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Plenary sitting

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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the 2013 Progress Report on Albania
(2013/2879(RSP))

Nikola Vuljanić

on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

B7-0000/2013

**European Parliament resolution on the 2013 Progress Report on Albania
(2013/2879(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Presidency conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council of 19 and 20 June 2003 concerning the prospect of the Western Balkan countries joining the European Union,
 - having regard to the preliminary findings and conclusions of the International Election Observation Mission to Albania, 23 June 2013,
 - having regard to its resolutions of 22 November 2012 on Enlargement: policies, criteria and the EU's strategic interests¹ and of 13 December 2012 on Albania²,
 - having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas solid progress on the reform agenda and the 12 key priorities of the Commission's 2010 Opinion has been made in a satisfying manner; whereas challenges still persist and need to be addressed further on the path to EU membership;
- B. whereas the orderly conduct of the June 2013 parliamentary elections and peaceful transfer of power have made a positive impact on the country's democratisation process and improved its international perception;
- C. whereas the EU accession process has become a driving force for continuing reforms in Albania and citizens' support to EU accession remains particularly high;
- D. whereas the rights of minorities should be further advanced, especially the Roma minority;
- E. whereas social reforms are as important as political and legal ones; whereas Albania is striving to raise the level of social cohesion and needs a strong support by the EU to do so;
- F. whereas the enlargement policy needs to remain credible and achievements in reforms rewarded; whereas the candidate status for Albania is within reach, as it has delivered and continues to deliver concrete results in key reform areas;

General considerations

1. Commends all political forces for the overall orderly conduct of the recent parliamentary elections and the smooth transition of power; considers it essential to sustain genuine political dialogue and co-operation among all parties and to find compromises as a key to progress;

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0453.

² Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0508.

2. Underlines that European Union integration needs to be a real national effort and an inclusive project of all political forces and the civil society;
3. Notes the encouraging progress on the reform agenda and expresses confidence in Albania's potential, capacity and commitment to further progress on its European path; commends the adoption of key reform measures i.e. the revision of the parliamentary Rules of Procedure, the adoption of the Civil Service Law and the amendments to the High Court Law;
4. Welcomes the continued commitment to EU integration and modernisation of the country and delivering further reforms; calls on Albania to continue delivering results under the key priorities of the 2010 Opinion of the Commission, in particular as regards the respect for the rule of law, the fight against corruption and organised crime, also by establishing sustainable track records of implementation;
5. Calls on the Council to acknowledge the progress by granting Albania candidate status;

Political criteria

6. Calls for further efforts to strengthen the independence, accountability, impartiality and efficiency of the judicial system, including the High Council of Justice; urges the authorities to improve access to justice for all those in need also through awareness-raising activities by the State Commission for Legal Aid and the establishment of the envisaged legal aid local offices; calls on the authorities to reinforce the independence, efficiency and effectiveness of human rights structures, like the Ombudsman and the Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination;
7. Welcomes the commitment to fight corruption at all levels and stresses the need to strengthen political commitment, enhance institutional capacity and improve institutional coordination; calls on authorities to clarify the role of the Department of Internal Control and Anti-Corruption and to enhance capacity in the area of internal control mechanisms, to provide Joint Investigative Units with sufficient resources, to monitor the implementation of anti-corruption strategies, and to further develop track record results on investigations, prosecutions and convictions, including cases of high-level corruption;
8. Again stresses the need to enforce reforms in the fight against organised crime as well as to develop a solid track record of investigations, prosecutions and convictions at all levels;
9. Appreciates the progressive dialogue between civil society and the Government and stresses the need to maintain it and consolidate the achievements, both in the field of democracy and human rights and shaping legislative framework for new reforms;
10. Welcomes that minorities generally enjoy respect of their rights; invites competent authorities to further improve the climate of inclusion and tolerance for all the minorities in the country; calls in this respect for the acceleration of the implementation of the action plan for the Roma Decade to strengthen Roma inclusion and to review legislation in fighting discrimination against LGBT persons, including sanctions for hate speech, and to establish a track record in that regard;

11. While the media environment is pluralistic and diverse, is concerned with the political influence in the public media especially; calls for guaranteeing media pluralism and the independence of the regulatory authorities to further enhance freedom of expression and for ensuring transparency in media ownership and its funding;
12. Calls for further efforts to ensure the effective implementation of the strategy and action plan on property rights as this is one of the cornerstones of economic development;

Socio-economic reforms

13. Invites the competent authorities to deal in a resolute manner with poor law enforcement and tax collection as well as the large informal economy, which are all hampering the country's social cohesion and economic prospects; encourages the new government to enforce measures and legislation to promote employment;
14. Urges the government to guarantee respect for labour laws, both in private and public sectors, and to improve tripartite social dialogue both to enhance the role of trade unions and have wider support in implementing reform legislation;
15. Stresses that special attention should be paid to protection of children's rights and calls for investments in early learning, especially for children from marginalized groups, to prevent exclusion, and for targeted measures to ensure children care, nutrition and family support to prevent the transmission of poverty across generations; stresses the need to immediately improve the situation of minors in judicial procedure, in accordance with best European practices;

Regional cooperation

16. Welcomes the stabilizing role of Albania in the Western Balkans, in particular in its relations with those neighbouring countries where strong Albanian minority lives, and its contribution to religious harmony;
17. Welcomes the new government's rejection of nationalistic discourse and stresses Albania's pivotal role for fostering good neighbourly relations in the Western Balkans; encourages Albania to continue with its constructive regional stance;

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18. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Government and Parliament of Albania.