



EUROPEAN UNION – ALBANIA
JOINT CONCLUSIONS OF THE FIFTH HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE ON
THE KEY PRIORITIES



TIRANA, 24 MARCH 2015

VENUE: HOTEL TIRANA INTERNATIONAL

- 1) Prime Minister Edi Rama and Commissioner Johannes Hahn chaired the fifth Meeting of the High Level Dialogue (HLD) on the Key Priorities between Albania and the European Commission on 24 March 2015. The plenary session included the participation of Government Ministers, as well as of the opposition through the chair of the parliamentary committee for European integration. Representatives of independent institutions were also present.
- 2) HLD participants noted the assessment made in the Commission's Progress Report of the progress made by Albania in addressing the Key Priorities. It also acknowledged that challenges lying ahead require substantial and sustained efforts from Albania. Commissioner Hahn stressed that consolidating the reform momentum and delivering solid and sustainable reforms in the areas under the five Key Priorities is essential for progress towards EU-integration and will be subject to a close scrutiny by the EU.
- 3) Commissioner Hahn underlined that constructive work in Parliament between government and opposition is essential for the sustainability of Albania's EU reform process. He stressed the importance of respect for and smooth implementation of the December political agreement which put an end to the parliamentary boycott.
- 4) Commissioner Hahn welcomed the progress made by Albania on reform of the justice system, including the establishment of the ad hoc parliamentary committee on judicial reform. It was agreed that the country will inform the Commission on the work and achievements of the committee. The Commissioner also underlined the importance of an inclusive reform process under the guidance of the Venice Commission. He stressed that strengthening the independence, accountability and efficiency of the justice system is crucial for a strong rule of law and in particular for fighting organised crime and corruption. It was agreed that the judicial reform strategy 2014-2020 has to be finalised and preparation for possible sector budget support stepped up.
- 5) The HLD Participants noted that the Joint Working Groups on the five Key Priorities held their second meeting on 5 February 2015 in Tirana. The operational conclusions of the Joint Working Groups were endorsed as an integral annex to these conclusions. Commissioner Hahn underlined the importance of implementing the actions identified by the Joint Working Groups and encouraged further work in line with the measures defined in the Roadmap.
- 6) Commissioner Hahn welcomed the progress Albania has made in the area of public administration reform with the start of implementation of the Law on Civil Servants, and recalled that any legislative amendments should not undermine the objective of establishing a merit-based and depoliticised public administration. In this context, further improving data collection and monitoring is key. Albania was also encouraged to advance with timely

adoption of the Code of Administrative Procedure and finalisation of the Public Administration Reform Strategy for 2015-2020.

- 7) The HLD Participants underlined the importance of proper functioning and independence of key democratic institutions such as the parliament, the judiciary and regulatory authorities, and other independent institutions. They recalled that independent institutions play a key role in view of fulfilment of the political criteria and obligations under the EU *acquis*. It was agreed that Albania will act on the operational conclusions from the workshop on independent institutions of 3 February 2015 to ensure the professionalism and de-politicisation of independent institutions, as well as to ensure more stability, both in terms of their legal framework and human resources policy.
- 8) Commissioner Hahn welcomed the commitment of the Albanian government to further strengthen the fight against corruption, and in this context, to include the recommendations of the Assessment of the Anti-corruption Framework in the anti-corruption strategy and action plans.
- 9) The HLD Participants welcomed Albania's commitment in the fight against drug trafficking, and the increased number of operations to identify and eradicate cultivation of narcotics. They underlined that cooperation between law enforcement institutions needs to be strengthened to increase the efficiency of investigations.
- 10) Prime Minister Rama stressed that the commitment to EU Enlargement contributes to the modernisation of Albania and brings benefits to all Albanian citizens. In this context Albania acknowledged that the granting of candidate status serves as an encouragement for further resolute efforts in the reform process. Prime Minister Rama expressed the hope that the decision to move towards the opening of accession negotiations would be made through a credible and predictable process, on the basis of the fulfilment of the five key priorities.
- 11) Commissioner Hahn added that the Commission stands ready to continue supporting Albania's reform efforts with expertise and financial assistance. As regards the possible allocation of EU financial support for the provision of equipment for the law enforcement authorities, the Commissioner underlined the importance of further stepping up efforts in the fight against organised crime and corruption. This would imply, among others, a decisive action in removing remaining obstacles to conduct proactive and efficient investigations, including the adoption of *ad hoc* targeted amendments to, *inter alia*, the Criminal Procedure Code, and the effective use of financial investigations.
- 12) The Prime Minister confirmed his commitment to a constructive and sustainable political dialogue between the government and opposition which is vital for the sustainability of the reform process. It added that the establishment of the National Council for European Integration (NCEI), which will be chaired by the opposition, is an important step towards strengthening the inclusiveness of the process of EU-related reforms and committed to make it operational as soon as possible.
- 13) The Commission will continue to provide assistance and monitor progress in the implementation of reforms in the framework of the High Level Dialogue and Joint Working Groups on the key priorities. Albania will provide reports on the implementation of the Roadmap according to the timeframe and guidelines agreed with the Commission.

Annex: Conclusions of the Joint Working Groups on the Key Priorities held on 5 February 2015.