

**EUROPEAN UNION – FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC  
OF MACEDONIA  
JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE  
27 - 28 November 2008 - Skopje**

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**FINAL  
DECLARATION**

adopted unanimously on 28 November 2008

Skopje, 28 November 2008

*The EU - Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee held its 5<sup>th</sup> meeting in Skopje on 27-28 November 2008 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. Ivica Bocevski, Deputy - Prime Minister of the Government of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia responsible for EU affairs, H.E. Mr Bernard VALERO, representing the EU Presidency-in-Office of the Council of the European Union and H.E. Mr Erwan FOUÉRE, EU Special Representative and Head of the EC Delegation, representing the European Commission on the EU - Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia relations and on the Commission's 2008 Progress Report.*

*The Joint Parliamentary Committee addressed the following issues:*

- ❖ Exchange of views with the Government of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on the relations between the European Union and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, on the state of implementation of the key priorities of the Accession Partnership and on the European Commission's 2008 Progress Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
- ❖ Liberalization of the visa regime for the citizens of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
- ❖ Environmental issues in the regional cooperation relevant for the accession process;
- ❖ Transport and infrastructures;
- ❖ Conditions in the penitentiary system;
- ❖ The EU assistance to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with a particular view to the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA);
- ❖ The TAIEX Instrument (major programmes and achievements) and the strengthening of the institutional cooperation between the two parliaments, in order to improve the parliamentary work.

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 EU/Western Balkans Salzburg Declaration of 11 March 2006;
- D. The European Council Conclusions of December 2006;
- 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 4<sup>th</sup> EU - Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee of 27 November 2007;
- G. The European Parliament Resolution on the Commission's Progress Report 2007 on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia of 4 March 2008;
- H. The European Council Conclusions of June 2008;
- I. The European Commission Progress Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the EU Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2008 - 2009 of 5 November 2008;
- J. The Accession Partnership adopted by the Council of EU in February 2008;

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

1. Welcomes the European Commission Progress Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the EU Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2008/2009 of 5 November 2008; acknowledges the progress in the country made in the past years, particularly regarding the fulfilment of the economic criteria and the ability to assume the obligations of the membership, and urges to fulfil the remaining obligations, especially in the field of the political criteria, in order for the country to start accession negotiations as soon as possible;
2. Welcomes the recent efforts made by the Assembly for promotion of constructive and inclusive dialogue, especially in areas which require consensus between all political parties; calls on further strengthening of the dialogue between the political parties regarding the further enhancement of the state capacities, as part of the political criteria for membership; in this respect welcomes the consensus on the implementation of the

Framework Agreement and the Badinter principle, and the establishment of the Committee on Relations Among the Communities, as well as the adoption of the Law on the Use of Languages;

3. Though broad consensus was achieved in amending the Electoral Code, mostly in line with the OSCE/ODHIR recommendations, special emphasis must be given to the actual implementation of the provisions contained therein, in order to avoid violence and irregularities like have taken place in some areas of the north-west part of the country in the June 2008 elections, stresses thus the responsibility of the competent authorities to ensure that Presidential and Local elections scheduled to take place in March 2009, meet the internationally established standards;
4. Welcomes the establishment of the National Council for Euro-Integration, as a body that encompasses all stakeholders in the Euro-Integration process; notes the adoption of the new Rules of Procedure which has been subject of controversy for several years; welcomes the establishment of the Budget Council of the Assembly as a first step toward full autonomy of the Assembly;
5. Notes the progress made in the area of judiciary reforms; takes into account the good progress made in implementing the strategy on judicial reform, which is a key priority of the Accession Partnership; welcomes the smooth functioning of the Judicial Council and the Council of Public Prosecutors, the establishment and functioning of the Administrative Court and the Court of Appeal in Gostivar, as well as the continuous work of the Academy for Training of Judges and Prosecutors; calls for further strengthening of the judiciary as regards its independence, efficiency, human resources and budgetary framework; notes that further progress has been made in the area of anti-corruption policy, especially the continuous strengthening of the legal and institutional framework and the cooperation among the relevant bodies; however, states that corruption still exists and that further steps are necessary, in particular as regards implementing provisions on financing of political parties and election campaigns;
6. Welcomes the entering into force of the new Law on Public Procurement and related implementing legislation that will provide a new remedies system and provisions to make publication and awarding of contracts more transparent. Still, more efforts are needed in order to achieve and implement all requirements of the European Commission;

