



Delegation for relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo

DSEE_PV(2019)0129

MINUTES

of the meeting of 4 February 2019,
17.30-18.30,
Brussels

The meeting opened at 17.35 on Monday, 4 February 2019, with Tonino PICULA (D-SEE Chair) in the Chair.

1. Adoption of the draft agenda

The draft agenda was adopted without any changes.

2. Adoption of the draft minutes of the 5th preparatory meeting of the EU-Kosovo SAPC

No comments or objections to the draft minutes were received within the deadline so the draft minutes were adopted without any changes.

3. Exchange of views with H.E. Mr Bernard NIKAJ, Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo to the Kingdom of Belgium, Mr David CULLEN, Head of Unit, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo, DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission and with Mr Clive RUMBOLD, Deputy Head of Division 'Western Balkans' in the European External Action Service on the political and economic situation in Kosovo and on its relations with the EU

In his opening remarks, D-SEE Chair Mr PICULA highlighted three issues. Firstly, deliberations concerning visa liberalisation are ongoing in the Council, and he expects Kosovo to fully cooperate with EULEX, in particular in criminal/civil cases and with the Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office. Nonetheless, the Romanian presidency remains fully committed to visa liberalisation and so does the European Parliament and the European Commission.

With regard to the Dialogue, Mr PICULA noted with concern that the high-level talks had been

halted in the wake of Kosovo's decision to expand the 100 percent import tariffs also to products of internationally recognized brands of other countries, including EU countries, that were produced in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. He stressed that the imposition of the tariffs went against Kosovo's CEFTA obligations and the spirit of the SAA, undermining regional cooperation and they were contrary to the values of the EU. Thus, he called for the lifting of the tariffs and the re-launch of the Dialogue in order to conclude a legally binding agreement between the Kosovo and Serbia. Lastly, he said that it was important that the EU kept facilitating the Dialogue, and that the five EU non-recognizers recognize Kosovo.

Concerning the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force, the EP and the SAPC Delegation stated that it should be implemented through an inclusive and gradual process in accordance with the Kosovo Constitution. Finally, Mr PICULA voiced his expectation for Kosovo to uphold its obligations under the First Agreement concluded in Brussels in April 2013 and its security arrangements.

Ambassador H.E. Mr Bernard NIKAJ first reminded of the upcoming 11th anniversary of independence of Kosovo. Concerning visa liberalisation, Kosovo remains the only country in the Western Balkans and Europe that needs a visa to travel to the Schengen area. He opined that it was a shame that the issue had not been resolved during this legislative mandate. Kosovo has fulfilled all the criteria by the Commission and strengthened the rule of law, which proves its commitment to the visa liberalisation roadmap and the SAA. Recently, the Kosovo Assembly approved some key legislation, notably the law on confiscation of assets, the law on the fight against corruption and organized crime, the law on whistle-blowers (according to him one of the most advanced in Europe) and the law on criminal code focusing on crime and corruption, human rights, and terrorism. Kosovo adopted a package of laws on the judiciary and launched the agenda "Justice 2020" to improve efficiency of the justice system and recruited new judges and prosecutors. As for Kosovar asylum-seekers in EU, their number remains low with no pending cases of readmission. With regard to the European Reform Agenda (ERA), Kosovo implemented 10 out of 22 priorities while the other criteria are progressing.

Kosovo's Ambassador also commented on the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) that had been going on since 2014 as well as on the strategic sectoral review of the security sector concluding that the KSF was in a position to transit to a defence mandate. The key priorities include the inclusiveness of all the citizens of Kosovo in its structures, and since early 2017, KSF achieved a higher percentage of minority representation than in the society itself, especially within the ethnic Serbs. They were however forced to resign from the KSF as a result from pressures coming from Belgrade since summer 2018. Thus, KSF launched its transition into a modern defence mandate, through the adoption of laws in the Kosovo Parliament which foresee a 10 year-process, in full cooperation with NATO, in charge of training. In his view, the transition of the KSF mandate does not require constitutional changes unlike the name change, and it is fully in line with Kosovo's Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

Kosovo remains committed to the Dialogue, and the national Parliament has voted a new delegation for Dialogue. Kosovo Ambassador specified that the 100% tax was a political response to the cruel de-recognition campaign led by Serbia based on various arrangements with countries around the world. This campaign was also led against Kosovo internship in INTERPOL. Thus, the tax, as a political gesture, had the aim at pointing to the fact that this situation was unsustainable. Last Saturday, a new law to authorise negotiations has been voted in Parliament, but Serbia did not stopped its de-recognition campaign. Even during the EU-African Union summit in Brussels, Serbia has continued its lobbying.

