

# **EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

## **DELEGATION TO THE EU-CROATIA JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE**

### **INFORMATION NOTE ON THE**

### **WORK OF THE EU-CROATIA JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE (2004 - 2009)**

**DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR  
EXTERNAL POLICIES OF THE  
UNION**

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SMZ/em

## History

As from 1981, the European Parliament had entertained relations with the Federal Assembly of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia<sup>1</sup>. Then, by its decision of 17 November 1994, it had established a delegation for relations with South East Europe, where five countries, ie. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were grouped together.

In 1994, the European Parliament had also created a separate delegation for relations with Slovenia, with a view to a future European Agreement.

The delegation for relations with the countries of South East Europe held 12 inter-parliamentary meetings with Croatia, alternatively in Croatia and in Brussels, from November 1992 to February 2004.

## Joint Parliamentary Committee

On 29 October 2001, the European Communities and their Member States signed in Luxembourg an Association and Stabilisation Agreement with Croatia, on the conclusion of which the European Parliament gave its assent on 12 December 2001.

An SAA represents the signatories' commitment to complete over a transition period a formal association with the EU. The Stabilisation and Association Policy was the main contribution of the EU, launched in 1999 at the end of the Kosovo conflict, to the political and economic rehabilitation of the countries of the Western Balkans, targeted, in due course, to their integration.

Pending the entry into force of the SAA (1st February 2005), the European Parliament decided, on 10 March 2004 and on 14 September 2004, to establish a delegation to the EU-Croatia Joint Parliamentary Committee, on the occasion of the inauguration of the 6th legislature. In fact, Art. 9 and 116 of the SAA state that, respectively, Article 9 : "*Political dialogue at parliamentary level shall take place within the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee established under Article 116*"; Article 116: "*A Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee is hereby established. It shall be a forum for Members of Croatian Parliament and the European Parliament to meet and exchange views. It shall meet at intervals that it shall itself determine. The Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee shall consist of members of the European Parliament, on the one hand, and of Members of the Parliament of Croatia, on the other. The Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee shall establish its rules of procedure. The Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee shall be chaired in turn by the European Parliament and the Parliament of Croatia, in accordance with the provisions to be laid down in its rules of procedure.*"

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<sup>1</sup> See the information note on the history of the delegation for relations with the countries of South East Europe

Mr Pál Schmitt (Hungary, EPP-ED) was elected chairman of the EP delegation, whilst Mr Gordan Jandrokovic (Croatia, HDZ) chaired the Croatian delegation until the legislative elections of 2007. From then onwards, the Chairman of the Croatian delegation to the EU-Croatia JPC is Mr Mario Zubovic (HDZ).

The constituent meeting of the EU-Croatia Joint Parliamentary Committee was held in Zagreb on 3-4 March 2005. The JPC adopted its rules of procedure at its constituent meeting; the rules of procedure were also approved by the Bureau of the European Parliament on 11 April 2005, as well as by the members of the Croatian delegation to the JPC on 4 February 2005.

Croatia formally applied for membership of the European Union in February 2003. The European Commission presented an opinion on Croatia in April 2004, in preparation for the European Council of December 2004, recommending to open accession negotiations, but, at the same time, stressing that much work remained necessary in numerous areas, such as the judicial reform, fighting corruption and the return of Serb refugees. Negotiations, which were due to start on 17 March 2005, were instead postponed for the Croatian failure to fully co-operate with the ICTY. Following a subsequent positive decision taken at the Council on General Affairs in Luxembourg (3 October 2005), Croatia started negotiations for membership of the EU in October 2005.

### **Functioning of the JPC**

The structured dialogue between the states holding an Association Agreement (candidate states) and the European Union is conducted on various levels, the Joint Parliamentary Committee being a means to promote contacts and discussions between the European Parliament and parliaments in the candidate states, especially a means to provide a democratic dimension to the negotiation process. The functioning of the EU-Croatia JPC is, in practical terms, identical to the JPCs with the other candidate and accession States (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey).

The full text of the Association and Stabilisation Agreement is published in Official Journal No. L 26/3 of 28 January 2005. The relevant Articles are 9 and 116, as mentioned above. The EU-Croatia JPC met twice a year, once in Croatia and once in one of the workplaces of the European Parliament. According to the practice, the representatives of the Government of Croatia, the EU Presidency in Office and the Commission were invited to the meetings, where they regularly delivered their opening remarks.

