

**EUROPEAN UNION -
FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE
26 & 27 November 2007 - Brussels**

**FINAL
DECLARATION**

adopted unanimously with two abstentions
on 27 November 2007

The EU - Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee held its 4th meeting in Brussels on 26-27 November 2007 under the joint Chairmanship of Mr. Antonios TRAKATELLIS (EPP-ED, Greece) and Mr. Aleksandar SPASENOVSKI (VMRO-DPMNE, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). At this meeting, the Committee held an exchange of views with Mr Nikola Dimitrov, Special Representative of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for EU and NATO, representing the Government of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, H.E. Mr António Tânger, Ambassador, Special Envoy for the Western Balkans, representing the EU Presidency-in-Office of the Council of the European Union and Mr Jan Truszczyński, Deputy Director General, representing the European Commission on the EU-Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia relations and on the Commission's 2007 Progress Report..

The Joint Parliamentary Committee addressed the following issues:

- ❖ The activities of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for progress towards EU membership, in the context of internal and the political progress of the country, and the regional and the European developments
- ❖ The process of economic reforms to fulfil the European criteria for EU membership;
- ❖ The reform processes in the fields of judiciary, home affairs and the state administration in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
- ❖ The facilitation of the visa regime - step towards full liberalization; and
- ❖ Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)

Taking into account:

A. The Feira 2000 European Council Conclusions and the Thessaloniki 2003 European Council Conclusions;

B. The European Council decision to grant the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the status of candidate country for EU membership of 17 December 2005;

C. The European Parliament Resolution on the Commission's Progress Report 2006 on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia of 12 July 2007;

D. The European Commission Progress Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the EU Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006 - 2007 of 6 November 2007;

E. The conclusion of the visa facilitation and readmission agreements between the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the European Community of 18 September 2007;

F. The Final Statement of the 3rd EU - Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee of 30 January 2007;

G. The EU/Western Balkans Salzburg Declaration of 11 March 2006

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

1. recalls the clear EU membership prospects which the Thessaloniki European Council in 2003 offered to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the other Western Balkan countries and the conditionality as set out in the Stabilization and Association Process and the Thessaloniki Agenda;
2. welcomes the European Commission Report on Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2007-2008, and the Progress Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia of 6 November 2007, and the assessment that the country has continues to make progress, but further efforts are necessary;
3. recalls that the European Parliament, in its resolution of 12 July 2007, underlined the clear prospect of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia of becoming a member of the EU and called for accession negotiations to start as soon as possible; encouraged in this regard the government, the opposition and all the stakeholders in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to do their utmost to carry out the necessary reforms to fulfil the necessary criteria for facilitating the accession negotiations to begin as soon as possible;
4. welcomes the adoption of the National Program for Adoption of the Acquis, the National Development Plan 2007-2009 and the Pre-accession Economic Program 2007-2009 and their continuous implementation; commends the fact that the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has fulfilled some of the short term priorities of the 2005 European Partnership and that preparations for accession to the EU will continue to be among the top priorities for the government of Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and believes that the country has the commitment and the determination to step up its reform efforts in order to launch accession negotiations;

5. urges the Government and all political forces to pursue effectively with the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) that is embedded in the constitution and in the legal framework of the country; welcomes in this regard the establishment of Secretariat for OFA implementation the increased budget allocations for equitable representation of the non-majority communities in the public bodies, as well as the measures undertaken for further development and promotion of inter-ethnic relations; emphasizes that the continued implementation of OFA contributes to the country's stability and encourages all stakeholders to maintain a constructive dialogue on the implementation of OFA;
6. welcomes the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the progress in the fight against corruption that resulted in improvement of the country's ranking according to the corruption perception index for 2007 of Transparency International; notes the strengthening of the legislative and institutional framework for fight against corruption; notes that the cooperation and coordination between the state bodies involved has been improved; regrets that the corruption is still present in the country and emphasizes the importance of demonstration of strong efforts in the fight against corruption on all levels;
7. takes into account the reforms made in the field of the judiciary; encourages further reforms and its functioning in an independent and efficient manner; welcomes the launching of the Academy for Training of Judges and Prosecutors and the improved efficiency of the judiciary; calls on all political parties to specifically and continuously support the reforms of the judicial system and the successful implementation of the legal reforms in this field; calls on the authorities especially as regards the appointments to the Judicial Council and the reform of the prosecution service;
8. 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;
9. notes that the continuation of the decentralization process has moved forward and welcomes the launching of the second phase of fiscal decentralization, including the transfer of fiscal competencies in the areas of education, social and child protection, fire-fighting and culture;

