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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Council and the Commission
pursuant to Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the Commission's 2009 enlargement strategy paper concerning the Western
Balkan countries, Iceland and Turkey

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on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

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United in diversity

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European Parliament resolution on the Commission's 2009 enlargement strategy paper concerning the Western Balkan countries, Iceland and Turkey

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the communication from the Commission entitled ‘Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2009-2010’ (COM(2009)0533), and the accompanying 2009 Country Progress Reports,
 - having regard to its resolutions of 16 March 2006 on the Commission's 2005 enlargement paper¹, of 13 December 2006 on the Commission's Communication on the Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006–2007², and of 10 July 2008 on the Commission's 2007 enlargement strategy paper³,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on the countries of the Western Balkans and Turkey,
 - having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas, on the basis of Article 49 of the EU Treaty, ‘[any] European State ... may apply to become a member of the Union’,
- B. whereas the future of the Western Balkans lies with the European Union, as reaffirmed by the Thessaloniki European Council of 19-20 June 2003, the Brussels European Council of 15-16 June 2006 and subsequent summits; whereas all the existing commitments made to the south-east European countries should be honoured,
- C. whereas Turkey has been a candidate country since 1999, Croatia since 2004 and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia since 2005; whereas Albania, Montenegro and Iceland have applied for membership of the Union and the Commission is in the process of evaluating the applications of Montenegro and Iceland; whereas Stabilisation and Association Agreements have been signed with Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and with Serbia; and whereas the Commission has announced its intention to propose trade agreements and visa liberalisation for Kosovo in the medium term,
1. Remains strongly committed to the enlargement policy, which has proved to be one of the most successful of all EU policies; recalls that previous enlargements have contributed to an unprecedented extension of the area of peace, security and prosperity in Europe;
 2. Emphasises that full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) constitutes a fundamental condition for the Western Balkans countries

¹ OJ C 291 E, 30.11.2006, p. 402.

² OJ C 317 E, 23.12.2006, p. 480.

³ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0363.

to make progress on the path to membership of the Union, but points out that, equally importantly, redress for war crimes should be seen by society in those countries as a vital step to bring justice to the victims and to facilitate regional reconciliation;

3. Calls on all the countries concerned to make every possible effort to resolve their disagreements with their neighbours in the early stages of the enlargement process; stresses, however, that such bilateral disputes should be resolved by the parties concerned and therefore should not constitute an obstacle for the countries on their way to membership of the Union;
4. Notes with concern the economic problems facing the Western Balkans region as a result of the financial crisis; welcomes the Commission's willingness to provide extraordinary financial aid, such as macro-economic assistance and direct budget support; stresses that the situation is particularly difficult in view of high poverty and unemployment levels in some of the countries concerned; calls on the Commission and on the countries themselves to make every possible effort to mitigate the effects of the crisis, particularly on the most vulnerable members of society;
5. Underlines the importance of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans as an important condition for the enlargement process and at the same time as a vital element of the reconciliation process; moreover, recalls the benefits of such cooperation in terms of increased trade volumes, energy security, environmental policies and the fight against organised crime and trafficking; stresses that regional political and economic cooperation must include all the political players as well as civil society, in particular women's organisations, and should not be hampered by bilateral political problems; in this respect, calls on Serbia to demonstrate a constructive attitude towards Kosovo's participation in regional trade and cooperation;
6. Calls on the countries in the region to make greater efforts to improve the situation of ethnic minorities, and in particular the Roma; emphasises that the Roma are frequently victims of discrimination, and that, in particular, their participation in the labour market and in the education systems should be greatly increased; in this regard, takes note of the bilaterally agreed readmission agreements concluded by the Western Balkan countries with the Member States, and calls on the countries concerned to step up their efforts to create appropriate social conditions and infrastructure in order to facilitate the reintegration of the Roma after their return; encourages the Member States to assist in these efforts;
7. Is of the opinion that, in order to maintain the support of EU citizens for further enlargement, it is crucial to present them with clear and comprehensive information on the benefits of this policy; calls on the Commission and the Member States to make efforts to that end; stresses, however, that, in order to be successful, information campaigns should be adequately funded;
8. Commends Croatia for its continued progress in meeting the criteria of accession to the Union as well as the obligations of membership; welcomes the bilateral agreement on resolving the border dispute with Slovenia, which has created the momentum to open all remaining chapters in the accession process; is confident that the accession negotiations can be concluded by mid-2010, provided that Croatia steps up its efforts by, *inter alia*,

strengthening public administration, pursuing reform of the judiciary more resolutely, vigorously combating corruption and organised crime, ensuring the sustainability of refugee return and allowing the ICTY to have access to documents requested for use in war crime trials;

