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**NOTE**

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from:	General Secretariat of the Council
to:	Delegations
Subject:	Summary record of the meeting of the European Parliament <b>Committee on Foreign Affairs</b> held in Brussels, 15 November 2012

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The meeting was chaired by Mr Salafranca (EPP, ES), Mr Kukan (EPP, SK).

**I. Exchange of views with Sebastián Piñera, President of Chile, on EU-Chile relations**

*(in association with the Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly and the Delegation to the EU-Chile Joint Parliamentary Committee)*

Introducing the debate, the Chair, Mr Salafranca (EPP, ES), noted the very good results achieved through the Association Agreement between the EU and Chile, a very ambitious agreement that had opened the way for a new generation of agreements. He also referred to the unwelcome possibility that China could replace the EU as the major partner of Chile.

President Piñera described the huge potential of the Latin American continent but called for its "renaissance" so as to eliminate the major problem in the region, i.e. poverty. He said that Chile's main challenge was indeed to become a developed country and to eradicate poverty by the end of the decade. To meet this objective, he insisted on the need to invest in education, health, social policy, and science and technology. Concerning Latin American

integration, he said that the EU was the template, but admitted that integration was not as developed as it should be. President Piñera hinted at Chile's commitment to the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which could become the largest free trade area in the world. But his final remarks were devoted to the upcoming EU-LAC Summit in Santiago (January 2013), expressing his wish that, on that occasion, the EU and Latin America would look together at how to influence global developments.

During the debate that followed, MEPs acknowledged that Chile had a number of positive features, such as the good state of its economy despite the world economic crisis (Mr Panayotov (ALDE, BU)). However, they also emphasised the existence of a number of social problems, notably the wide gap between rich and poor, widespread poverty in the south of the country, violence against women, and the discrimination of the Mapuche Indians. Ms Muñiz (S&D, ES) called on Chile to do more to build bridges among Latin American countries.

M. Piñera acknowledged the problems affecting Chilean society and gave an account of the numerous actions taken by the government to reduce inequalities, eliminate poverty, combat discrimination against women etc. In particular, he stressed investments made in areas such as science and technology, as well as measures taken to improve the education system. With regard to the Mapuche minority, he stated that there must be respect for their history and culture and that they should be given constitutional status and social protection, because they were part of Chilean identity.

## **II. Exchange of views with Aivo Orav, Head of EU Delegation to the fYRoM, on the situation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

Mr Orav gave an overview of the situation in the country. With regard to the reform progress, he stated that the High Level Accession Dialogue had created a new dynamism in the country, and that the government, the opposition and civil society were all enthusiastic about it. The government showed a strong commitment to meet the targets that were indicated in the framework of the dialogue and 70% of them had been fully or partially met. Mr Orav pointed out the concrete progress which had been achieved within the framework of the dialogue, such as legislation on conflict of interests, decriminalisation of defamation, electoral reform, etc. With regard to the latest political developments, he conceded that quite

a few incidents and episodes of interethnic violence had occurred over the last few months, but considered that the government was able to cope with these tensions. Finally, Mr Orav outlined the challenges fYRoM had to face, namely the upcoming local elections (with the temptation to use ethnic interests in the campaign), the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, and maintaining the reform momentum and the EU perspective.

Mr Vigenin (S&D, BU), on behalf of the standing rapporteur Mr Howitt (S&D, UK), reiterated that the EP supported the Commission's recommendation to open accession negotiations as a means to motivate the country to continue with the reform process. His assessment of the High Level Dialogue was positive, but as Mr Chatzimarkakis (ALDE, DE), Chair of the EP Delegation to the EU-fYRoM Joint Parliamentary Committee stressed, the Dialogue should in no way be considered as a substitute for accession talks. On the name issue, Mr Vigenin welcomed the Commission's position that resolution of the issue was not a precondition to start accession negotiations. He then raised the issue of the rights of ethnic Bulgarians in fYRoM, warning that the veto to the opening of accession negotiations could come from Bulgaria rather than from Greece.

Mr Preda (EPP, RO) expressed the concern that, despite the recommendation by the Commission, the opening of negotiations could be postponed again, and felt that the EP had to send a clear message on this issue. On the subject of the next elections, he raised the issue of those people who could not vote because they did not have biometric documents.

