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## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statements by the Council and the Commission

pursuant to Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the 2013 Progress Report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia  
(2013/2883(RSP))

**Richard Howitt**

on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

**European Parliament resolution on the 2013 Progress Report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia  
(2013/2883(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the decision by the European Council of 16 December 2005 granting candidate country status for EU membership, and to the conclusions of the European Council of 13 December 2012 and 27-28 June 2013,
  - having regard to the Presidency conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council of 19-20 June 2003 concerning the prospect of the Western Balkan countries joining the European Union,
  - having regard to UN Security Council Resolutions 845 (1993) and 817 (1993), as well as to UN General Assembly resolution 47/225 and to the Interim Accord of 13 September 1995,
  - having regard to the judgment of the International Court of Justice on the application of the Interim Accord,
  - having regard to the Commission's report of 16 April 2013 entitled 'Implementation of reforms within the framework of the high-level accession dialogue and promotion of good neighbourly relations' (COM(2013)0205), its 2013 Progress Report (SWD(2013)0413), and its communication of 16 October 2013 entitled 'Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2013-2014' (COM(2013)0700),
  - having regard to the agreement between the political parties dated 1 March 2013, the final report of the Committee on Inquiry of 26 August 2013, and the Memorandum of Understanding of 16 September 2013,
  - having regard to its previous resolutions on the country and its resolution of 22 November 2012 on 'Enlargement: policies, criteria and the EU's strategic interests'<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the European Council has decided for the fifth consecutive year not to open the accession negotiations with the country in spite of the positive recommendation of the Commission in this respect; whereas this further postponement is adding to the growing frustration of public opinion in the country over the stalemate reached in the EU integration process and risks exacerbating domestic problems and internal tension; whereas bilateral issues should not represent an obstacle to the official opening of accession negotiations, although they should be solved before the end of the accession process;

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2012)0453.

- B. whereas the rule of law, freedom of the media, regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations are essential parts of the EU enlargement process;
- C. whereas bilateral issues should be addressed in a constructive spirit as early as possible, taking into account the principles and values of the UN and of the EU;
1. Reiterates its call to the Council to set a date for the start of accession negotiations without further delay;
  2. Invites Greece to use its Presidency to inject momentum into the European integration process of the country, thereby reaffirming its commitment made in the 2003 Thessaloniki Agenda and creating a positive environment for settling bilateral differences in the spirit of European values and principles; calls on the Greek Presidency to use the positive dynamics of its leadership to develop new initiatives to overcome the current stalemate in the negotiations and work towards a solution;
  3. Encourages the country to consolidate reforms and reverse policies and practices which could still constitute obstacles for its European future, and to secure real progress on key areas as set out in the European Council conclusions, and more specifically the statements on the enlargement and stabilisation and association process; considers that starting negotiations with the EU represents a positive step towards resolving current disputes with the country's neighbours, while also generating further reforms to improve the situation in the country;
  4. Regrets, given the positive recommendation of the Commission and its positive assessment of the results of the High Level Accession Dialogue while also warning of the risks of backsliding, the fact that the European Council chose not to repeat its December 2012 decision in which it concluded that it largely shared the Commission's view, anticipated a possible decision to open accession negotiations during the following presidency, and noted that the Commission would undertake all the necessary preparatory work to enable this;
  5. Emphasises that continuing to delay the opening of accession negotiations entails an increasing and unpredictable cost for the country as well as for regional stability; calls on both the government and on the Commission to produce a quantitative analysis of the potential social and economic costs, as well as of the domestic and regional political impact and the risks arising from the Council's failure to set a date for the start of the accession negotiations;
  6. Insists that all candidate and potential candidate countries should be treated on the basis of their merits;
  7. Agrees, notwithstanding the very significant challenges facing the country, with the Commission's conclusion that it has a high level of alignment with the EU acquis vis-à-vis its stage in the accession process and that the Copenhagen criteria are sufficiently met for accession talks to begin; notes that under the EU's procedures new members are admitted only when they have met all requirements; shares the view of the Commission that opening Chapters 23 and 24 on justice, democracy and human rights will enhance progress on the very issues which are of particular concern to some

