



Delegation to the EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee

D-RS_PV(2022)0623

MINUTES

of the meeting of 23 June 2022, 13.30-15.00

room ASP 3G2, Brussels

The meeting opened at 13.35 on Thursday, 23 June 2022, with Mr Franc BOGOVIČ (1st Vice-Chair) presiding. Mr BOGOVIČ reminded that one of the purposes of the meeting was to elect the new Chair following the departure of Ms Tanja FAJON (S&D, SL). Mr Thijs REUTEN (S&D, NL), on behalf of S&D, informed Delegation Members on his group's proposal to nominate Ms Alessandra MORETTI (S&D, IT) as the new Chair.

There were no other proposals.

1. Election of the Chair

Ms Alessandra MORETTI (S&D, IT) was elected Chair by acclamation.

With the newly elected Chair

2. Adoption of the draft agenda

The Agenda was adopted without any changes as in the draft.

3. Adoption of the draft minutes of the 3 March 2022 delegation meeting

The draft minutes from the delegation meeting of the 3 March 2022 were adopted as in the draft.

4. Chair's announcements

Ms Alessandra MORETTI started her opening statement by mentioning the EU-Western Balkans Summit, taking place in parallel and ahead of the June European Council, noting the participation of all six Western Balkans leaders, including the leaders of the three countries participating in the Open Balkan initiative, which countries until the day before the meeting had been considering to boycott. She welcomed the adoption of a roadmap on the implementation of the 2013 energy agreement by Belgrade and Pristina in a new round of the Dialogue at chief negotiator level in Brussels on 21 June. She also stated that she would wait for other progress in the Dialogue.

Ms MORETTI recalled that on 14 June, the AFET Committee voted on the 2021 Commission report on Serbia, saying that it was the first time that the word “mutual recognition” figured in the EP report. The report also called on Serbia to urgently align with EU restrictive measures against Russia and Belarus. She further stressed the importance for Serbia to align with EU foreign and security policy, not only in words but also in deeds, especially in such an important turning point in Europe’s history, adding that joining a community of values is no longer compatible with carrying on business as usual with an aggressor such as Russia. Ms MORETTI declared that the EU had shown an unprecedented degree of action in condemning the unjustified aggression.

5. Debriefing by Mr Thijs REUTEN, Head of the EP Election Observation Delegation on the 3 April 2022 general elections in Serbia

Mr Thijs REUTEN (S&D, NL) pointed out that apart from the higher voter turn-out and an expectedly more diverse political representation in the new Parliament, there were no positive aspects to note. The electoral conditions have unfortunately not met the minimum standards of free and fair elections, an improvement that could have been expected from an EU-candidate country such as Serbia. Among the issues on the electoral eve, he mentioned in particular that the Central Electoral Committee could not announce the final results, which had still not been announced two-and-a-half months after the elections due to repeated votes in several polling stations. This delay was holding up the formation of the new government. Mr REUTEN highlighted that shortcomings were a series of deliberate decisions that contributed to create an uneven playing field, which benefitted the incumbents. As an example, he also mentioned the control of the media, the abuse of power and the pressure on voters: he stressed that it was

important to note that these were not incidents. Mr REUTEN stated that improvements achieved by the EP-facilitated Inter-Party Dialogue (IPD) had been implemented too late to have an impact on the better conduct of elections. The triple elections meant a too heavy challenge for Serbia's fragile electoral system to handle, which could not guarantee impartiality and transparency.

Ms Viola von CRAMON-TAUBADEL (Greens/EFA) reminded that Serbia was a candidate country and consequently more progress was expected. She also stated that the announcement of the final results should be a minimum standard, and she asked if there were any news on this aspect.

Mr Thijs REUTEN (S&D, NL) declared that those deliberate actions questioned the problem of safeguarding fundamental democratic principles and would be addressed in the final Report. He also expressed hope for a follow-up visit to take place soon to find solutions together with Serbian authorities.

6. Exchange of views with Mr Miloš TODOROVIĆ, Deputy Head of Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the EU and with Mr Michael MILLER, Head of Unit for Montenegro and Serbia in the DG NEAR of the European Commission, Mr Clive RUMBOLD, Senior expert, Division 'South-East Europe & Western Balkans' in the EEAS on the 3 April 2022 presidential, early parliamentary and Belgrade city elections in Serbia and the formation of the new government

Mr Miloš TODOROVIĆ, Deputy Head of Mission of the Republic of Serbia, started his intervention by pointing to the lack of interest from MEPs in debates on Serbia. He rejected Mr REUTEN's assessment saying that Serbia had not met the minimum standards of a free and fair elections, arguing that the electoral criteria had been agreed with the representatives of the European Parliament, and they had all been met. However, he acknowledged that the final results of the elections had still not been announced due to repeated votes connected to irregularities in a number of polling stations, of which the last one should have taken place the day of the meeting, but it had to be postponed again.

