

Delegation for relations with Serbia
The Chair

**STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
DELEGATION TO THE EU-SERBIA SAPC ALESSANDRA MORETTI**

Following the 15th meeting of the EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee, Chair Alessandra Moretti (S&D, IT) made the following statement:

We regret that it was not possible to reach agreement on a joint statement of the Co-Chairs of the SAPC.

People across Serbia, and we all, are deeply shaken by the terrible events which unfolded on 3 and 4 May and led to the loss of many innocent lives. Our Delegation visited the elementary school Vladislav Ribnikar to pay our respects and sign the book of condolences. We mourn that so many lives were stolen or changed forever in a matter of minutes, first at this school and shortly after in villages near Mladenovac.

Many citizens have since then been expressing their unease about the level of violence in Serbian society. They are anxious about the deteriorating discourse, both in public and in their parliament. So far seven protest marches have taken place. It is crucial that all act responsibly, so that citizens can continue to express their opinions peacefully, safely and without fear. We count on the police and the authorities to fulfil their duties and secure a safe space for these protests. We are aware of the demands of the protesters and have concluded that many of these demands concern issues that are also addressed in the resolution on Serbia that our Parliament adopted on 10 May this year.

The Serbian Parliament must remain the forum where the problems that the country is facing, but also the desired EU membership, are debated and decided upon seriously, orderly and respectfully. Unfortunately, the quality of the debates has been increasingly deteriorating in recent times. This is a worrying development, and a special responsibility lies with the political actors in the country. We call on all of them to live up to the challenges of the moment, to behave in a civilised way, refrain from hate speech and treat those who hold a different opinion with due respect. We are deeply concerned about the media freedom situation in Serbia and call on the media to act responsibly and objectively, and observe professional journalistic standards and ethics.

We are also deeply worried about the state of play of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and the latest developments in the north of Kosovo. We reiterate that all incidents need to be duly investigated and that there cannot be impunity. The European Parliament is following the situation very closely, and we urge all parties involved to do what it takes to de-escalate tensions immediately.

We want to stress once again that the European Parliament stands in solidarity with Ukraine and that we expect the same from all candidate countries, as EU membership is their declared

strategic objective and they therefore need to subscribe to our community of values. Regrettably, Serbia stands out as the only Western Balkan country that has so far not aligned with EU sanctions on Russia. As a result, its CFSP alignment has decreased significantly. This is also mirrored in our resolution of 10 May, in which we reiterate our position that ‘accession negotiations with Serbia should advance only if the country aligns with EU sanctions against Russia and makes significant progress on EU-related reforms’.

Finally, we also recognise some reforms which still need to be implemented as well as recent positive developments, which include economic progress in Serbia and the increase of EU support, which amounts to EUR 400 million per year over 2020-2022.