Member States;

8. Calls on the European Council to endorse the opening of the screening process, especially for Chapters 23 and 24; believes that the screening will help build on the reform momentum and help the country better address the imminent challenges facing any candidate country such as further enhancing the effectiveness of the rule of law and reforming the judiciary and public administration, as well as strengthening interethnic cohesion;
9. Welcomes the fulfilment of the country's commitments under the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and its advanced stage of legislative alignment with the acquis; calls on the Council to adopt the Commission's recommendations regarding moving to the second phase of implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), in line with the relevant provisions of that agreement;
10. Stresses that good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation are an essential pillar of the country's EU accession process, including a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution to the name issue under UN auspices; bearing in mind the Albanian minority within the country and also the sensitive bilateral issues with other neighbouring countries, particularly Greece and Bulgaria, reiterates its position, sharing the view of the Commission in this regard, that bilateral issues should be addressed as early as possible in the accession process, in a constructive and neighbourly spirit and through an intensive and open dialogue in the spirit of the common European future, and preferably before the opening of accession negotiations; recalls that gestures, controversial actions and statements which could negatively impact on good neighbourly relations should be avoided; asks for more concrete results in terms of cooperation in order to establish good neighbourly relations between the three sides (Athens, Sofia and Skopje);
11. Endorses the Commission's finding that any continuing failure of the European Council to make progress in relation to the country's EU accession will jeopardise the credibility of the EU enlargement process; adds that it will also undermine the climate needed to encourage EU-related reform measures; notes that the accession process builds by itself the impetus to complete the reforms;
12. Believes that the failure of both parties to find a mutually acceptable, fair and just solution to resolving the name dispute over a period of nearly 20 years also calls into question the credibility of the framework for achieving this goal, for which it is vital to make efforts; notes that this is despite the best efforts of the UN mediator and the genuine political will of both parties to find a solution; reiterates, however, its view that bilateral issues should not be resorted to in order to hinder the European accession process;
13. Invites Greece to use its Presidency of the EU, together with all interests in the Commission, the Council and Parliament, and in the country itself, to inject new political impetus into genuine and sincere efforts to find a mutually accepted solution to the name issue without further delay; notes the decision of 5 December 2011 of the International Court of Justice regarding the application of the interim accord of 13 September 1995; takes the view that the country's leadership and the EU should

consistently explain to the public the benefits of a solution once agreed ahead of the referendum on the issue; welcomes the meeting and talks between the Greek Foreign Minister Evangelos Venizelos and the French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius regarding the country in hopes that this represents a sign of future greater positive developments regarding the possible resolution of the name issue;

14. Welcomes the fact that five meetings have taken place in nine months in a good atmosphere between working groups from the country and Bulgaria; believes that the deeply felt historical, community and other common issues between the two countries are best addressed by dialogue in this spirit, including collaboration with the media and with the legal system and other authorities; calls for significant steps to be taken towards achieving a bilateral agreement in due time as a suitable framework in this regard;
15. Reiterates its concern over the use of historical arguments in the current debate with neighbours, and reiterates its call for positive progress to be made in joint celebrations of common historical events and figures with neighbouring EU Member States, since this would contribute to a better understanding of history and good neighbourly relations; encourages the attempts to establish joint expert committees on history and education, with the aim of contributing to an objective interpretation of history, strengthening academic cooperation, and promoting positive attitudes in young people towards their neighbours; urges the authorities to introduce educational materials free of ideological interpretations of history and aimed at improving mutual understanding;
16. Commends the country for maintaining its constructive role and positive contribution to regional cooperation, and welcomes its active participation in regional initiatives such as the Central European Initiative (CEI) and the Regional Initiative for Migration, Asylum and Refugees (MARRI); congratulates the country on its successful completion of its period as chair of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECPP) from June 2012 to June 2013), and welcomes, in this regard, the promotion of all-inclusiveness as a valuable contribution to the further strengthening of regional cooperation;
17. Calls on the Commission and the Council to include the country in the new macroregional cooperation framework in south-east Europe, namely the Adriatic-Ionian macroregional strategy and transnational programme;
18. Insists that the full implementation of the recommendations of the parliamentary committee of inquiry following the events of 24 December 2012 and compliance by all parties with the Memorandum of Understanding are both indispensable to returning the country to a Euro-Atlantic perspective; takes pride in the role undertaken by the Commissioner for Enlargement and Parliament itself in helping broker the 1 March agreement, but recognises that it is the responsibility of the political parties themselves to establish constructive mutual dialogue and cooperation and to reject the use of boycotts, in the interests of enabling full, independent legislative oversight of government and upholding European democratic norms; emphasises the importance of both government and political parties working towards improving relations in order to maintain political stability;