On the economic development, Kosovo has an annual growth of 3,5% of GDP. Kosovo approved the biggest budget surpassing 2 billion euro. The country recorded successes as per the World Bank business indicator and but also increased exports in IT and entrepreneurship related sectors.

Mr David CULLEN from DG NEAR reiterated that the 100% tariffs were a violation of CEFTA and against the spirit of SAA, and expressed hope that they would be lifted. The Commissioner has offered possibilities for a forum to discuss the grievances and overcome them as this situation cannot continue. On visa liberalisation, the Commission wants to make sure that Kosovo continues fulfilling the benchmarks. The process is difficult to be understood by the population, and it is important to manage the population's expectation while being careful about the terms used. However, the Commission's position remains the same and will continue to acknowledge the efforts achieved. Concerning reforms, the European Reform Agenda (ERA) was jointly agreed with Kosovo in November 2016, and important progress has been made, in particular in the area of rule of law and public administration. In the economic field, it is important to improve business climate, and the imposition of the tariffs does not help attracting the FDI which was at a historic low last year. Mr Cullen also questioned the medium-term sustainability of the budget increase and the law on salaries.

Mr Clive RUMBOLD from EEAS underlined that the pending decision on visa liberalisation had caused frustration to the Kosovo leaders and citizens. Kosovo has met the requirements in the visa liberalisation roadmap, and it is important for the EU to show credibility to do its part. At the same time, Mr RUMBOLD called for further reforms in rule of law, migration and security, and the implementation of SAA and ERA. Concerning the imposition of the tariffs, the EU was clear that these measures should be revoked and the parties should make use of the appropriate forum to address trade issues and grievances. Consequently, peaceful protests took place in the Serb-majority municipalities whereas the mayors of the 4 Serb-majority municipalities in Northern Kosovo resigned, ceasing communication and cooperation with central authorities in Pristina. About the transformation of the KSF, the EU and NATO called for an inclusive and gradual process in accordance with the national constitution, while upholding the existing security arrangements. Regarding the Dialogue, efforts are ongoing with a view to suspend the customs tariffs, which is a shared position by 28 Member States as well as the USA. This is a condition for the resumption of normalisation talks. Mr RUMBOLD welcomed the appointment of a delegation for Dialogue. Lastly, Kosovo and Serbia have a full opportunity to normalize relations in order to achieve a legally binding agreement but it requires a favourable climate.

Mr Jasenko SELIMOVIC (ALDE, SE) underlined that the tariffs were counterproductive, not only to Kosovo's economy but they also diminished Kosovo's credibility in terms of investment while giving Kosovo's enemies arguments for not delivering on visa liberalisation even though Kosovo had achieved excellent reforms.

D-SEE Chair Mr Tonino PICULA (S&D, HR) asked the Ambassador about the alleged project of a territorial swap, meant to be a key for a long-lasting solution between Serbia and Kosovo. However, since September this idea has not been present. Mr Picula expressed interest about President Trump's letter to President Thaçi, encouraging both leaders to use this historic opportunity for a solution which is apparently very near. Lastly, he expressed regret that the EU had not delivered on the visa liberalisation. Even though the Parliament's mandate expires, the Council's position matters.

Ambassador NIKAJ specified that there was a heavy discussion in Kosovo to find a solution to the tax issue, adding that related views were varying among political leaders. In his view, there needs to be a positive change in Serbia's behaviour in order to give the Dialogue a chance. However, he is convinced that the tax will be suspended in the future, and thanked Commissioner Hahn for the proposal on the establishment of a forum on trade grievances. Statistically, Kosovo companies spend three times more time waiting at the borders than any other country in the Western Balkans when trying to export, which brought to a growing sense of feeling treated differently, along with the issue of visa liberalisation. Nevertheless, Kosovo is looking to overcome the current situation. About the land swap, he considers it as a "media hype" and reiterated that Kosovo is engaged in an EU-facilitated Dialogue, and is looking for a solution in line with EU values and international law, while being acceptable to both parties and in accordance to the interest of the region and Kosovo's partners. For the first time, Kosovo has the full attention and commitment of a Dialogue team voted by the Parliament which includes the opposition. Achieving a wide-ranging agreement with Serbia is a key element in Kosovo's way to the EU. There is an overwhelming support by the EU, expressed by the Juncker strategy, but also a supporting administration in Washington which is crucial, whereas Russia is ready to listen. Thus, the current context is favourable for an historic agreement. Kosovo's position has been expressed through the Platform adopted by the Kosovo Assembly, and the country is willing to discuss any topic in order to achieve mutual recognition with Serbia, recognition by "the five" of the EU, and a potential endorsement of the agreement by the UN Security Council. Finally, even though visa liberalisation has not been achieved, Mr Nikaj expressed recognition for the signature of the SAA in this legislative mandate, and reminded that Kosovo became part of EU programs and regional agreements even though visa liberalisation had not been concluded.