The EU-Croatia JPC held 9 meetings in total by the time of preparation of the present note :

(Constituent meeting of the EP Delegation: 20 September 2004, Brussels)

- 1st meeting                      3-4 March 2005, Zagreb
- 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting                      4-5 October 2005, Brussels
- 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting                      19-21 March 2006, Dubrovnik
- 4<sup>th</sup> meeting                      3-4 October 2006, Brussels
- 5th meeting                      20-21 March 2007, Zagreb
- 6th meeting                      1-2 October 2007, Brussels

- 7th meeting                            28-30 April 2008, Opatija and Rijeka (Croatia)
- 8th meeting                            6-7 October 2008, Brussels
- 9th meeting                            23-24 February 2009, Zagreb

On the occasion of the visit to Zagreb for the 1st EU-Croatia JPC, held on 3-4 March 2005, the EP Delegation had the opportunity to meet Mr Ivo SANADER, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia and Mr Stjepan MESIC, President of the Republic of Croatia, as well as Mr Vladimir SEKS, Speaker of the Croatian Parliament. On the occasion of the 3rd EU-Croatia JPC, held on 19-21 March 2006 in Dubrovnik, the EP Delegation had some parallel meetings with the Mayor of Dubrovnik, Mrs Dubravka SUICA, and representatives of the Municipal assembly, civil society, NGOs and operators and trade unions of the tourism sector. On the occasion of the 5th JPC, held in March 2007 in Zagreb, the EP Delegation had talks with the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the Association of Croatian Judges and the USKOK (Office for the Prevention of Corruption and Organised Crime).

On the occasion of the 7th JPC, held in Opatija (Gulf of Kvarner - Croatia) in April 2008, the EP Delegation visited the ship-building site of "3 May", one of the five largest of the country and had talks with the managers of the factory and with various stake-holders on the delicate issue of ship-building restructuring in Croatia. On the occasion of the 9th JPC, held in February 2009 in Zagreb, the last before the European elections of June 2009, the EP Delegation had talks with the highest State's officials (the President, the Prime Minister), and with various important Government's ministers or officials in charge of reforming the most problematic sectors (Minister of Interior) or of managing the EU funds (Central Office for Development Strategy and Coordination of EU Funds ). The EP Delegation also met the President of the Croatian Journalists' Association.

### **Subjects discussed by the delegation during the first four JPC meetings (2005-2006)**

The 1st JPC meeting welcomed Croatia's application for accession to the EU, underlining Croatia's natural vocation for EU membership and the wider political signal represented by that application for the other countries of the area. The Committee welcomed the entry into force, on 1st February 2005, of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, the positive opinion from the European Commission on Croatia's candidature, the European Partnership and supported the opening of negotiations at the scheduled date of 17 March 2005.

Members welcomed the recent joint initiatives by the Croatian Parliament and Government, as well as the declaration adopted by all the Croatian political parties confirming their readiness to support and cooperate during the negotiations.

The JPC recalled, in particular, that the European Partnership identified the reform of the judiciary as a short term priority; confirmed that respect of international legal provisions was a basic condition for the fulfilment of the political criteria and, therefore, for the opening of negotiations and expected Croatia to take the necessary steps for full cooperation with the ICTY.

The Committee recommended to the Croatian Government to continue to implement the Constitutional Law on the rights of minorities and to proceed in overcoming any possible hindrance on local and lower administrative levels; on refugee return, the JPC expected Croatia to strengthen efforts to facilitate the return of refugees, in particular the Serb

refugees, and stressed the importance of implementing the provisions for housing of refugees and internally displaced persons.

On the economic field, the JPC took note with satisfaction of the fact that Croatia could be regarded already as a functioning market economy and considered that the performance of the judiciary and of public administration, especially when dealing with land property and entry and exit of enterprises from market, should be enhanced.

The Committee finally stressed that the enhancement of regional cooperation was a priority policy issue; it welcomed the efforts of Croatia to address the remaining open issues with neighbours.