19. Welcomes the conclusions of the OSCE/ODIHR Electoral Observation Mission to the effect that the spring municipal elections were efficiently administered; shares the concern expressed regarding balance of media coverage, blurring of state and party activities in relation to the use of administrative resources and reported irregularities concerning registration of voters from Pustec, Albania; endorses the Government's commitment to comply with the OSCE/ODIHR recommendations for electoral reform in full; emphasises the need for further efforts to increase transparent financing and accountability of political parties; urges action to avoid the blurring of state and party activities during election campaigns and secure cross-party agreement for an audit of the voters' register;
20. Stresses the need to ensure the professionalism and independence of the public administration through policy improvements at all levels; considers it important that a new legal framework enshrines the fundamental principles of transparency, merit and equitable representation; calls on the government to continue with the necessary reforms in this respect, as also in the fields of public expenditure and public procurement, since this will have positive effects on the quality of governance;
21. Urges a deepening of democracy through further decisive steps towards budget decentralisation, regretting the reduction in the budget during the past year but looking forward to the survey report on the state of decentralisation and welcoming the increased share of revenue in the core budget of the municipalities through further actions to strengthen respect for local self-government, especially in cases where the parties in control at local level are not in power at national level;
22. Welcomes the progress made in the EU integration process by the other countries in the region, but is concerned that further delay in the opening of accession talks could create an unreasonable disparity in the region, which could pose further risks to good interethnic relations and create a feeling among all Macedonian citizens of being left behind; condemns all forms of ultra-nationalism, in any country; calls for anti-discrimination policies and tolerance in society, regardless of religion, ethnicity or language;
23. Endorses the Commission's call for the review of the Ohrid Framework Agreement to be completed and for implementation of its recommendations to commence;
24. Notes that further strengthening of a political dialogue with the Albanian population within the country represents an important contribution to regional stability and cooperation;
25. Urges the government, the media, the academic community, civil society and all relevant stakeholders to send out clear signals to the public that discrimination on the basis of national identity is not tolerated in the country, including in relation to the justice system, the media, and employment and social opportunities; underlines the importance of doing so for the integration of the various ethnic communities, the country's stability and the European integration;
26. Regrets that more progress has not yet been achieved with regard to integrated education and that funds have not been allocated to implement the Strategy on

Integrated Education; expresses its concern that fewer young people seem to be mastering each other's languages; urges action on the matter, in order to avoid separation and potential conflict along ethnic lines among school-age children; stresses, at the same time, the importance of promoting inclusive bilingual education on a non-compulsory basis; remains concerned at the separation of Roma pupils in schools;