Ms Julie WARD (S&D, UK) reminded that Trump considered the EU as an enemy, but Kosovo's good relations with the USA was an opportunity to reaffirm their European vision to Trump who had been difficult in various areas regarding the EU. Thus, Kosovo might be the bridge between the two.

4. Consideration of the draft agenda and the draft programme for the 6th meeting of the EU-Kosovo Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee on 14 February 2019 in Strasbourg

The draft agenda was preliminarily adopted.

Appointment of first speakers:

The Chair reminded that there were still missing first speakers for an agenda point, namely:

- Social and economic situation in Kosovo

MEP Ms Julie ward volunteered to speak on that point.

Mr PICULA stated that due to the limited time available to negotiate and debate on Recommendations and in accordance with Rule 3 of the EU-Kosovo SAPC Rules of Procedure, the two Co-Chairs had agreed that there would be no Recommendations adopted at the SAPC. However, a Joint Statement will be released by the Co-Chairs following the meeting.

5. Any other business

MEP Ms Julie WARD shared her project to bring artist Ms Saranda Bogujevci's (British citizen and an elected MP of Kosovo) art exposition to Brussels, depicting her family's experience of the Podujevo massacre. The exposition should take place in autumn, and Ms Ward called for support of the project by the MEPs of the next legislature.

6. Date and place of the next SAPC meeting

The Chairman informed participants that the 6th meeting of the EU-Kosovo Stabilisation Association Parliamentary Committee would take place on Thursday, 14 February 2019, in Strasbourg.

The meeting closed at 18.45.

ПРИСЪСТВЕН ЛИСТ/LISTA DE ASISTENCIA/PREZENČNÍ LISTINA/DELTAGERLISTE/
 ANWESENHEITSLISTE/ΚΟΗΛΟΛΙΓΓΑΤΕ ΝΙΜΕΚΙΡΙ/ΚΑΤΑΣΤΑΣΗ ΠΑΡΟΝΤΩΝ/RECORD OF ATTENDANCE/
 LISTE DE PRÉSENCE/POPIS NAZOČNIH/ELENCO DI PRESENZA/APMEKLĒJUMU REĢISTRŠ/DALYVIŲ SĄRAŠAS/
 JELENLĒTI ĪV/REGISTRU TA' ATTENDENZA/PRESENTIELIJST/LISTA OBECNOŠCI/LISTA DE PRESENÇAS/
 LISTĀ DE PREZENĀ/PREZENČNĀ LISTINA/SEZNAM NAVZOČIH/LĀSNĀOLOLISTA/DELTAGARLISTA

Бюро/Меса/Пředsednictvo/Formandskabet/Vorstand/Juhatus/Προεδρείο/Bureau/Predsjetništvo/Ufficio di presidenza/Prezidijs/ Biuras/Elnökség/Prezydium/Birou/Predsedníctvo/Predsedstvo/Puheenjohtajisto/Presidiet (*)
Tonino Picula (C)
Членове/Diputados/Poslanci/Medlemmer/Mitglieder/Parlamendiliikmed/Μέλη/Members/Députés/Zastupnici/Deputati/Deputāti/Nariai/ Képviselek/Membri/Leden/Posłowie/Deputados/Deputați/Jäsenet/Ledamöter
Julie Ward
Заместници/Suplentes/Náhradníci/Stedfortrædere/Stellvertreter/Asendusliikmed/Αναπληρωτές/Substitutes/Suppléants/Zamjenici/ Supplenti/Aizstājēji/Pavaduojantysnariai/Pótagok/Sostituti/Plaatsvervangers/Zastępcy/Membros suplentes/Supleanți/Náhradníci/ Namestniki/Varajäsenet/Suppleanter

