

Ninth meeting of the Stabilisation and Association Council between Albania and the EU

The Stabilisation and Association Council (SA Council) between Albania and the European Union held its ninth meeting on 15 November 2017.

The SA Council noted the Commission 2016 Albania report, which acknowledged that the country had made further progress towards meeting the political criteria for membership and, overall, steady progress continued in the five key priorities for the opening of accession negotiations. The SA Council also noted that the 2016 Commission communication on EU Enlargement policy, in view of the progress in meeting the key priorities and subject to credible and tangible progress in the implementation of the justice reform, in particular the re-evaluation of judges and prosecutors (vetting), recommended opening of accession negotiations with Albania. Since then Albania has made significant additional progress.

The SA Council noted Albania's continued commitment to the reform agenda. On that occasion, the Council underlined that, along with the other key priorities, judicial reform remained essential in Albania's EU accession process and could be transformative for other reforms. In this context, the EU welcomed the appointment of the vetting institutions in June 2017 and highlighted that this important success represents a step forward in the implementation of the justice reform in Albania. It also welcomed the deployment of the international monitoring operation observers which has started under the lead of the European Commission. The EU also welcomed the further steps in the fight against corruption and organised crime, particularly the positive results achieved in the fight against cannabis cultivation. Furthermore, the Council positively noted the steps taken on human rights matters including the adoption of the framework law on the protection of national minorities.

The SA Council confirmed that Albania has maintained a sustained pace in the implementation of public administration reform measures and welcomed in particular the consolidation of measures aimed at strengthening the transparency and meritocracy of the civil service and improving effectiveness in service delivery.

The SA Council acknowledged Albania's role in the region as a pro-active and constructive partner. The SA Council also commended Albania's continuous participation in regional initiatives and structures in South Eastern Europe and its good neighbourly relations and constructive regional stance. The EU reiterated that good neighbourly relations and regional stability are essential elements of the Stabilisation and Association process.

The SA Council welcomed the consistent full alignment of Albania to Council decisions and in Common Foreign and Security Policy.

The meeting was chaired by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini. The Albanian delegation was led by the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Mr Ditmir Bushati. The Director General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, Mr Christian Danielsson represented the European Commission.

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