Resolution on the conclusion of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States and the Republic of Albania

2006/2601(RSP) - 06/09/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a joint resolution on the conclusion of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the EU and Albania. Itwelcomed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. This would be instrumental in achieving political, economic and institutional stability in the country as well as in the whole region and in promoting the transformation of Albania into a pluralist democracy respecting the rule of law, with a functioning market economy. Members felt that progress in achieving the standards laid down in the Agreement should be monitored by means of concrete measurable benchmarks by the SAA Council and the relevant joint parliamentary committee.

The EU and Albania should use the Agreement as a mutually beneficial opportunity. Parliament advised Albania to exploit the opportunity to find its own niche on the European market and develop competitiveness in targeted sectors.

It recommended that Albania focus more strongly on developing its economic potential, not least through the improvement and possibly the expansion of its existing transport infrastructure and the development of environmentally and socially sustainable tourism. Regretting the recent cuts in external action assistance as provided for in the Financial Framework, Parliament called on the Commission to earmark sufficient funds for the improvement of the country's infrastructure, in particular for the development of public transport.

Parliament went on to draw attention to the following:

- the need for Albania to demonstrate further substantial progress in combating all forms of organised crime, in particular trafficking in women and children for the purposes of sexual exploitation, exploitation at work or compelling them to beg, as a prerequisite for intensified cooperation with the EU;

- corruption being one of the main obstacles to the economic and social development of Albania, Parliament expected the government's campaign to continue to show tangible results;

- Albanian governmental bodies should empower civil society by providing it with greater opportunities to participate in the formulation of policy and in the monitoring of its implementation and effectiveness at all levels of government;

- there were still significant violations of human rights in Albania which should be addressed. Parliament urged the Albanian Government to implement the necessary reforms to give detainees access to defence in legal proceedings and to combat torture, brutality or inhuman or degrading treatment.

- the Commission should help Albania to put an end to the persistence of the 'blood feud', which constituted a failure of the rule of law and was fundamentally at odds with European values;

- further efforts must be made to protect minority rights, including the rights of the Greek minority in Albania, and to complete its minority-related legislation.

- Albania should devote special attention to developing economic cooperation in the region, in particular with its direct neighbours.

Parliament called on the EU and Albania to take advantage, by means of twinning and secondment programmes, of the extensive knowledge and experience gained by the new Member States in reforming their societies and economies in the EU integration process. It referred to the adoption and implementation of legislation on land and property restitution and strengthening the border guard and customs authorities.