The 2nd JPC meeting, which started in the afternoon of the same day in the early night hours of which the Intergovernmental Conference called in Luxembourg at the conclusion of the General Affairs Council had officially opened accession negotiations with Croatia and Turkey, stressed that opening of negotiations on 3-4 October 2005 constituted a wider political signal for Croatia itself and for the entire region and was sincerely pleased on it. Recalling that various accession negotiation processes can be conducted in parallel, it stressed however that each candidate would be judged on its own merits and that no link, concerning accession date, should be established among different countries.

The JPC expressed the hope that Croatia, given progress already achieved (especially when considering that a large part of the *acquis* had already been adopted), would become a Member of the EU as soon as possible, possibly still in the current decade; it encouraged the efforts of Croatia to improve its administrative capacity on EU financial assistance (CARDS and other programmes) and warned on the administrative preconditions to be fulfilled for the future financial instrument IPA.

The Committee also expressed concern for the decreasing support of the Croatian population for their country's membership in the EU and hoped the rate of support would increase again, provided that the advantages and challenges of membership are correctly explained.

As usual, the parliamentarians discussed on judicial, corruption and police matters.

Moreover, in line with Council's Conclusions of 3 October 2005, confirmed that full cooperation with the ICTY would remain a requirement for progress throughout the accession process and noted that less than full cooperation at any stage would affect overall progress in negotiations; the JPC welcomed the report by the ICTY Chief Prosecutor that Croatia was now cooperating fully, welcomed the firm commitment of the Croatian Government to continue to fully cooperate and expressed the hope that indicted former General Ante Gotovina would be transferred to The Hague soon.

Members stressed the importance of implementing provisions for housing of refugees and returnees, and encouraged the initiatives and activities carried out by local authorities and communities in Croatia and the neighbouring countries for strengthening cross-border understanding and border regions' economic and social development.

The 3rd meeting of the JPC welcomed the quality and dynamics of the screening process carried out by the European Commission with Croatia<sup>2</sup> and looked forward to the rapid

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<sup>2</sup> The technical screening process consists of two parts: for each negotiation chapter, in the first part, the candidate country's legislation and structures are, indeed, "screened", to allow the Commission to have an overall view of the situation; in the second part, the Commission explains to the counterpart what the EU *acquis* consists of, also for each negotiation chapter.

opening of the first negotiation chapters based exclusively on Croatia's own individual achievements.

The JPC welcomed the efforts of Croatia to improve its administrative and absorption capacity with regard to EU financial assistance; strongly supported a speedy adoption by the EU of the IPA regulation, in connexion with the financial perspectives 2007-13 and expressed satisfaction with the growing rate of support of the Croatian population for EU membership, also welcoming the adoption, in January 2006, of a new Communication Strategy.

The Committee welcomed the first cases of referral to Croatia of trials concerning persons already indicted by the ICTY and expressed the hope that Croatia, with the international monitoring agreed and with a more efficient system of witness protection, would be able to deal with transferred war crimes trials adequately; the JPC welcomed the progress made in tackling unbalances in war crimes ethnic prosecution and encouraged especially local courts to avoid ethnic bias; it also stressed that further improvement of the functioning of the judiciary remained a major challenge for Croatia.

Members welcomed the strategy for refugee return of September 2005, recognised that Government had started to implement it already and recalled that Croatia, together with Serbia and Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina had set up the goal in the Sarajevo declaration to close the refugee return issue by the end of 2006. At this purpose, the JPC stressed the importance of implementing the provisions for public infrastructure and housing. It was recalled that minorities form an integral part of the Croatian society and that therefore greater efforts are needed to achieve the objective of peaceful coexistence and reconciliation. Finally, the JPC encouraged the two branches of the EU budgetary authority to find modalities and financial means in the new financial perspectives 2007-13 for the inclusion of Croatia's special needs, as a negotiating country and future Member State.

At its 4th meeting, held in October 2006 in Brussels, the Joint Parliamentary Committee congratulated Croatia for its dynamic and positive contribution to the screening process which was about to be completed; it welcomed the opening and provisional closure of Chapter 25 on Science and Research and recommended to Croatia to prepare for the fulfilment of the benchmarks already communicated, which are a pre-condition for the opening of other chapters.

The JPC supported the intention of Croatia to proceed smoothly in the negotiation, with the objective of full membership in the EU, and its aim of enabling its citizens to participate in the next European elections in 2009, keeping in mind that progress would also depend on the fulfilment of Croatia's obligations under the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and on the necessary institutional arrangements in the EU.