27. Believes that the obstacles to proceeding with a census corresponding to best democratic standards might be partly overcome through the establishment of a civil registry, as a temporary solution;
28. Regrets the deterioration of the country's reputation in relation to media freedom; shares the Commission's concern that the safeguarding of freedom of expression with diverse and pluralistic media free from political interference remains a vital challenge for the country; points out, in this regard, that the lack of media pluralism is partly a result of government advertising; stresses the need to ensure the independence and sustainability of the public service broadcaster, encouraging the authorities to adopt safeguards in media law in this respect; believes that the current media law should be the object of further consultation and dialogue, so that such important reforms are agreed only if there is broad support across the country's journalistic community; points out that more efforts are needed in order to restore and rebuild trust between the government and the media community; supports the initiative of the country's Media Institute, with EU support, to publish a 'White Book' on enhancing civil society-media relations; stresses the need for greater efforts to protect the rights and independence of media workers; emphasises the need for transparency regarding media ownership;
29. Highlights the progress previously made by the Round Table between the government and the Association of Journalists, drawing on the expertise of the OSCE Special Representative on Free Media, and believes that reconvening the Round Table and fulfilment of its roadmap towards freedom of expression and ensuring a proper working environment for journalists continue to form the primary mechanism for making necessary progress; recognises that full freedom of expression can only be achieved in a society where there is an established right of public access to information and a public space that enables meaningful public debate;
30. Believes, nevertheless, that the recent case of the imprisoned journalist Tomislav Kezarovski and other cases – whose outcomes should only be determined by an independent judiciary working within the framework of the European Convention on Human Rights - raise concern over the possible exercise of selective justice in the country, which all relevant authorities should take effective measures to avoid;
31. Notes the new Lustration Law, but also the concerns expressed by the Venice Commission and the Helsinki Committee regarding its constitutionality and potential misuse;
32. Encourages the authorities to retrieve the Yugoslav secret service archives from Serbia and to include in the lustration process the personnel of the intelligence and counter-intelligence services; encourages the strengthening of the mandate of the Data Verification Commission by transferring all necessary documents from the intelligence and counter-intelligence services to that commission's premises on a permanent basis;

33. Reiterates the recommendations made in its previous resolution regarding civil society empowerment; urges the government to recognise the important role of civil society and its added value in the political debate, and calls on it to actively engage civil society organisations (CSOs) in the dialogue on policymaking; stresses the crucial role CSOs can play in making the EU integration process more transparent, accountable and inclusive; suggests that support should be offered to the civil society sector in support of its initiatives; welcomes the involvement of civil society in the Working Group on Chapter 23 established by the Ministry of Justice, and encourages all ministries to follow this example; encourages positive consideration of the proposal for selecting CSOs to take part in all working groups under the National Programme for the Acquis;
34. Regrets the modest progress of, and expresses its concern regarding the severe delays in, implementation of the second government Strategy for Cooperation with Civil Society and its action plan; is concerned at the lack of commitment to it and the lack of transparency in budget support to civil society; believes that the Open Government Partnership to which the country has pledged can provide an appropriate framework for improving the situation; welcomes and encourages the use of indicators to assess civil society participation, as outlined in the Commission's communication of 12 September 2012 on 'The roots of democracy and sustainable development' (COM(2012)0492);
35. Reiterates its call on the Commission and the government to agree to devote a minimum quota of the next programming period of the Instrument for Pre-Accession to secure 15 % payments to non-state actors and ensure that technical assistance to civil society organisations is managed by civil society itself; also urges that the IPA II be further deployed to support efforts to help leverage a target of 9 % of the country's own budget, to be delivered through decentralised regional and local government;
36. Commends the country for the reforms previously undertaken which have brought the national legal framework into conformity with international standards; urges the country to increase the transparency of the Judicial Council in order to minimise perceptions that it works under influence and pressure; invites the Commission to consider and analyse respect for European Court of Human Rights judgments in relation to the country, in its future Progress Reports;
37. Welcomes the activities aimed at improving the professionalism, independence and efficiency of the judiciary, namely the recruitment of graduates of the Academy for Judges and Prosecutors to those posts, the maintaining of the positive clearance rate of the courts in the first half of 2013, and the further reduction in the backlog; calls for the unification of jurisprudence in order to ensure a predictable judicial system and public trust;
38. Calls in particular for the reinforcement of the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption, the Anti-Corruption Unit of the Ministry of Interior, the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for the fight against organised crime and corruption, and the State Audit Office in budgetary, material and human resources; emphasises further the need to focus on high-level corruption cases and to make greater use of orders for seizure and confiscation of assets, and urges continued efforts to establish a track record for convictions in high-level cases; calls on independent civil society organisations and



media to expose corruption and champion independent and impartial investigations and trials; welcomes the continued UNDP-supported efforts of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption to strengthen the preventive aspect of the fight against corruption by introducing comprehensive integrity systems in nine pilot municipalities; supports the national authorities' intention to complete the amendment of the Law on Prevention of Corruption, expand the integrity system concept nationwide, and provide systematic institutional protection for whistleblowers;