Mr Ilchev (ALDE, BU) pointed out that the tensions in relations between Bulgaria and fYRoM were not new but had been ongoing for the last 20 years. He stressed that Bulgarians in fYRoM were oppressed and had many problems in proving their identity.

Mr Orav replied that the EU delegation was following up the issue of biometric passports. He acknowledged that there were many tensions between fYRoM and Bulgaria, but the letter sent by the fYRoM Minister of Foreign Affairs to Bulgaria had created a good opportunity to deal with this issue.

The Chair announced that on 27 November the AFET committee would host the fYRoM Minister of Foreign Affairs.

### **III. Reports and opinions**

#### **a) 2012 Progress Report on Albania**

AFET/7/10693, 2012/2814(RSP)

Rapporteur: Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL)

The rapporteur announced that 140 amendments had been tabled and he presented the compromise amendments. The shadow rapporteurs from the S&D group and the Greens supported all of them, while the EPP group supported only nos 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8.

Mr Kukan (EPP, SK) expressed his scepticism about the situation in Albania and asked for further clarification regarding the progress achieved by the country. He also stressed that reforms not only had to be adopted, but also had to be implemented. Mr Vigenin (S&D, BU) shared these concerns. He said that the three pieces of legislation pending in parliament and upon which the granting of the candidate status depended were not receiving the parliamentary support needed for their adoption. He therefore called on the opposition as well as on the ruling parties to work together to find a compromise. Mr Vigenin added that, in his view, granting Albania candidate status would have a positive effect, in that this would be conducive to the holding of fair and free elections.

The Commission representative said that it was extremely important to give Albania a strong signal of support and encouragement for further reforms and their implementation.

#### **b) The integration of migrants, its effects on the labour market and the external dimension of social security coordination**

AFET/7/09933, 2012/2131(INI) COM(2012)0153

Rapporteur for the opinion: Cristian Dan Preda

Responsible: EMPL\* – Nadja Hirsch (ALDE)

Mr Preda (EPP, RO) presented his draft opinion and stated his position on the amendments tabled. Ms Gomes (S&D, PT) pointed out the necessity of making a distinction between migrants and refugees.

### **IV. Debriefing by Andrey Kovatchev on the joint AFET/SEDE/DROI Delegation to UNGA on 28 - 31 October 2012**

*This item was postponed.*

## **V. Debriefing by Kristian Vigenin on the joint AFET/SEDE Delegation to Serbia on 29 - 31 October 2012**

Mr Vigenin (S&D, BU) debriefed the AFET committee on the visit to Serbia and Kosovo, which was organised in order to follow developments on the ground in the framework of the preparation of the EP reports. He stressed that the timing had been particularly opportune, as the visit had taken place 100 days after the formation of the new Serbian government, just a few days after publication by the Commission of its progress report and feasibility study, and a few hours ahead of Ashton's and Clinton's visit to the region. He said that the delegation had met high-level interlocutors (with the exception of the Serbian President, who had been on an official visit abroad). Mr Vigenin said that the conclusion that the delegation drew from the visit was that the Serbian government was serious in its commitments, despite the initial EU scepticism. The dialogue with Pristina was continuing and the issue of EU integration remained high on the political agenda. Concerning Kosovo, the government seemed encouraged by the feasibility study and was willing to deliver. Mr Vigenin reported that PM Thaci had warned the EU not to be too optimistic on the Serbian government because expectations could be disappointed. The EP delegation had been able to see for itself that the situation in the north remained problematic.

Mr Duff (ALDE, UK) said that, even though it might seem contradictory, the new Serbian government was more capable of making progress on Kosovo than its predecessor because it had started from nationalistic positions. Concerning the EU mission EULEX, he warned that the spirit behind it was at risk because of the situation in northern Kosovo. Mr Panzeri (S&D, IT) stressed that the EP should push for resolution of the problem in northern Kosovo and for the institutional set up in the country to be strengthened. Ms Lunacek (Greens/ALE, AT) emphasised the willingness of the Kosovo government to go ahead with the dialogue with Belgrade. She warned about the risk of holding early elections if the electoral code were not reformed. Responding to those who spoke of Kosovo as a failed state, she argued that at least partial responsibility for that lay with the EU and its Member States that remained divided on Kosovo and did not second qualified individuals to EULEX.

## **VI. Next meeting(s)**

- 26 November 2012, 15.00 – 18.30 (Brussels)
- 27 November 2012, 9.00 – 12.30 and 15.00 – 18.30 (Brussels)