The presidential elections were won by incumbent President Aleksandar Vučić with 58.59% of the votes (more than 2.200.000 voters), who was sworn in for his second term on 31 May. On 20 June, the Belgrade city Assembly elected Mr Alexander Sapić (heading the SNS list) as its new mayor. The SNS and SPS has a majority of 57/110 seats in the Belgrade City Assembly. Mr TODOROVIĆ stated that there were activities organized to improve the electoral conditions and the general atmosphere, and legislative changes were adopted following an extensive dialogue among the ruling parties and opposition. He concluded by welcoming the engagement and mediation of the European Parliament in avoiding an electoral boycott, as it happened during the previous elections.

Mr Michael MILLER, Head of Unit for Montenegro and Serbia in the DG NEAR of the European Commission, declared that the European Commission had followed the preparation and the

conduct of the elections, including Serbia's record in implementing the OSCE/ODHIR recommendations, praising the achievements of the IPD and the participation of all political forces in the elections and Inter-party Dialogue. Despite improvements challenges remain, in particular when it comes to the level playing field and access to the media. The Commission is looking forward to the final OSCE/ODHIR report that should steer the work to address the remaining shortcomings for future elections.

Mr MILLER stated that in terms of Serbia's EU accession negotiations, 22 out of 35 chapters had been opened, and the European Commission was also looking forward to working with the new government once it is formed to take forward Serbia's strategic decision to join the EU. He specified that tangible results in the area of rule of law and the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue would continue to determine the overall pace of accession.

On Kosovo, Mr MILLER welcomed Tuesday's agreement on the energy roadmap as an important step forward that would, hopefully, unlock discussions on other outstanding issues. On Cluster 3 (competitiveness and inclusive growth), he declared that the European Commission considered that Serbia had fulfilled the opening benchmarks, and the decision now was in the hands of the Member States.

However, he underlined that Serbia's position on Russia's unprovoked and unjustified aggression would be the key for any further progress this year. In autumn, the European Commission will present its next enlargement package, where there will be an assessment on Serbia's efforts towards EU accession. Mr MILLER concluded by saying that the European Commission was cooperating with Serbia in five areas to alleviate the impact of Russia's war in Ukraine, and to decrease its overdependence on Russian in the areas of fuel imports, trade restrictions, food security and Russian disinformation.

Mr Clive RUMBOLD, Senior expert, Division 'South-East Europe & Western Balkans' in the EEAS, welcomed the participation of all political parties in the elections, following the engagement of the Inter-party Dialogue facilitated by the European Parliament. He expressed the hope for a renewed political commitment for the implementation of reforms once the elections will be fully completed and official results will be published.

He also added that the EU was looking forward to a renewed cooperation with Serbia on the foreign policy front, especially in the light of Russia's unprovoked aggression in Ukraine. Mr MILLER pointed out that up until now, Serbia has aligned with a number of High Representative political declarations; however, it had not so far aligned with any of the restrictive measures related directly to the Russian Federation. In fact, contacts between Russia and Serbia continue, including at the highest level, and Air Serbia also maintains flights to Russia. Mr RUMBOLD concluded by welcoming the energy roadmap agreed by Serbia and Kosovo earlier this week.

Debate with MEPs:

Mr Andor DELI (NI, HU) highlighted how Serbia was in a “*sui generis*” position after the Russian aggression on Ukraine, and he suggested that the European Parliament should focus its attention on possible solutions. He criticised the “mutual recognition” phrase used in the latest EP report on Serbia, because it would, in his view imply that Kosovo had to recognize Serbia too.

Mr Franc BOGOVIĆ (1st VC, EPP, SL) urged for empowering local communities and increasing decentralisation via EU funds in Serbia. He also highlighted the importance of dialogue.

D-RS Chair Ms Alessandra MORETTI (S&D, IT) stressed that the European Parliament’s role was to encourage and support the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, however it was up to Serbia and Kosovo to find solutions.

Mr Thijs REUTEN (S&D, NL) reiterated the importance of concluding the final results of the elections.