39. Notes that the activities aimed at making the National Intelligence Database (NID) operational are still ongoing, and encourages the country's authorities to accelerate their efforts in this respect and to establish the National Coordination Centre for the fight against organised crime as soon as possible, in order to provide full support to the fight against organised crime, corruption, fraud, money laundering and other serious offences, including cross-border offences;
40. Expresses its concern at the widespread and lengthy use of pre-trial detention and the conditions in which detainees are held; notes instances of disproportionate policing in relation to demonstrations; calls for efforts to maintain public order to be proportionate and to respect the right of free assembly;
41. Welcomes the new Justice for Children Law, and calls for sufficient funding to implement it; continues to regret the absence of health and education services in juvenile detention centres;
42. Welcomes the decrease in the number of children in institutional care, but remains concerned at the large numbers of children with disabilities who are still in institutions; calls for further reforms of the child protection system and the strengthening of the capacities of the Centres for Social Work in order to support disadvantaged families;
43. Welcomes the formation of the National Youth Council and the efforts to ensure that it is broad-based and politically impartial and can fully participate as a member of the European Youth Forum; invites the country's Agency for Youth and Sport to fully support and participate in its activities;
44. Encourages the government to allocate sufficient human and financial resources to the Commission for Protection from Discrimination and to the anti-discrimination unit in the Department for Equal Opportunities; calls for measures to strengthen awareness-raising on equality and non-discrimination;
45. Welcomes the reopening of the LGBTI Centre in Skopje, after five separate attacks on it in the last twelve months; welcomes, and calls for wider application of, the findings of the country's Anti-Discrimination Commission condemning homophobia in school textbooks; calls, especially, for the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation in employment; regrets that the Anti-Discrimination Law is still not in line with the EU acquis; reiterates its call for this law to be amended in order to fully comply with the acquis; condemns all violence against the LGBTI community and invites all political leaders and figures in the wider society to do the same; calls for the perpetrators of such violence to be brought to justice; reminds the government and the political parties of their responsibility in creating a culture of inclusion and tolerance;

46. Urges the authorities to systematically collect data on excluded and marginalised groups, including street children, Roma children and persons with disabilities; regrets the failure to collect data on hate crimes; remains concerned at the number of Roma children in special needs schools, but welcomes the system of government bursaries designed to enable Roma children to complete secondary education;
47. Remains concerned over the continued discrimination affecting Roma; in this regard, highlights that Roma women suffer double discrimination on the grounds of gender and ethnicity, which mostly goes hand in hand with poverty; is concerned that this long-recognised double discrimination is widespread, routine and pervasive; calls on the authorities to break this pattern, and strongly urges proactive implementation of the Strategy for Roma inclusion and action to ensure access to health, education, employment, housing and social welfare for Roma;
48. Strongly urges the government to solve the problem of Roma without personal documents;
49. Calls on the government to increase its efforts to improve the status of Roma and Ashkali refugees from Kosovo;
50. Welcomes the increase in the number of female mayors from zero to four, out of 81 mayors in the country, and in the number of women in parliament, which is in accordance with the gender quota; is concerned, however, over persistent practices of voluntary withdrawal of women from political decision-making; welcomes the changes made to the labour law to afford better legal protection for women who are pregnant or have just given birth, but is concerned at the high unemployment rates among women; welcomes the adoption of the gender equality strategy, but notes that the public mechanisms for gender equality are still not functioning properly, and calls on the government to improve their functioning and increase their human and financial resources; calls on the authorities to ensure a gender perspective in all policy areas and to increase support for and initiatives aimed at increasing awareness of gender equality; regrets the fact that important amendments to the Law on Termination of Pregnancy were adopted by the parliament in a shortened procedure without a broader public debate;
51. Commends the government for preserving macroeconomic stability, and welcomes the return to growth; notes, however, that income convergence has been slow and shares the concern existing as to whether the public deficit target of 2.6 % by 2016 will be met and how public finances will be consolidated; recommends that the Commission should award the country 'functioning market economy status'; invites the government to act in accordance with the principles of CEFTA and the WTO regarding the terms of foreign trade;
52. Welcomes the increase in GDP of 2.9 % in real terms in the first quarter of 2013 as compared with the same quarter in 2012; notes the trend of positive changes in the labour market, with the number of employed in the first quarter of 2013 being 3.9 % higher than that for the same quarter in 2012, while the annual unemployment rate fell by 4.2 %; welcomes the ranking of the country in the World Bank's 'Doing Business' report as being among the top ten in the world showing the greatest progress in the