9. Congratulates the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the progress achieved by that country since the last progress report, and in particular during the last few months; welcomes the fact that the country has fulfilled all the benchmarks for visa liberalisation, and expects that the visa-free regime will apply from 1 January 2010; notes with satisfaction that this progress has been acknowledged by the Commission, which has recommended the opening of accession negotiations with the country; calls on the Council to confirm the Commission's recommendation at the summit to be held in December 2009 and to set a date for the beginning of negotiations;
10. Calls on the authorities of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to continue their efforts in the reform process, particularly in the fields of the reform of public administration and the judiciary, anti-corruption policy, women's rights and inter-ethnic relations, including increasing the participation of minorities in public life and administration; moreover, in the spirit of good neighbourly relations, calls on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece to use the window of opportunity following the recent Greek elections and to find a mutually satisfactory solution to the name issue;
11. Notes that Turkey has made some progress towards meeting the Copenhagen political criteria; urges the Turkish Government and all parliamentary parties to establish consensus on key reforms; points out the crucial importance of a swift implementation of the judicial reform strategy for the functioning of the Turkish State and society; regrets the limited progress made in the area of freedom of expression and freedom of religion; deplores the continued non-fulfilment of commitments stemming from the Additional Protocol to the EC-Turkey Association Agreement; calls on the Turkish Government to contribute actively to the swift devising of a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus question; welcomes the efforts to resolve the Kurdish issue and encourages the Turkish Government to take concrete measures to address the situation of citizens of Kurdish origin; commends the diplomatic efforts made to normalise relations with Armenia and urges the Turkish Grand National Assembly to ratify the relevant protocols; calls on the Turkish Government to coordinate its foreign policy with the EU, in particular regarding Iran; regrets, however, that the NATO-EU strategic cooperation extending beyond the 'Berlin plus' arrangements continues to be blocked by Turkey's objections, which has negative consequences for the protection of the EU personnel deployed, and urges Turkey to set aside those objections as soon as possible;
12. Notes with satisfaction the progress made by Serbia, and in particular its unilateral implementation of the Interim Agreement; is of opinion that such unilateral implementation, carried out against the background of the financial crisis, shows that country's commitment to moving forward on the path to membership of the Union; therefore urges the Council to decide on the ratification of the Interim Agreement without delay; welcomes the signing of the police protocol by the Serbian authorities with EULEX and calls on Serbia to further step up its cooperation with EULEX, especially as regards EULEX's operations in northern Kosovo;

13. Expresses its dissatisfaction over the limited progress achieved by BiH as a potential candidate country on the path to membership of the Union; notes with growing concern the unstable political climate and the lack of a common vision shared by both entities, and condemns the use of inflammatory language, which can undermine the achievements in the process of inter-ethnic reconciliation and the functioning of State structures; encourages the Council to continue its efforts, with the support of the international community, to pursue a dialogue with political leaders in BiH in order to help that country and its peoples to remain on the path to European integration; welcomes the most recent joint diplomatic efforts by the Swedish Foreign Minister, the Enlargement Commissioner and the US Under-Secretary of State, but also recalls the necessity of involving parliamentarians and civil society more closely in sustaining a viable country;
14. Urges the Commission to start the visa dialogue with the Kosovo authorities as soon as possible as provided for in the progress report, with a view to defining a roadmap for visa liberalisation; expects the process of decentralisation to be concluded before the end of the year in order to meet the basic requirements of the Ahtisaari Plan; welcomes the achievement by EULEX of a full operational capability such as will enable it to fulfil its mandate of promoting the rule of law, public order and security in transparency and accountability throughout the whole of Kosovo and pave the way for Kosovo's integration in the Union;
15. Acknowledges the progress made by Albania and Montenegro since the last progress report, and encourages both countries to continue their efforts on the reform path; notes that both countries have applied for membership of the Union and that the Council has taken the decision to invite the Commission to prepare its opinion on Montenegro's application; commends Montenegro on its achievement, and encourages Albania to continue its efforts on the path of reform so that the Council can shortly be in a position to proceed with its application;
16. Welcomes Iceland's accession application and expects that, in view of that country's high level of alignment with the *acquis communautaire*, Iceland should receive candidate status in the near future;
17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.