Mr Miloš TODOROVIĆ clarified that he did not define the absence of final results as a “problem” and that Serbia did not need Kosovo’s recognition. He further asked if the EU had consulted Serbia on sanctions, stating that the alignment would mean to commit an economic suicide. According to him, the EU needed to find a balance in what was asking from Serbia. He also said that the lack of EU efforts towards the Western Balkans and Serbia was becoming “annoying”.

Ms Alessandra MORETTI stated that compromises represented a common ground between two parts that despite having different positions. She recalled that Serbia and Kosovo had to make this kind of effort.

Mr Michael MILLER strongly disagreed with Mr TODOROVIĆ, saying that the EU was making efforts towards Western Balkans and Serbia to address the difficulties that existed or would come out after alignment. For this reason, calling the EU “annoying” was a misreading of the width and depth of EU solidarity towards Serbia. Furthermore, Mr MILLER disagreed with Serbian government representative’s assessment of the EU-WB Summit and he urged Serbia to focus on its own delivery instead.

Mr Clive RUMBOLD stated that the CFSP alignment represented a sign of shared values between the EU and other countries, and a formal requirement of the accession process. On the impact of the war, he also recalled that it was the Russian invasion of Ukraine that was causing economic, energy and food problems, and not the EU sanctions.

7. Any other business

No other issues were raised during the meeting.

8. Date and place of the next meeting

D-RS Chair reminded that the date and place of the next meeting, provisionally scheduled for 19 and 20 October in Strasbourg, needed to be reconfirmed once Serbia's National Assembly would be constituted.

The meeting closed at 14.50.

**ПРИСЪСТВЕН ЛИСТ/LISTA DE ASISTENCIA/PREZENČNÍ LISTINA/DELTAGERLISTE/
ANWESENHEITSLISTE/KOHALOLIJATE NIMEKIRI/KATAΣΤΑΣΗ ΠΑΡΟΝΤΩΝ/RECORD OF ATTENDANCE/
LISTE DE PRÉSENCE/POPIS NAZOČNIH/ELENCO DI PRESENZA/APMEKLĒJUMU REĢISTRŠ/DALYVIŲ SĄRAŠAS/
JELENLÉTI ÍV/REĢISTRU TA' ATTENDENZA/PRESENTIELIJST/LISTA OBECNOŠCI/LISTA DE PRESENÇAS/
LISTĂ DE PREZENȚĂ/PREZENČNÁ LISTINA/SEZNAM NAVZOČIH/LÄSNÄOLOLISTA/NÄRVAROLISTA**

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Franc Bogovič; Petros Kokkalis
Членове/Diputados/Poslanci/Medlemmer/Mitglieder/Parlamendiliikmed/Βουλευτές/Members/Députés/Zastupnici/Deputati/Deputăți/ Nariai/Képviselők/Membri/Leden/Posłowie/Deputados/Deputați/Jäsenet/Ledamöter
Salvatore De Meo, Andor Deli, Carlo Fidanza, Vlad Gheorghe, Jarosław Kalinowski, Łukasz Kohut, Alessandra Moretti, Eugen Tomac, Viola Von Cramon-Taubadel
Заместници/Suplentes/Náhradníci/Stedfortrædere/Stellvertreter/Asendusliikmed/Αναπληρωτές/Substitutes/Suppléants/Zamjenici/ Supplenti/Aizstājēji/Pavaduojantysnariai/Póttagok/Sostituti/Plaatsvervangers/Zastępcy/Membros suplentes/Supleanți/Náhradníci/ Namestniki/Varajäsenet/Suppleanter
Valter Flego, Thijs Reuten

209 (7)
216 (3)
56 (8) (Точка от дневния ред/Punto del orden del día/Bod pořadu jednání (OJ)/Punkt på dagsordenen/Tagesordnungspunkt/ Päevakorra punkt/Σημείο της ημερήσιας διάταξης/Agenda item/Point OJ/Τοčka dnevnoĝ reda/Punto all'ordine del giorno/Darba kārtības punkts/Darbotvarkēs punktas/Napirendi pont/Punt Agenda/Agendapunt/Punkt porządku dziennego/Ponto OD/Punct de pe ordinea de zi/Bod programu schôdze/Τοčka UL/Esityslistan kohta/Punkt på föredragningslistan)

Наблюдатели/Observadores/Pozorovatelé/Observatører/Beobachter/Vaatlejad/Παρατηρητές/Observers/Observateurs/Promatrači/Osservatori/Novērotāji/Stebėtojai/Megfigyelők/Osservatori/Waarnemers/Obserwatorzy/Observadores/Observatori/Pozorovatelia/Opazovalci/Tarkkailijat/Obserwatörer

