform process in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is the best advert of all to convince EU citizens of the benefits of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's membership to the EU.