200 (2)	
206 (3)	
53 (8) (Точка от дневния ред/Punto del orden del día/Bod pořadu jednání (OJ)/Punkt på dagsordenen/Tagesordnungspunkt/ Päevakorra punkt/Ημερήσια Διάταξη Σημείο/Agenda item/Point OJ/Τοčka dnevno red/Punto all'ordine del giorno/Darba kārtības punkts/Darbotvarkes punktas/Napirendi pont/Punt Agenda/Agendapunt/Punkt porządku dziennego/Ponto OD/Punct de pe ordinea de zi/Bod programu schôdze/Τοčka UL/Esityslistan kohta/Föredragningslista punkt)	
Bernard Nikaj, Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo to the Kingdom of Belgium, David Cullen, Head of Unit, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo, DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission, Clive Rumbold, Deputy Head of Division 'Western Balkans' in the European External Action Service.	2

Наблюдатели/Observadores/Pozorovatelé/Observatører/Beobachter/Vaatlejad/Παρατηρητές/Observers/Observateurs/Promatrači/Osservatori/Novērotāji/Stebėtojai/Megfigyelők/Osservatori/Waarnemers/Observatorzy/Observadores/Observatori/Pozorovatelia/Opozovalci/Tarkkailijat/Observatörer

По покана на председателя/Por invitación del presidente/Na pozvání předsedy/Efter indbydelse fra formanden/Auf Einladung des Vorsitzenden/Εσίμεθε κντσή του Προέδρου/At the invitation of the Chair(wo)man/Sur l'invitation du président/Na poziv predsjednika/Su invito del presidente/Pēc priekšsēdētāja uzaicinājuma/Pirmininkui pakvietus/Az elnök meghívására/Fuq stedina tač'-Chairman'/Op uitnodiging van de voorzitter/Na zaproszenie Przewodniczącego/A convite do Presidente/La invitația președintelui/Na pozvanie predsedu/Na povabilo predsednika/Puheenjohtajan kutsusta/På ordförandens inbjudan
Bernard Nikaj, Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo to the Kingdom of Belgium, David Cullen, Head of Unit, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo, DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission and with Clive Rumbold, Deputy Head of Division 'Western Balkans' in the European External Action Service

Съвет/Consejo/Rada/Rådet/Rat/Nðukogu/Συμβούλιο/Council/Conseil/Vijeće/Consiglio/Padome/Taryba/Tanács/Kunsill/Raad/Conselho/Consiliu/Svet/Neuvosto/Rådet (*)	
Комисия/Comisión/Komise/Kommissionen/Kommission/Euroopa Komisjon/Επιτροπή/Commission/Komisija/Commissione/Bizottság/Kummissjoni/Commissie/Komisja/Comissão/Comisie/Komisia/Komissio/Kommissionen (*)	
David Cullen, Julia Mueller-Hellmann.	
Европейска служба за външна дейност/Servicio Europeo de Acción Exterior/Evropská služba pro vnější činnost/EU-Udenrigstjenesten/Europäischer Auswärtiger Dienst/Euroopa välissteenistus/Ευρωπαϊκή Υπηρεσία Εξωτερικής Δράσης/European External Action service/Service européen pour l'action extérieure/Europiska služba za vanjsko djelovanje/Servizio europeo per l'azione esterna/Eiropas Ārējās darbības dienests/Europos išorės veiksmy tarnyba/Európai Kültügyi Szolgálat/Servizz Ewropew ghall-Azzjoni Esterna/Europese dienst voor extern optreden/Europejska Služba Działañ Zewnętrznych/Serviço Europeu para a Acção Externa/Serviciul european pentru acțiune externă/Európska služba pre vonkajšiu činnost/Evropska služba za zunanje delovanje/Euroopan ulkosuhdehallinto/Europeiska avdelningen för yttre åtgärd (*)	
Clive Rumbold, Bianca Maier	
Други институции/Otras instituciones/Ostatní orgány a instituce/Andre institutioner/Andere Organe/Muud institutsioonid/Άλλα θεσμικά όργανα/Other institutions/Autres institutions/Druge institucije/Altre istituzioni/Citas iestādes/Kitos institucijos/Más intézmények/Istituzjonijiet oħra/Andere instellingen/Inne instytucje/Outras Instituições/Alte instituții/Iné inštitúcie/Muut toimielimet/Andra institutioner/organ	
Valeza Oruçi	Embassy of the Republic of Kosovo to the Kingdom of Belgium

Други учасници/Otros participantes/Ostatní účastníci/Endvidere deltog/Andere Teilnehmer/Muud osalejad/Επίσης Παρόντες/Other participants/Autres participants/Drugi sudionici/Altri partecipanti/Citi klātesošie/Kiti dalyviai/Más résztvevők/Partecipanti ohra/Andere aanwezigen/Inni uczestnicy/Outros participantes/Alți participanți/Ini účastníci/Drugi udeleženci/Muut osallistujat/Övriga deltagare