По покана на председателя/Por invitación del presidente/Na pozvání předsedy/Efter indbydelse fra formanden/Auf Einladung des Vorsitzenden/Εσίμεηη κηση/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/Pirmininkui pakvietus/Az elnök meghívására/ Fuq stedina tač-'Chairman'/Op uitnodiging van de voorzitter/Na zaproszenie Przewodniczącego/A convite do Presidente/La invitația președintelui/ Na pozvanie predsedu/Na povabilo predsednika/Puheenjohtajan kutsusta/På ordförandens inbjudan

Съвет/Consejo/Rada/Rådet/Rat/Nöukogu/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/Komisja/Komissio/Kommissionen (*)
Michael MILLER, Maja SMRKOLJ
Европейска служба за външна дейност/Servicio Europeo de Acción Exterior/Evropská služba pro vnější činnost/EU-Udenrigstjenesten/Europäischer Auswärtiger Dienst/Euroopa välisteenistus/Ευρωπαϊκή Υπηρεσία Εξωτερικής Δράσης/European External Action service/Service européen pour l'action extérieure/Europiska služba za vanjsko djelovanje/Servizio europeo per l'azione esterna/Eiropas Ārējās darbības dienests/Europolio išorės veiksmų tarnyba/Európai Külügyi Szolgálat/Servizz Ewropew għall-Azzjoni Esterna/Europese dienst voor extern optreden/Europejska Służba Działañ Zewnętrznych/Serviço Europeu para a Acção Externa/Serviciul european pentru acțiune externă/Európska služba pre vonkajšiu činnost/Evropska služba za zunanje delovanje/Euroopan ulkosuhdehallinto/Europeiska avdelningen för yttre åtgärd (*)
Clive RUMBOLD, Francisco ONOFRE
Други институции и органи/Otras instituciones y organismos/Ostatní orgány a instituce/Andre institutioner og organer/Andere Organe und Einrichtungen/Muud institutsioonid ja organid/Λοιπά θεσμικά όργανα και οργανισμοί/Other institutions and bodies/Autres institutions et organes/Druge institucije i tijela/Altre istituzioni e altri organi/Citas iestādes un struktūras/Kitos institucijos ir įstaigos/Más intézmények és szervek/Istituzzjonijiet u korpi ohra/Andere instellingen en organen/Inne instytucje i organy/Outras instituições e outros órgãos/Alte instituții și organe/Iné inštitúcie a orgány/Muut toimielimet ja elimet/Andra institutioner och organ

Други учасници/Otros participantes/Ostatní účastníci/Endvidere deltog/Andere Teilnehmer/Muud osalejad/Επίσης παρόντες/Other participants/Autres participants/Drugi sudionici/Altri partecipanti/Citi klātesošie/Kiti dalyviai/Más résztvevők/Partecipanti ohra/Andere aanwezigen/Inni uczestnicy/Outros participantes/Alți participanți/Ini účastníci/Drugi udeleženci/Muut osallistujat/Övriga deltagare
Miloš TODOROVIĆ (Deputy Head of Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the EU), Milica VUJOVIC ROYLE (Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the EU)

Секретариат на политическите групи/Secretaría de los Grupos políticos/Sekretariát politických skupin/Gruppernes sekretariat/Sekretariat der Fraktionen/Fraktsioonide sekretariaat/Γραμματεία των Πολιτικών Ομάδων/Secretariats of political groups/Secrétariat des groupes politiques/Tajništva klubova zastupnika/Segreteria gruppi politici/Politisko grupu sekretariāts/Frakciju sekretoriai/Képviseletcsoportok titkársága/Sekretariat gruppi politici/Fractiesecretariaten/Sekretariat Grup Politycznych/Secretariado dos grupos políticos/Secretariate grupuri politice/Sekretariát politických skupin/Sekretariat političnih skupin/Poliitisten ryhmien sihteeristö/De politiska gruppernas sekretariat	
PPE	Jan-Willem VLASMAN, Yoanna VERGILOVA, Jure BIZJAK
S&D	Joregn SIIL, Chrysantos KYPRIANIS, Francesca GARBAGNATI
Renew	Paul IVAN
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The Left	Charalampos KONTONIS
NI	Julianna HUSZAR-DEKANY

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Peter LANG, Anna PARFJONOVA	

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