The JPC stressed that all matters related to the sound functioning of the rule of law, and in particular the reform of the judiciary and of public administration, the fight against corruption and organised crime are priorities of high importance, not only in view of Croatia's accession to the EU.

The Committee also focused on urgent tasks in the field of refugee return and protection of minorities.

On regional cooperation, the JPC expressed the expectation that Croatia would continue to contribute constructively to resolving the outstanding bilateral issues.

## **Subjects discussed by the delegation during the 5th to 9th JPC meetings (2007-2009)**

At the 5th meeting, held in March 2007 in Zagreb, the JPC expected the opening of a substantial number of negotiation chapters in the course of 2007 and noted the progress in the fulfilment of benchmarks with a view to the opening of negotiations on seven chapters. The JPC welcomed the National Programme for the Accession of Croatia to the EU. Regarding financial co-operation linked to Community programmes, the JPC, while welcoming the measures taken by Croatia to enable decentralised management of funds, underlined that the institutions involved needed to have sufficient human resources. Deputies stressed that further improving of the functioning of the judiciary remained a challenge for Croatia, welcomed the continuation of full co-operation of Croatia with the ICTY and called for a continuous objectivity in conducting war crime cases by all juridical stakeholders. The JPC recalled that further progress was required in the reform of public administration. The meeting noted, on competition and state aid, that some progress had been made but emphasised the need to intensify the efforts for further legislative alignment and strengthening of administrative capacity.

The 6th meeting, held in October 2007 in Brussels, recalled that the European Parliament, in its resolution of 25 April 2007, had encouraged Croatia to do its utmost to carry out the necessary reforms so that the negotiations could be concluded in time for the European Parliament to give its assent before the parliamentary elections of June 2009. At that time, as the JPC underlined, two chapters had been provisionally closed and ten additional chapters opened. The Committee expressed the certainty that preparations for accession to the EU would continue to be among the top priorities for Croatian authorities in view of the upcoming parliamentary elections and that European issues would continue to be a matter of consensus and not be part of the pre-election campaign. The JPC took note with satisfaction of the reduction of the backlog of pending and enforcement cases and of the ongoing informatisation of the sector and encouraged the pursuit of further establishment and management reforms in the sectors of justice and of public administration. The meeting took note of Croatia's increased attention to minority issues and encouraged Croatia to continue with the implementation of the Constitutional Law on National Minorities. On regional cooperation and relations with neighbours, the JPC sincerely welcomed the informal agreement reached on 25 August between the Croatian and Slovene Prime Ministers on the submission of their border dispute to the International Court of Justice in The Hague. The meeting welcomed the fact that the European Parliament, in the discussions on its future composition for the legislature 2009-2014, was naturally contemplating its future enlargement, having notably Croatia in mind.

At the 7th meeting, held in April 2008 in Opatija, deputies considered that the negotiations should proceed more and more smoothly and at an accelerated pace and asked the Slovene Presidency in Office to open all the remaining chapters and the two following presidencies of the Council of the EU to close them as soon as possible. The JPC recalled the EP resolution of 10 April 2008 which shared the Commission's view that, with increased efforts on the part of Croatia and continuous support by the EU institutions, accession negotiations should, in any event, be concluded in 2009. At that time, apart from two provisionally closed chapters, 16 additional chapters were open and the Commission had announced, should Croatia be able to meet all opening benchmarks by June 2008, to comply with all legal obligations under the

SAA and to improve its management of EU financial assistance, the presentation in Autumn 2008 a calendar for the conclusion of negotiations before the European elections of 2009. On the judiciary, the JPC encouraged the Croatian Government to pursue the rationalisation of the system of the courts and, on public administration, it had to note the assessment of the European Commission on overall limited progress in the area. The Committee was pleased to note that the legal framework to combat corruption had been further improved. Deputies congratulated Croatia on the appointment of a Serb minority representative as Deputy Prime Minister and welcomed the decision, adopted on 13 March 2008 by the Croatian Parliament, according to which the Ecological Protection and Fisheries Protection Zone shall not apply, provisionally, to the European Union Member States. Large space was dedicated also to the hardous problem of the restructuring of shipyards and the protection of the environment.

