Resolution on Albania

2010/2611(RSP) - 08/07/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 567 to 47 with 19 abstentions a resolution tabled on the Committee on Foreign Affairs on Albania. It confirms its full support for Albania's application for EU membership (and for future EU membership for all the other Western Balkan countries), once it has achieved a certain level of political stability and reliability and fully meets the Copenhagen criteria. Members **acknowledge the progress achieved by Albania in the context of the reform process, but underline the need for further substantial efforts**, which are necessary both to consolidate democracy and the rule of law and to ensure the country's sustainable development. They stress that a candidate country's progress towards EU membership depends on its ability to meet the Copenhagen criteria, including the existence of stable institutions guaranteeing democracy.

Parliament expresses the hope that the Albanian Government and opposition clearly understand that **overcoming the current political controversies is crucial for the country's progress** towards EU integration and for furthering Albanians' European aspirations. It is high time to find a solution to the current political crisis on a basis which will stand the test of time, and it is the responsibility of the Government of Albania together with the opposition to promptly find ways forward which will be required for the country on its EU path. Parliament deplores the political crisis following the June 2009 parliamentary elections in Albania, and underlines that fully functioning, representative institutions (especially parliament) are the backbone of a consolidated democratic system and, as a key priority for the European Partnership. It welcomes the opposition's decision actively to participate in the Albanian Parliament's work, but deplores the fact that – in spite of the recent talks facilitated by the EU – a consensus has still not been reached regarding the 2009 elections. It strongly urges all political sides to assume their responsibilities and engage in constructive political dialogue, including discussions on a new electoral law ensuring a fully transparent electoral process for future elections. A solution to the stalemate can be found only by complying fully with the Constitution and the principles of transparency. If a solution cannot be found without outside help, government and opposition are asked to agree to mediation, for example by jointly inviting Council of Europe and/or European Parliament representatives.

Parliament moves on to welcome the adoption on 27 May 2010 of the Commission's legislative proposal on **visa liberalisation**, and calls on the Commission to check that the remaining benchmarks are met in the coming months, with the aim of clearing the way for the Council and Parliament to approve the introduction of a visa waiver for Albanian citizens by the end of 2010. It also welcomes the cross-party political support for visa liberalisation expressed in the resolution adopted by the Albanian Parliament on 11 March 2010. Members note with satisfaction Albanian initiatives to waive visa requirements for neighbouring countries, which are a positive step that facilitates people-to-people contacts and enhances regional reconciliation. They consider that such initiatives should be undertaken in parallel to the visa liberalisation process involving the Schengen countries and Western Balkan countries.

Members welcome the progress made in respect of the judicial system, but underlines that implementation of the reforms is still at an early stage, and that **judicial reform**, including the enforcement of court decisions, is a key prerequisite for Albania's EU membership application process. They note that the **fight against corruption** remains a major political challenge, that law enforcement and prosecution are still weak, and that further vigorous steps need to be taken to remedy the situation whereby people guilty of corruption enjoy impunity. Parliament underlines the need to establish a track record of investigations and convictions, including in cases of high-level corruption, and to continue implementing the latest GRECO recommendations, especially as regards reducing the number of officials enjoying immunity. It calls, furthermore, for the adoption of a **legislative framework for fully transparent political party financing**;

Parliament acknowledges the progress made in respect of **protection of minorities**, and that an adequate institutional and legislative framework for the protection of minorities is largely in place. It notes, however, that discrimination continues to be a problem in Albania, and it refers particularly to the recent anti-gay demonstration in Albania. It underlines that more efforts are needed to tackle the European Partnership priorities with regard to minorities, and more specifically the use of minority languages and provision for minority-language education and non-discriminatory treatment for members of all minorities.

Lastly, Parliament acknowledges **Albania's good relations with its neighbours** as making a vital contribution to regional stability, and welcomes the recent positive trend in relations between Albania and Serbia, along with the country's active participation in regional initiatives.