



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No 1059 Vienna, 11 June 2015

EU statement in Response to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, H.E. Mr. Nikola Poposki and Special Representative of CiO for the Western Balkans, H.E. Ambassador Gerard Stoudmann

The EU warmly welcomes Minister Poposki and Ambassador Stoudmann to the OSCE Permanent Council. We thank you for sharing your views on the political situation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr Foreign Minister, your country has been in our minds in the recent weeks. Concerned by the current political crisis, the Council of the European Union previously was obliged to underline the deteriorating situation in the country. While reaffirming its engagement in the accession process, the EU calls for political parties in the country to assume their respective responsibilities and take immediate measures towards a sustainable solution, constructively engage in political dialogue and restore trust in the institutions by adequate political steps. Some positive steps have been taken earlier this month when a political agreement was reached between the four main political parties in the country. But a range of problems remain to be addressed in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It is time for the country's authorities to urgently tackle the pressing challenges through serious reforms in the key areas, including political dialogue, rule of law, independence of the judiciary and state institutions, freedom of expression and the media, the implementation of the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement and strengthening good neighbourly relations.

The EU welcomes the progress made so far by the leaders of the four main political parties at their meetings on 2 June in Skopje and 10 June in Brussels, facilitated by Commissioner Hahn and urges them to rapidly reach an agreement on the outstanding issues.

The EU welcomes the parties' commitment to implement all recommendations of the European Commission in relation to systemic rule of law issues, including those revealed by the wiretaps. We emphasize the European Commission's intention to monitor and report on progress, including through an inclusive High Level Accession Dialogue involving all main political parties and civil society and the Progress Report.

We recall that any elections which may result from an agreement will need to be organised in accordance with OSCE/ODIHR standards and the implementation of all remaining OSCE/ODIHR recommendations, including ensuring the accuracy of the voter list.

The EU also recalls that all allegations should be investigated by the relevant authorities, including those allegations of potential wrongdoing being made public, with full regard for due process, the principle of independence of the judiciary and the presumption of innocence, in order to restore trust to the country's institutions.

As regards the recent events in Kumanovo, the EU calls again for the relevant authorities to fully investigate them in an objective and transparent manner within the law. The EU recalls the need for continued engagement by the authorities on building trust between communities.

Mr Chairman, we want to commend the OSCE Mission in Skopje for its work, including its cooperation with the European Union.

We also want to express our full support for the efforts of Ambassador Stoudmann and commend him for his engagement, and we welcome very much his interaction with us today.

Thank you again, Foreign Minister Poposki, for being with us today and for sharing with us your views on the situation in your country and the prospects for the future.

The Candidate Countries MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE align themselves with this statement.

* Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.