



Delegation for relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo

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MINUTES

of the meeting of 28 February 2022, 11.00-12.00

Brussels

Remote meeting via WebEx

The meeting opened at 11.00, with Romeo FRANZ (Chair) presiding.

1. Adoption of the draft agenda

The Agenda was adopted without changes.

2. Adoption of the minutes of the meeting of the Delegation for relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo of 12 January 2022

The draft minutes were adopted unchanged (following two comments from MEPs that were integrated in an updated version sent to D-SEE Members prior to the meeting).

3. Exchange of views on the latest developments in Kosovo and the state of play of EU-Kosovo relations, with H.E. Mr Agron BAJRAMI, Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo in Brussels, Mr Vassilis MARAGOS, Head of Unit for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo at the European Commission, and Ms Elsa FENET, Head of the Western Balkans Division at the European External Action Service

In his introductory remarks D-SEE Chair **Romeo Franz** recalled the successful 7th EU-Kosovo SAPC meeting in Pristina in November 2021, which concluded with the swift and smooth adoption of recommendations. He then focused on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, highlighting Russia's longstanding role as a game-spoiler in the Western Balkans and

urging increased vigilance, as Putin wanted to unilaterally create a new security order in Europe for which the Western Balkans was an additional point of entry. We should stand with our Western Balkan partners, not only in words, but also in deeds. On the other hand all Western Balkan countries were expected to fully align with EU sanctions and other policy decisions following Russia's aggression towards and in Ukraine, and to do it now, not progressively. Mr FRANZ praised Kosovo's leadership for promptly announcing that it would fully align with EU sanctions.

For the EU Putin's unilateral 'declaration of war' should be the ultimate eye-opener and a clear message that the EU could no longer afford to be hesitant and weak in its decisions, be it in the Western Balkans or elsewhere. In this regard Mr FRANZ again criticised the ongoing failure of the EU to deliver on visa liberalisation, which was a devastating message for Kosovar youth and for Kosovo as the country with the youngest population in Europe. He called on the French EU Presidency to rise to the occasion and seize the opportunity of the European Year of Youth 2022 to work ambitiously towards a concrete solution beyond declarations.

The EU-facilitated dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade had completely stalled, except for some modest progress on the car licenses issue. However, this was just one issue on the table and there was no guarantee of success.

The intention of the Kosovar government to formally apply for EU membership this year should motivate the authorities to swiftly and fully implement the European Reform Agenda (ERA II). Mr FRANZ welcomed that the Ministerial Council for European Integration last Friday had approved in principle the National Program for the Implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement for 2022 - 2026. This program should now be approved by the government and adopted by the Assembly as a matter of urgency. The full commitment and engagement of the Assembly of Kosovo was of key importance to move Kosovo's EU integration process forward. All too often its legislative activity was hampered by the inability to reach the necessary quorum.

Newly appointed Ambassador **Agron Bajrami** strongly condemned Russia's aggression and its agenda to undermine Ukraine as an independent state. Kosovo was committed to work with its partners to play its role in defending the values of the democratic world.

Kosovo had for years been ringing the alarm bell on the imminent threat from Russia and its proxies in the Western Balkans. Kosovo had been mentioned several times in Russian warmongering speeches in the days before the invasion. Mr BAJRAMI warned for spillover effects in the Western Balkans and mentioned in this regard Serbia's ongoing refusal to denounce the Russian aggression as well as the nature of its military exercises (with Russia, while the rest of the region participated in NATO exercises). Serbia also purchased arms from Russia, Belarus and China while it was openly threatening its neighbours including Kosovo. Kosovo would continue to align its positions with those of the EU and the U.S in line with its Euro-Atlantic trajectory.

On EU-Kosovo relations Mr BAJRAMI underlined the strong support for EU membership among citizens and all political actors in Kosovo as well as the government's strong commitment to implement the SAA. He dwelled on what had already been done to promote the European Reform Agenda and regretted that the latest Commission report on Kosovo did not provide a full picture of the situation on the ground, as Kosovo had made serious

progress over the six months preceding the publication of the report. Kosovo expected this progress to be reflected in the next report. Mr BAJRAMI went on to list the priorities for reforms and highlighted the substantial improvement in Kosovo's fight against corruption and organised crime (e.g. it rose 17 places in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index), including excellent cooperation with Europol.

Kosovo's declared objective was now to address more complex issues and to work towards candidate country status. The objective was to submit the application for EU membership this year. The ongoing failure of the EU to grant visa liberalisation to Kosovo was very disappointing. After detailing Kosovo's recent promising economic indicators and its successful management of the pandemic, which would not have been possible without the crucial assistance of the EU, Mr BAJRAMI insisted that mutual recognition was a key element of the final comprehensive agreement with Serbia. Kosovo had continued to engage constructively, with mutual recognition as a key element of the final agreement. It had prioritised the most important issues, which included missing persons, given the urgency and the humanitarian dimension. Reciprocity should be a leading principle.