business and regulatory environment;

53. Welcomes the Commission's intention to launch a special dialogue on employment and social policy with this and other countries in the region; encourages measures to ensure a modernised labour law in full compliance with the ILO conventions; stresses that the country has ratified the ILO's eight core labour rights conventions; calls for the strengthening of the capacity of the social partners and the guaranteeing of labour and trade union rights; shares the concern that high unemployment, in particular among vulnerable groups such as young people and women, remains one of the most pressing challenges for the government, and calls for enhanced action to combat poverty, high youth unemployment and discrimination;
54. Regrets that the country does not yet have a comprehensive climate policy although it associates itself with EU positions in the international context; expects the Government to adopt the necessary measures so as to strengthen administrative capacity for implementing climate change legislation;
55. Stresses the need for major efforts in the field of environment and in particular in the areas of water quality, nature protection, wildlife conservation, and industrial pollution control and risk management; encourages efforts to implement the legislation in those areas; underlines that no substantial progress can be achieved without a suitable strengthening of administrative capacity; calls on the government to take the necessary measures in this respect;
56. Encourages the government to continue cooperation with the EU in the energy sector within the framework of the Energy Community;
57. Points out that, as regards renewable energies, the potential of the country is underdeveloped, thanks also to cumbersome administrative procedures and the price of electricity; calls, in this connection, on the authorities to step up efforts in this field in order to meet the Energy Community obligation of full implementation of the renewable energy directive by the beginning of 2014;
58. Reaffirms its support for the visa liberalisation regime for the Western Balkan countries as an important pillar of their European integration process; calls on the Member States to shorten their asylum procedures for citizens of Western Balkan countries who enjoy visa-free travel within the Schengen area, as an effective means of reducing the number of unfounded asylum applications while still allowing applicants the right to make their case in a full interview; welcomes, furthermore, the intentions of the new coalition government in Germany as expressed in the coalition agreement regarding national asylum legislation;
59. Reiterates that a proper balance must be maintained between legitimate measures to combat illegal migration and the avoidance of ethnic profiling or other actions which are potentially discriminatory in relation to the right of free movement; commends regional cooperation with regard to migration and refugees; strongly urges that the current EU visa liberalisation regime for the country be maintained; believes the country should be declared a 'safe country of origin' in order to enable quicker procedures to deal with applications; calls on the government to maintain the existing liberal visa

regime with neighbouring countries, and to step up efforts to improve the social and economic situation of minorities and prevent any discrimination or negative measures such as travel restrictions in respect of people who have had asylum applications rejected in the EU;

60. Takes note of the government's efforts to rebuild the local road infrastructure in the country with the aim of developing alternative tourism and improving citizens' lives; in this regard, encourages the country to take a more dynamic approach in regional development projects under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) that will increase cross-border cooperation and links among the countries in the region, and to participate in the development of a modern and eco-efficient rail system connecting south-east Europe with the rest of the continent; calls for further progress on alignment transport policy and its alignment with the *acquis*;
61. Takes note of the meeting between the transport ministers of the country and of Bulgaria held on 28 November 2013 in Sofia, and expresses the hope that the commitments to finalising the rail connection between the two countries, as confirmed at the meeting, will be fulfilled in the short term, since this will open up new economic perspectives for the region;
62. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the government and parliament of the country.