At the 8th meeting, held in October 2008 in Brussels, the JPC welcomed the provisional closure of one more chapter, bringing the total of closed chapters to three, out of 21 opened. As regards financial management, the Committee further encouraged the efforts invested by the Croatian Government to continue strengthening the administrative capacity of all relevant agencies and bodies, including those at the local level, in order to benefit more fruitfully from the pre-accession assistance programmes. The meeting noted the adoption by the Government of the State Administration Reform Strategy 2008-11 and looked forward to its implementation as well as to renewed commitment towards administrative decentralization and encouraged Croatia to continue its efforts with regard to representation of minorities in state administration, the judiciary and the police. The JPC encouraged Croatia and its neighbours to continue enhancing work for finding definitive solutions to all pending bilateral issues, but underlined that these should not, as such, jeopardise or slow down the ongoing accession negotiation process. The JPC, after holding an exchange of views with the EP rapporteur on the "health check" of the Common Agricultural Policy, noted that Croatia has a rich potential for sustainable development of rural areas, which is, at present, under-exploited, and expected a robust recovery of the sector to happen, also as a result of the EU accession process.

**In Autumn 2008**, because of Slovene unwillingness to allow further chapters to be opened, due to the long-lasting border dispute related to the Piran Bay and to some points of the green border, **negotiations were de facto blocked**. Before that time, one more negotiation chapter (on Public Procurement) had been opened. This is still the situation at the time of writing the present note.

At the 9th meeting, held in February 2009 in Zagreb, the JPC regretted that fact and considered that Croatia should be granted the same treatment in the accession process as the other accession countries were granted in the previous enlargement rounds. The Committee recalled that bilateral border-related issues are to be separated from the accession negotiation process and encouraged both Croatia and Slovenia to further actively participate in resolving the issue and took note of a proposal by Commissioner Rehn to use the good offices of well known European personalities with a rich experience in international conflict conciliation; considered that further delay on the matter would be detrimental for all involved and for the European integration and enlargement process. The Committee took note with satisfaction of the adoption, in December 2008, of an amended Criminal Procedure Code and encouraged continuous commitment in the necessary preparations for its gradual entry into force; it

expected further concrete results in tracking down organised crime and called on the police and the judiciary to pursue resolutely investigations and prosecution of the cases of intimidation and murder of journalists who were working on cases of corruption and organised crime. The JPC took note, amongst others, of Croatia's commitment to make significant progress in achieving the programme intended to former tenancy rights holders in 2009. Deputies also discussed energy and economic issues, in the light of the recent Ukraine-Russia gas supply crisis and of the international financial crisis.

## **EP resolutions**

During the first half of the 6th legislature, the EP did not adopt any resolution exclusively dedicated to the preparation of Croatia for accession to the EU. Nevertheless, as soon as Croatia opened accession negotiations, in October 2005, a rapporteur was appointed by the Committee on Foreign Affairs (Mr Swoboda, PSE, Austria). Croatia was mentioned in §§ 44 to 50<sup>3</sup> of the EP Resolution of 14 April 2005 on Regional integration in the Western Balkans, and on § 29<sup>4</sup> of the EP resolutions of 13 December 2006 on the Commission's Communication on the Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006-2007 (2006/2252 (INI)), as well as in various other paragraphs of these resolutions in relation to the Western Balkans.

Croatia's candidate status and the EU-Croatia SAA were also taken into account in various EP legislative resolutions adopted on amended EU regulations or Council's decisions, especially with regard to the 2004 enlargement.

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<sup>3</sup> §§ 44 to 50 of the EP Resolution of 14 April 2005:

44. Welcomes the decision taken on 18 June 2004 to grant Croatia candidate status;
45. Takes note of the Council's decision to postpone the opening of accession talks with Croatia due to the absence of a common agreement about this country's full cooperation with the ICTY;
46. Welcomes, in this respect, the decision of the Council to adopt the negotiating framework with Croatia and calls on the Croatian government to do its utmost to prove it is fully cooperating with the ICTY; takes the view that this is a basic test for all the countries in the region and expresses its full support for the difficult work carried out by the ICTY;
47. Calls on Croatia to settle the remaining border disputes through dialogue with Slovenia and to avoid unilateral acts which intend to prejudice the determination of the Slovenian-Croatian border and affect the demarcation of the border without consent;
48. Takes note of the November 2004 visit by Croatian Prime Minister Sanader to Belgrade, the first such official visit since the collapse of the former Yugoslavia; notes the fact that Prime Minister Sanader and Serbia and Montenegro President Marovic signed agreements regarding national minorities and on technical and scientific cooperation, and that they concurred that the future of both Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro must include European Union membership;
49. Calls on the authorities to take significant steps to facilitate the return of refugees and to guarantee fair and effective domestic trials for war crimes;
50. Urges the Council and the Commission to send the Monitoring Task Force to Croatia as soon as possible in order to provide the next Council meeting with reliable results on which to base decisions;

<sup>4</sup> § 29 of the EP Resolutions of 13 December 2006 :

29. Welcomes the continued progress made by the candidate country Croatia towards EU integration and calls on the negotiators on both sides to maintain the momentum achieved in these negotiations, with a view to their early conclusion;

On 25 April 2007, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the EC's 2006 Progress Report on Croatia, in which it congratulated the Croatian authorities on the rapid progress they had made in the accession negotiations. Parliament expressed support for the necessary, although difficult, decisions to be made and reforms to be implemented (for example, in the competition and state aid sectors). Parliament also expressed concern for flagging public support for EU accession and listed a series of reforms to be pursued and implemented in several political and economic sectors. The resolution urged both Croatia and Slovenia to exploit all the opportunities available in order to reach an agreement on all their pending border issues and invited them to abstain from any unilateral action which might undermine the process.

The following year, on 10 April, the European Parliament adopted another resolution, dedicated to the analysis of the EC's 2007 Progress Report on Croatia. Parliament considered that the objective of ongoing accession negotiations was to agree on measures that might be necessary in order to facilitate integration and that they should not be used as a lever to settle bilateral political disputes falling outside the scope of the *acquis* and the objectives of the process. The Parliament was pleased that much of the Croatian corpus of law had been aligned with EU standards, but reminded Croatian authorities that it was crucial to speed up the development of the required administrative capacities. Apart from reminding the most important reforms to be implemented and the most important principles underpinning the "political criteria", the resolution addressed also environment, education and the economy. Parliament expressed concern for the way the EU funds were being managed in Croatia and urged the relevant authorities to address the administrative weaknesses. Parliament recalled that border-related issues had been defined as priorities in the EU-Croatia Accession Partnership: in this regard, it expressed concern for the start of construction of the Peljesac Bridge, at the Croatian-Bosnian border, and welcomed, on the other hand, the readiness of Croatia to resolve the border issue with Montenegro. Parliament welcomed the informal agreement between Slovenia and Croatia on arbitration for their open border issue. The resolution stated that accession negotiations should, in any event, be concluded in 2009.

The last resolution adopted by the European Parliament in the course of the 6th legislature is that of 12 March 2009. In it, the EP is particularly pleased to note that legislative and regulatory work has finally been matched by efforts to strengthen and improve the administrative capacity required to implement the reforms required for EU membership. Parliament is confident that the goal of concluding negotiations in 2009, in accordance with the indicative road map published by the Commission, can be achieved, provided that the Government steps up its efforts to address particularly the more sensitive issues linked to the accession process, including fighting against organised crime and corruption, and finally meets the benchmarks in these areas, and also provided that the Council is willing and able to open all negotiation chapters without further delay. Parliament takes note of the statement issued at the UN in New York by the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia that Croatia has responded to most requests for assistance made by the office of the Prosecutor, whilst pointing out that certain key military documents relating to the Gotovina case remain unaccounted for; Parliament urges the Government of Croatia to step up its efforts to make these documents available immediately to the Tribunal. The resolution notes recent cases of intimidation and killings of journalists investigating cases of corruption

and organised crime. In conclusion, Parliament deeply regrets that accession negotiations have been de facto blocked for a considerable time because of bilateral issues; it recalls the informal agreement of 26 August 2007 reached by the two Prime Ministers of Croatia and Slovenia on the submission of their border dispute to an international body; Parliament welcomes the readiness of Croatia and Slovenia to accept the mediation offer made by the Commission and takes the view that this mediation should be based on international law; in this context , the European Parliament looks forward to a rapid advancement of the accession negotiations.

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