Mr BAJRAMI concluded that the war in Ukraine meant that now was the time to step up efforts for the EU integration of Kosovo and all Western Balkan countries as the only way to achieve long-term stability, security and prosperity.

Vassilis Maragos, Head of Unit for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo at DG NEAR, also welcomed Kosovo's alignment with EU positions on Ukraine. The SAPC and parliamentary democracy were key elements of the EU's engagement with Kosovo. There was a genuine window of opportunity for progress. Mr MARAGOS praised the commitment of Kosovo's government to reform, but consistent implementation on the ground was needed. The roadmap was there and work should advance. He looked forward to further cooperation in all sectoral subcommittee meetings, with a focus on the implementation of conclusions. He further welcomed that the government was eager to use the opportunities offered by the Commission's economic and investment plan. Some flagships were under way and others were under preparation. The economic and investment plan was also the EU's response in terms of recovery from the pandemic.

Regarding energy policy, Mr MARAGOS highlighted that Kosovo was preparing a new energy transition strategy and underlined that the focus should be on decarbonisation, a credible transition plan and implementation of Kosovo's commitments regarding the green agenda for the Western Balkans. It was very important for Kosovo to present a plan which phased out coal and accelerated activities on renewables and energy efficiency. Investments in coal would not be supported by the Commission.

The rule of law strategy should be implemented and efforts to strengthen the independence of the judiciary and reduce the backlog in cases should be stepped up. Regarding vetting, the Commission had proposed less intrusive and more efficient ways to address the government's concerns. Mr MARAGOS reiterated that vetting should remain an exceptional measure and that full alignment with the suggestions and recommendations of the Venice Commission and European standards was needed. On a final note, he agreed that visa liberalisation was very important and urged the Kosovo authorities to actively engage with EU Member States on a bilateral basis.

Elsa Fenet, Head of the Western Balkans Division at the European External Action Service, referred to the most recent statements of HR Borrell on Ukraine, in which he had also highlighted the vulnerability of the Western Balkans and the need to be vigilant. She welcomed Kosovo's strong strategic orientation and its full alignment with EU sanctions, even if it was not formally requested to do so. Referring to the recent municipal elections, she urged Kosovo to follow up on all relevant recommendations. She concurred with Mr Maragos on the judiciary and energy policy.

On regional cooperation, Ms FENET regretted the lack of progress in different regional formats. More progress and more positive signals would be welcome. Regarding the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, Kosovo should respect and implement all past agreements and further engage in the dialogue in good faith and in a spirit of compromise.

As to the upcoming 3 April elections in Serbia, Ms FENET explained that there was no dialogue agreement regulating the participation (of Kosovo Serbs) in elections. To date the modalities had been negotiated separately by the parties for five consecutive times. Both parties should engage constructively to find a mutually agreed solution and there were plenty of EU examples of possible scenarios, also outside diplomatic representations. Without such an agreement relations between Kosovo and Serbia, the Dialogue process and the overall atmosphere in the region would be negatively impacted.

4. Consideration of the draft agenda of the 8th EU-Kosovo SAPC meeting on 9-10 March 2022 in Strasbourg

There were no comments on the draft agenda.

5. Any other business

There was no other business to attend to.

6. Date and place of the next meeting

MR FRANZ confirmed that the next Delegation meeting would take place after the 8th EU-Kosovo Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee (SAPC) meeting that would be held on 9-10 March 2022 in Strasbourg.

The meeting closed at 12.00.

**ПРИСЪСТВЕН ЛИСТ/LISTA DE ASISTENCIA/PREZENČNÍ LISTINA/DELTAGERLISTE/
ANWESENHEITSLISTE/KOHALOLIJATE NIMEKIRI/KATASTAΣΗ ΠΑΡΟΝΤΩΝ/RECORD OF ATTENDANCE/
LISTE DE PRÉSENCE/POPIS NAZOČNIH/ELENCO DI PRESENZA/APMEKLĒJUMU REĢISTRS/DALVIŲ SARAŠAS/
JELENLÉTI ÍV/REĢISTRU TA' ATTENDENZA/PRESENTIELIJST/LISTA OBECNOŚCI/LISTA DE PRESENÇAS/
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Romeo Franz
Членове/Diputados/Poslanci/Medlemmer/Mitglieder/Parlamendiliikmed/Bouλευτές/Members/Députés/Zastupnici/Deputati/Deputati/Nariai/Képviselők/Membri/Leden/Posłowie/Deputados/Deputati/Jäsenet/Ledamöter
Bogdan Rzoíca, Ladislav Ilčíć