10. welcomes the steps taken to improve the management of the administration, through establishment of human resource management units in the public institutions, as well as the transparency in providing information to the public; welcomes the establishment of sectors for EU affairs in the ministries to deal with the preparations for EU accession; encourages the government to pursue the de-politization of the public administration of Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; points out that the EU has invested a great deal in building programs and underlines that the administration should be merit-based and that professional and transparent administration is crucial to improve the capacity for assuming the obligations of EU membership; regrets the fact that public administration remains weak and inefficient;
11. calls for political cooperation and constructive contribution of all political parties in the work of the Assembly and on making additional efforts for improvement of the political climate and the political dialogue for intensification of the adoption of laws that are of critical importance for integration of Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the European Union; regrets that problems have surfaced in the functioning of the Parliament; recommends that the consultation between the government and the opposition continue;
12. commends the country on the progress made in the harmonization of its legislation with the EU acquis; calls for continuous effective implementation and in particular, effective enforcement of EU legislation; encourages the country to continue with increased dynamics the harmonization of its legislation with that of the EU;
13. notes that progress has been made in the area of economic and monetary policy and in overall the economic policy preparations are advancing; calls upon the government to improve the business climate and conditions for foreign investors; notes the improvement of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia towards establishing of a functional market economy, increased macro-economic stability and the reducing of the overall foreign debt;
14. points to the need 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 the country's commitment to ensure effective implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement and welcomes in this regard the progress achieved in various areas, such as customs, transport, internal market, competition, state aid, protection of intellectual and industrial property rights, etc.; notes with satisfaction that concrete steps have been taken for liberalization of the telecommunication market, by introducing third mobile operator and the envisaged liberalization in the fixed telephony market; calls for continuous strengthening of the administrative capacity through a systematic and well planned training to ensure smooth implementation of SAA;
16. welcomes the fact that the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has submitted all operational programs within Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) 2007 and looks forward to the signing of the IPA Framework Agreement; welcomes the progress made by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia authorities for the decentralised management of EU funds; encourages the government of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, to strengthen its administrative capacity in order to benefit intensively from the IPA; urges the Government to utilize the IPA to address certain urgent and important environmental issues; urges the Commission to make a decision on the decentralised management and to support with all available means the authorities of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in order to fully participate in this process;
17. welcomes the successful conclusion of the visa facilitation agreement and the readmission agreement with the EU and looks forward to their enforcement as of 1 January 2008; commends the progress made by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the area of Justice, freedom and security and, in particular, on migration, visa policy, border management and on document security, including the introduction of biometric passports, identity cards, and driving licences; calls on the European Commission to fulfill its commitment, as outlined in the 2007 Strategy Report on Enlargement, to promptly commence a visa dialogue with Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia aimed at establishing a mutual visa-free travel regime; calls on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for continuous implementation of the required European standards in this regard;

18. notes the difficulties faced by citizens of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia due to the non-recognition by Greece of its passports, the situation linked with the name issue; calls on both parties to honor commitments as outlined in the Joint Declaration annexed to the text of the EC-Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Visa Facilitation Agreement to re-assess the issue, as a matter of priority, once conditions have been met, namely the adoption by the EU of the Community Code on Visas;
19. notes the constructive role of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the field of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP); commends its participation in the mission of the European Union ALTHEA, as well as in the NATO missions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon and its readiness to take part in the promotion of the ESDP capabilities and in future EU-led civilian and military crisis management missions;
20. takes into account that regional cooperation and good-neighborly relations are part of the process moving forward towards the European Union; welcomes the readiness of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to increase its engagement in the regional cooperation process, primarily through the establishment of the Regional Cooperation Council as a regionally owned forum for cooperation, the chairmanship of CEFTA 2006 Agreement, the Energy Community Treaty, the Agreement on a European Common Aviation Area and other forms of cooperation according to its common interest;
21. commends the country's constructive position regarding the solution of the final status of Kosovo and emphasizes the important role already played by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia during the Kosovo crisis, as a factor of stability in the SEE region; points out that with the multi-ethnic character of its society, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia could serve as a model in the Western Balkans region; further stresses the importance of finalizing the technical 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 as soon as possible;
22. encourages the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to continue to pursue resolutely the reforms needed to fulfill the conditions and requirements set forth in the Copenhagen political criteria and in the Stabilization and Association Agreement for the country to respond to the other issues and criteria for membership included in the Commission's Opinion and to

implement the priorities in the European Partnership, on the basis of specific benchmarks; calls on the European Commission to assist the country in its efforts to comply with and implement the requirements of the European partnership; calls on the European Parliament and the national parliaments of the Member States to support the further process of accession of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the EU as soon as possible;

23. reminds that the EU enlargement process has contributed to stability, peace, democratic reforms, market-based economies and the promotion of the European values in the new member countries, and brought welfare to the citizens in the old member countries; to that aim, stresses the importance for the EU Commission, the European Parliament and the governments and national parliaments of all member states of the Union to continue informing their public adequately about the benefits of future enlargements; recalls at the same time that eventual integration in the European Union depends on effective implementation of reforms and full respect of the principle of conditionality; reminds the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia that this is the fastest road towards EU accession.