7. Notes the growth of the economy and the progress made in the structural reforms and the improvement of the business environment reforms, as well as the movement of the country closer towards becoming a functional market economy, as noted in the Doing Business Report of the World Bank, placing the country on the 4<sup>th</sup> place among the 10 biggest reform countries for 2006 and 2007 in the world; states that the slow speed of judiciary procedures and insufficient resources impede the creation of a level playing field for market participants; encourages the government to undertake appropriate measures to reduce the high unemployment rate in the country and to ensure stable legal and institutional framework for proper fulfilment of the contracts with the investors; welcomes the broad political consensus on maintaining the fundamentals of economic policy; taking into account the improvement of the efficiency of the tax administration and the simplification of the tax system, notes that tax collection has been improved; notes the importance to continue with the efforts towards the fulfillment of the economic criteria, especially in this critical period of global economic crisis;
8. Welcomes the launch of the dialogue on visa liberalization, based on roadmaps containing clear and realistic benchmarks; Notes the successful progress made in the fulfillment of the criteria for visa liberalization and the results made by the country in the security of documents, namely the establishment of the visa center, the integrated border management, as well as in the field of asylum and migration; commends the issuing of new biometric passports which are in line with international security standards; commends the entering into force of the new Law on Aliens and the implementation of the legislation regulating issuance and processing of visas; calls on the EU member states to fulfill their commitments for establishment of a visa-free travel regime for the citizens of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2009; commends the decision of the government to allow entrance of the EU citizens with ID cards;
9. Notes that some progress has been made in the area of horizontal environmental legislation, and in the field of waste management; calls on the Government for a speedy realization of new landfills, closure of the old municipalities dumping sites and their rehabilitation, and to develop actions for separated collection of urban waste and in order to decrease the risk of pollution of rivers and lakes; encourages the authorities to establish a new National Agency that will collect data about the waste cycle and will manage the control and monitoring of the environment; regrets however, that little progress has been

made in the field of water quality and urges the authorities of the country to intensify their efforts with regard to the protection of water quality and the pollution control; welcomes the adoption of a package of basic laws in the field of environment that completes the legal framework in this area; encourages the government in its efforts to fully implement the new Law on Waters, the legislation on waste management and air quality; encourages the Government to adopt the envisaged National Strategy for Sustainable Development and the National Strategy on Investments in the Environment; welcomes the efforts of the Government for a healthier and ecologically clean environment and calls these efforts to continue in future; having in mind that the environmental projects have a trans-border character and that the trans-border cooperation is crucial for European integration, welcomes the commitment of the Government to solve the environmental problems and calls for a realization of the remaining projects; supports all future initiatives on cooperation in the field of water management with the neighboring countries;

10. Welcomes the adoption of the amendments to the Energy Law in 2008 and the efforts to strengthen competitiveness in the field of production and distribution of energy; encourages the Government to introduce a new incentive system for creating plants facilitating the production of energy from renewable sources; welcomes the creation of hydroelectric plants and encourage the Government to accelerate the planning and production of energy from renewable sources including in the field of Solar, biomass and wind energy; stresses that existing industrial plants should be converted using the "Best Available Technologies" for reducing the CO2 emissions;
11. Welcomes the progress made so far in the area of transport networks and calls on the government for a speedy realization of Pan-European Corridors VIII and X; points out, though, that limited progress has been made as regards railway connections and infrastructure and that fresh and genuine efforts should also go in this direction in line with EU targets; supports the continuation of the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on the South-East European Core Regional Transport Network; commends the progress made in the development and the liberalization of the telecommunication market, especially the entrance of new operators and the introduction of new ICT services and the adoption of the Strategy for Development of the Public Broadcasting;

12. Expressing concern for the situation in the prisons, encourages the Government in the efforts to continue to improve the conditions in the prisons by implementing its strategic priorities for reforms of the judicial system and in accordance with the recommendations from the EC Progress Report 2008 and the recommendations of the 2007 Report of the Council of Europe; welcomes the start of the implementation of the Program for Improvement of Prison Conditions, through constructions activities in several penitentiary institutions and through the training activities for the personnel in the prisons in accordance with the European practices for prison rules and for respect of the basic human rights;
13. Welcomes the considerable amount of work made by the Institutions to be prepared to take over the ownership of the use of the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA); commends the establishment of the structures for managing and monitoring IPA funds, as well as the establishment of IPA units in each Ministry; reiterates the importance of the IPA for preparation for future EU membership; calls on the government to continue with implementation of all the necessary steps in order to obtain a positive decision by the European Commission for transfer of all competences on national level in 2009 through the Decentralized Implementation System (DIS);
14. Expresses satisfaction with the quality of the overall political relations between the European Parliament and the Assembly of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; recognizing the importance of the process of further strengthening of the parliamentary cooperation, calls for further promotion of the relations between the two institutions and for exploring all the possibilities for organizing study visits and exchanges on administrative level, with the aim of strengthening the institutional capacities necessary to assume the obligations from the European integration process. Accordingly, calls on increased use of the possibilities offered with the TAIEX instrument.