Секретариат на политическите групи/Secretaría de los Grupos políticos/Sekretariát politických skupin/Gruppernes sekretariat/Sekretariat der Fraktionen/Fraktsioonide sekretariaat/Γραμματεία των Πολιτικών Ομάδων/Secretariats of political groups/Secrétariat des groupes politiques/Tajništva klubova zastupnika/Segreteria gruppi politici/Politisko grupu sekretariāts/Frakciju sekretariai/Képviseletcsoportok titkársága/Sekretariat gruppi politici/Fractiesecretariaten/Sekretariat Grup Politycznych/Secr. dos grupos políticos/Secretariate grupuri politice/Sekretariát politických skupin/Sekretariat političnih skupin/Poliitisten ryhmien sihteeristö/Sekretariats sekretariat

PPE	Julianna Huszar-Dekany
S&D	Jorgen Siil
ECR	
ALDE	
Verts/ALE	
GUE/NGL	
EFDD	
ENF	
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Кабинет на председателя/Гabinete del Presidente/Kancelář předsedy/Formandens Kabinet/Kabinett des Präsidenten/Presidendi kantslei/Γραφείο Προέδρου/President's Office/Cabinet du Président/Ured predsjednika/Gabinetto del Presidente/Priekšsēdētāja kabinets/Pirmininko kabinetas/Elnöki hivatal/Kabinett tal-President/Kabinet van de Voorzitter/Gabinet Przewodniczącego/Gabinete do Presidente/Cabinet Președinte/Kancelária predsedu/Urad predsednika/Puhemiehen kabinetti/Talmannens kansli

Кабинет на генералния секретар/Гabinete del Secretario General/Kancelář generálního tajemníka/Generalsekretærens Kabinet/Kabinett des Generalsekretärs/Peasekretäri büroo/Γραφείο Γενικού Γραμματέα/Secretary-General's Office/Cabinet du Secrétaire général/Ured glavnog tajnika/Gabinetto del Segretario generale/Generalsekretära kabinets/Generalinio sekretoriaus kabinetas/Főtitkári hivatal/Kabinett tas-Segretarju Ġenerali/Kabinet van de secretaris-generaal/Gabinet Sekretarza Generalnego/Gabinete do Secretário-Geral/Cabinet Secretar General/Kancelária generálneho tajomníka/Urad generalnega sekretarja/Pääsihteerin kabinetti/Generalsekreterarens kansli

Генерална дирекция/Dirección General/Generální ředitelství/Generaldirektorat/Generaldirektion/Peadirektoraat/Γενική Διεύθυνση/ Directorate-General/Direction générale/Glavna uprava/Direzione generale/Generāldirektorāts/Generalinis direktoratas/Fóigazgatóság/ Direttorat Generali/Direktoraten-generaal/Dyrekcja Generalna/Direcção-Geral/Direcții Generale/Generálne riaditeľstvo/Generalni direktorat/Pääosasto/Generaldirektorat	
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Секретариат на комисията/Secretaría de la comisión/Sekretariát výboru/Udvalgssekretariatet/Ausschusssekretariat/Komisjoni sekretariaat/Γραμματεία επιτροπής/Committee secretariat/Secrétariat de la commission/Tajništvo odbora/Segreteria della commissione/ Komitejas sekretariāts/Komiteto sekretoriatas/A bizottság titkársága/Sekretarjat tal-kumitat/Commissiesecretariaat/Sekretariat komisji/ Secretariado da comissão/Sekretariat comisie/Sekretariat odbora/Valiokunnan sihteeristö/Utskottssekretariatet	
Peter Lang, Tatiana Mrazikova	
Сътрудник/Asistente/Asistent/Assistent/Assistenz/Βοηθός/Assistant/Assistente/Palīgs/Padējējas/Asszisztens/Asyent/Pomočnik/ Avustaja/Assistenten	
Cesarina Dall'Ozzo	

- * (P) = Председател/Presidente/Předseda/Formand/Vorsitzender/Esimees/Πρόεδρος/Chair(wo)man/Président/Predsjednik/Priekšsēdētājs/
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 Varapuheenjohtaja/Vice ordförande
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 Membro/Lid/Członek/Membro/Membro/Člen/Poslanec/Jāsen/Ledamot
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 Tjänsteman