209 (7)	
216 (3)	
56 (8) (Точка от дневния ред/Punto del orden del día/Bod pořadu jednání (OJ)/Punkt på dagsordenen/Tagesordnungspunkt/Päiväkorra punkt/Σημείο της ημερήσιας διάταξης/Agenda item/Point OJ/Točka dnevnog reda/Punto all'ordine del giorno/Darba kārtības punkts/Darbotvarkēs punktas/Napirendi pont/Punt Aģenda/Agendapunt/Punkt porządku dziennego/Ponto OD/Punct de pe ordinea de zi/Bod programu schôdze/Točka UL/Esityslistan kohta/Punkt på föredragningslistan)	3
H.E. Mr Agron Bajrami, Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo in Brussels Mr Vassilis Maragos, Head of Unit for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo at the European Commission Ms Elsa Fenet, Head of the Western Balkans Division at the European External Action Service	

Наблюдатели/Observadores/Pozorovatel é/Observatér/Beobachter/Vaattlejad/Παρατηρητές/Observers/Observateurs/Promatrači/Osservatori/Nověrotáji/Stebétojai/Megfigyelők/Osservaturi/Waarnemers/Obserwatorzy/Observadores/Observatori/Pozorovatelia/Opozovalci/Tarkailijat/Observatörer

По покана на председателя/Por invitación del presidente/Na pozvání předsedy/Efter indbydelse fra formanden/Auf Einladung des Vorsitzenden/Esimene kutsel/Με πρόσκληση του Προέδρου/At the invitation of the Chair/Sur l'invitation du président/ Na poziv predsjednika/Su invito del presidente/Pēc priekšsēdētāja uzaicinājuma/Pirmminukui pakvietus/Az elnök meghívására/ Fuq stedina tač-'Chairman'/Op uitnodiging van de voorzitter/Na zaproszenie Przewodniczącego/A convite do Presidente/La invitación al presidente/Na pozvanie predsedu/Na povabilo predsednika/Puheenjohtajan kutsusta/På ordförandens inbjudan

Съвет/Consejo/Rada/Rådet/Rat/Nōukogu/Συμβούλιο/Council/Conseil/Vijeće/Consiglio/Padome/Taryba/Tanács/Kunsill/Raad/Conselho/Consiliu/Svet/Neuvosto/Rådet (*)

Комисия/Comisión/Komise/Kommissionen/Kommission/Komisjon/Επιτροπή/Commission/Komisija/Commissione/Bizottság/Kummissjoni/Commissie/Komisja/Comissão/Comisie/Komisia/Komissió/Kommissionen (*)

Mary Teresa Moran

Европейска служба за външна дейност/Servicio Europeo de Acción Exterior/Evropská služba pro vnitřní činnost/EU-Udenrigstjenesten/Europäischer Auswärtiger Dienst/Euroopa väliseenistus/Ευρωπαϊκή Υπηρεσία Εξωτερικής Δράσης/European External Action service/Service européen pour l'action extérieure/Europska služba za vanjsko djelovanje/Servizio europeo per l'azione esterna/Eiropas Ārējās darbības dienests/Europos išorės veiksmų tarnyba/Európai Külügyi Szolgálat/Servizz Ewropew ghall-Azzjoni Esterna/Europese dienst voor extern optreden/Européjska Służba Działal Zewnętrznych/Serviço Europeu para a Ação Externa/Serviciul european pentru acțiune externă/Európska služba pre vonkajšiu činnosť/Europska služba za zunanje delovanje/Euroopan ulkosuhdehallinto/Europeiska avdelningen för yttrre åtgärd (*)

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Други участници/Otros participantes/Ostatní účastníci/Endvidere deltog/Andere Teilnehmer/Muud osalejad/Επίσης παρόντες/Other participants/Autres participants/Drugi sudionici/Altri partecipanti/Cíti klátesošie/Kiti dalyviai/Más résztvevők/Parteicipanti ohra/Andere aanwezigen/Inni uczestnicy/Outros participantes/Altı participantı/Iní účastníci/Drugi udeleženci/Muut osallistujat/Övriga deltagare

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PPE	Blagoy Klimov, Dominika Kaczkowska
S&D	Jörgen Siil
Renew	Simon Schelde
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The Left	Chrysanthos Kyprianou
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André De Munter

Сътрудник/Asistente/Asistent/Assistent/Assistenz/Боηόć/Assistant/Assistente/Palīgs/Padējējas/Asszisztens/Asystent/Pomočník/Avustaja/Assisternt

Vesselina Veleva

Anna Parfjonova

Rosa-Maria Licop Cabo

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