

## **4th Inter-parliamentary Meeting**

**19-20 May 2011**

**Pristina**

### **JOINT STATEMENT**

**by the Chairpersons of the Delegations**

At the conclusion of the 4th European Parliament - Kosovo Inter-parliamentary Meeting, held in Pristina on 19-20 May 2011, the two chairmen:

1. Welcomed the creation of the new government and the swift election of the new president following the verdict of the Constitutional Court; regretted however that these elections were accompanied by many irregularities; called on the new government to immediately restart work on the most important reforms;
2. Stressed the importance of visa liberalisation as a powerful incentive for Kosovo to undertake the necessary reforms but emphasized that it should not be referred to as a single key priority for Kosovo overshadowing a need to refer to European *aquis* in other fields like economy and social issues; assessing the current efforts of its institutions to fulfil the criteria for visa liberalization, stressed that Kosovo is the only country in the region whose citizens cannot travel freely to the EU and that this situation creates the feeling of isolation, in particular amongst young people, students and professionals dealing with EU related matters; considered that the European Commission should initiate the visa liberalisation dialogue and issue benchmarks without delay;
3. Welcomed the opening of the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade; underlined that the dialogue concerns issues which are important to improve everyday life for all the citizens of both sides and that it is in their vital interest that tangible results should be achieved promptly; underlined that a successful outcome would be a milestone for regional cooperation and to this end welcomed the fact that the first meetings have been carried out in a good and constructive atmosphere; stressed the importance of clearly communicating to the citizens the purpose and the outcome of the dialogue;

4. Welcomed the fact that general elections held on 12 December 2010 were the first since the country's independence to be carried out under the sole responsibility of the Kosovo Central Election Commission; however, underlined the serious concern with the high number of irregularities reported during the elections which affect the trust of the citizens in the democratic process; welcomed the quick formation of new committees for election reform, involvement of existing ones and the beginning of their work;
5. Welcomed the political will of all parties, including the government and the opposition, to advance the reform of the constitutional and electoral legislation; called on the government and the parliament to immediately start working on aligning the national legislation to international standards and encouraged them to make use of the support and expertise provided by the international community; underlined the utmost importance of investigating all the election-related irregularities and of prosecuting their perpetrators in a transparent and timely manner; called for the involvement of civil society organisations and media observers, on reporting to the wider public about the results of these investigations;
6. Welcomed the efforts to strengthen the parliamentary and the governmental institutions; in this respect, noted the role of the Kosovo Assembly and in particular the mechanisms guaranteeing the parliamentary scrutiny over the government and stressed the need to further develop its functions to allow the parliamentarians to carry out their mandates effectively and efficiently;
7. Stressed the importance of independent and professional judiciary and prosecutors, as an indispensable element of upholding the rule of law as well as a vital criterion on the path towards the European Union; underlined their particular importance in achieving success in the fight against corruption and organised crime seen by the citizens as major problems in the country, for example by adopting and implementing mechanisms allowing to freeze funds and seize of assets of criminals;
8. Recalled the important role which EULEX and local authorities play in the fight against corruption and organised crime; underlined its expectation that the mission would extend its functioning and establish more active presence in the North of Kosovo, working in quest for mutual support between the EULEX mission and the local and central authorities;
9. Welcomed declarations from the Kosovo authorities about their full support for verification of the allegations adopted in the PACE resolution of 25 January 2011 ("Marty Report") and expressed their trust in EULEX in preparing a thorough and complete investigation of the allegations, in particular by creating a reliable and advanced witness protection programme necessary to start the investigation;
10. Recalled that protection of ethnic and sexual minorities' rights is important for establishing a genuinely open, tolerant and democratic society; called in this respect on the authorities to actively engage in defending the values of a diverse and pluralistic society of which all ethnic and sexual minorities are an integral part;

11. Stressed the importance of the decentralisation process, vital both to create efficient local administrative structures close to the citizens and to achieve the aim of a multi-ethnic Kosovo; welcomed the ongoing transfer of competences from mother municipalities to the new municipalities; called on the government to establish a clear timetable for the new municipalities to take over all their responsibilities; expressed the need of the decentralization process in the North, in order to integrate the Serb community in Kosovo's institutional life; stressed that integration of all the communities shall be achieved in parallel through socio-economic development and not only through ethnically based decentralization;
12. Reminded that a vital civil society constitutes an essential part of the modern democracy; called on the authorities to engage in a debate with the wider civil society on the central issues facing Kosovo today and to consult the NGO representatives while drafting legislative proposals;
13. Underlined the importance of coherent economic policies and the need to avoid unsustainable budget deficits in order to maintain macroeconomic stability; invited the government to make use of the expertise of the international financial organisations, such as the IMF and the World Bank; noted with concern that Kosovo's trade deficit increased since 2008 with countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia; called on the EU to speed up the process regarding ATMs;
14. Expressed its concern about the recent developments in the Kosovo economy especially regarding the financial vulnerability represented by the twin deficit, namely the large current account deficit and the more modest, but still significant fiscal deficit; stated that the international competitiveness of the Kosovo economy is constrained by the fairly excessive wage increases in the public sector and the fairly slow pace of job creation; stressed that in order to avoid a deterioration of the financial situation, the Government of Kosovo is urged to conduct the negotiations with the IMF in good faith and bring them to a successful conclusion as soon as it is possible;
15. Noted with concern the difficult economic situation of Kosovo and the impact it has on the living standards of the citizens; underlined high unemployment, common to all the countries in the region, which does not allow Kosovo to reach its full economic potential and which leads to growing frustration among the citizens; called on the government to continue making efforts to protect the citizens, in particular the most vulnerable groups, from the effects of the financial crisis;
16. Called for the implementation of advanced and transparent public procurement procedures which will attract private foreign investments in the framework of Public-Private Partnerships;
17. Noted that the project for a lignite coal based power plant co-financed by the World Bank will allow the decommissioning of Kosovo A and rehabilitation of Kosovo B; called on the Kosovo authorities and the World Bank to take into account EU targets on CO2 emissions and consider renewable and energy efficiency plans;

18. Recalled the importance of regional cooperation in the process of EU integration of all the countries in the region; called for pragmatic solutions to fully include Kosovo in regional cooperation; in this respect, called for a swift resolution of the problems hampering the functioning of CEFTA; noted the positive effects that the resumption of trade with all its neighbours would have on Kosovo's economy and on the creation of new jobs; called for the full inclusion of Kosovo and the Western Balkans region in the development of the transport and energy networks which are going to be settled in the region, aiming at favouring both the internal development and the international connections necessary to boost the regional growth.