Resolution on the conclusion of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and Montenegro, of the other part

2007/2638(RSP) - 13/12/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

Following the debate held on 12 December 2007, the European Parliament adopts a resolution on the conclusion of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the EC and Montenegro, and congratulates the Montenegrin Government on the speedy conclusion of the negotiations concerning the SAA and on the recent signature of this important document. The SAA is considered by Parliament to be the first, but important, step by Montenegro towards accession to the EU. However, the prospects for accession need to be assessed in a realistic manner, on the basis not merely of the transposition into national law of Community rules but also of the country's real administrative and judicial capacities and the allocation of sufficient resources.

Parliament recommends strengthening the role of the Parliament of Montenegro, as the centrepiece of parliamentary democracy, and calls on the Parliament of Montenegro to contribute actively to the process of rapprochement with the EU. It also urges the Government and Parliament of Montenegro to give practical effect to the objectives listed in Article 80 of the SAA by introducing the laws to guarantee the full independence and accountability of the judiciary. Both the Montenegrin Government and the judicial authorities must provide all necessary assistance to the Italian judicial authorities as regards the conclusion of the inquiry into organised crime and the smuggling of cigarettes which involves prominent Montenegrin politicians.

Parliament pronounces itself pleased to record Montenegro's continued cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and emphasises that this is closely linked with Montenegro's progress towards EU membership. It calls on the Montenegrin authorities further to cooperate with Serbia and other neighbouring countries in locating the remaining war crimes suspects, in particular Ratko Mladi and Radovan Karadži.

Members further urge the Montenegrin authorities to :

- implement proactive policies against corruption, the combating of organised crime and the fight against trafficking in human beings, arms, cigarettes and drugs, since these are preconditions for further integration into the EU ;

- seize the signing of the agreement as an opportunity to pursue vigorously reforms in areas such as the rule of law, fighting organised crime and corruption, strengthening border controls and increasing Montenegro's administrative capacity;

- to adopt the provisions required on public administration to ensure transparent recruitment and career management within the public administration and to make full use, with the Commission's support, of the Community assistance and twinning instruments for public bodies;

- implement the national law for the protection of the countryside – particularly in coastal areas – and of waters and the marine environment, and to implement the master plans for integrated waste management and the treatment of waste water, focusing in particular on promoting differentiated waste collection in coastal tourist resorts and providing for the construction of heat recovery plants. Parliament draws attention in particular to the delicate ecological balance in Kotor Bay and the urgent need for concerted action to preserve this exceptionally beautiful natural and architectural heritage;

- give practical effect to the objectives set out in Article 109 of the SAA by constructing at the earliest opportunity plants using renewable energy sources;

- make a firmer commitment to employment, one of the most severe economic and social problems facing Montenegrin society, and to pursue economic policies aimed at creating an openly competitive and transparent business climate;

- find long-term solutions with regard to the housing and the nationality of refugees from neighbouring Kosovo, on the basis of the 1997 European Convention on Nationality and the newly adopted Council of Europe Convention on the Avoidance of Statelessness in relation to State Succession;

- coordinate even more efficiently Montenegro's involvement in Community programmes, particularly in the field of education and training;

- implement reforms in the media laws, in particular the Law on Media Transparency and Prevention of Media Concentration, in order to allow for greater transparency and prevent media monopolies in both the printed and electronic media ;

- ensure the independence of the Broadcasting Council from Radio Television of Montenegro (RTCG), including genuine representation of all sections of society, thereby facilitating the full transformation of RTCG into a professional public broadcasting service.

Parliament regretted the signature of an agreement between the United States and Montenegro under which the Montenegrins pledge not to hand over US personnel to the ICC, in return for which the US will provide military aid to Montenegro. The EU opposes such accords as they undermine the ICC's authority, and Parliament expects Montenegro to take into account the EU stance on this matter and adopt appropriate measures.

It goes on to regret ongoing speculation in property and real estate and its negative impact on the sustainable development of the country, mainly due to weak or insufficient control by state and local authorities. It notes that foreign direct investment in Montenegro is dominated by investment in immovable property.

Parliament considers that regional cooperation among Western Balkan countries may be an effective instrument for solving their political, economic and social problems. It welcomes Montenegro's accession to the CEFTA agreement, and urges the Commission to assist the Montenegrin authorities in strengthening cooperation with neighbouring countries in the field of energy, the environment and transport.