



NEWSLETTER

MFA issues the first Newsletter



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in an attempt to be closer to the public, issues the first Newsletter on diplomatic activity. This Newsletter, aims at offering a snapshot view on the recent activities, events and engagements of the Albanian foreign services, highlighting the

most important moments for the reader. "Newsletter" is a new project designed by Directorate of Public Diplomacy that will come to you in electronic version periodically once in three months.

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Strategic partnership: A model for regional cooperation

Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the developments in Ukraine

Albania's candidature to the Human Rights Council

Ministry of Foreign Affairs announces the winning logo of Albania's Candidature to the Human Rights Council

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Strategic partnership: A model for regional cooperation



The year 2014 coincides with desired expectations and our common destination. Albania and Kosovo have gone through a laborious path and through the Prizren meeting they are materializing the will, the wish and the commitment of many generations to initiate common projects of strategic and long-term importance. Prizren symbolizes for us the meeting point of long historical and state-building efforts as well as the city of religious and ethnic co-existence.

Appreciating the unique importance of our relationship and the vital cooperation between our two countries, on 11 January was held the first joint meeting of our two governments.

This proves the Euro-Atlantic orientation of our two countries and the need to address common issues in a more concerted manner. This new form of cooperation between Albania and Kosovo is of strategic importance for us, serves as a stabilizer for the region and strengthens our common European future.

By promoting such joint enterprises, Albania and Kosovo give their direct contribution to peace, security and stability in the region. At the same time, both our countries shall serve as promoters of the further Europeanization of our region.

With this in mind, the Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership and Cooperation signed by Prime Ministers Edi Rama and Hashim Thaçi, materializes the mutual and long-term commitment to transform our bilateral relationship into a new model, inspired by best practices in the region and beyond.

The first joint government meeting drew the guiding lines of cooperation in various areas such as foreign policy and security, justice, economy, energy and transportation, education and culture. It also brought forth concrete agreements that prepare the further anchoring of our countries into European waters.

Certainly, these policies aim at improving the daily lives of our citizens, for generations to come, according to the common objective of the two Albanian states to become part of the European Union. Strategic projects in infrastructure and energy, such as the connection of Kosovo with the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) or the construction of the "energy highway" shall give new

impetus to the economic and social development of both our countries.

The structured dialogue among Benelux countries has acted as an inspiration for us, which is in itself an indication that we have taken the appropriate steps towards our common EU path. This model will not only serve the cooperation between our two countries, but shall also act as a reference point for further cooperation amongst other countries in the region.

From now on, the structured dialogue shall replace the model that has been absent for such a long time. It is important to mention that no fellow Albanians are left out of attention by the Albania-Kosovo structured dialogue. Those who were not physically present in the government to government meeting were definitely part of the discussion and of the agreements that were signed.

It is important to remember that we need to transform the freedom we have gained with so many efforts throughout the centuries - thanks to the full support of our strategic partners, the US and EU - into a positive energy and give our citizens the opportunity to build policies and implement instruments that in the end shall be translated into improved living standards. We feel confident that we have charted the future. This is just the beginning of a new chapter.

By:

Mr. *Ditmir Bushati* Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, and

Mr. *Enver Hoxhaj* Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo

Protocol Calendar

January 2014

President of Bulgaria Mr. Rosen Plevneliev visits Albania

Prime Minister of Croatia Mr. Zoran Milanovic visits Albania

Prime Minister of Slovakia Mr. Robert Fico visits Albania

February 2014

Minister Bushati attends All ministerial in Athens

Minister Bushati visits Qatar

Speaker of Kososvo parliament Mr. Jakup Krasniqi visits Albania

Executive Secretary of UNECE Mr. Sven Alkalaj visits Albania

Foreign Minister of Greece Mr. Evangeleos Venizelos visits Albania

March 2014

President of Italy Mr. Giorgio Napolitano visits Albania

Foreign Minister of UAE Mr. Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan visits Albania

Prime Minister of Romania Mr. Victor Ponta visits Albania

Director-general of UNESCO Mrs. Irina Bokova visits Albania

April 2014

OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Foreign Minister of Switzerland Mr. Didier Burkhalter will visit Albania



Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the developments in Ukraine

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania condemns the military intervention of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, in defiance of the norms of international law and in violation of territorial sovereignty and integrity of the country.

Condemning the political actions that aim to legitimize the use of force, the MFA expresses its staunch support to the territorial sovereignty, integrity and unity of Ukraine, and the right of the people of Ukraine to define their future without external interferences.

The MFA calls for respect of international law and signed agreements by avoiding the use of force, which generates severe destabilizing effects for Ukraine and international security, and encourages all parties to return to political dialogue, as the legitimate means for normalizing the situation.

The MFA praises the commitment of Ukrainian authorities with regards to respect for democratic values, human rights and rights of minorities and highlights the

importance of a comprehensive political process that fulfills the democratic aspirations of the people of Ukraine.

The MFA strongly supports the immediate deployment of international observers, from both the OSCE and the United Nations, to Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, in order to provide the international community with the opportunity of receiving real-time, transparent updates on the ongoing situation.

The MFA fully complies with the statement of NATO and other strategic allies and has expressed its will by joining the stance of the EU member countries during the plenary meeting of OSCE and during the meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe that were held respectively in Vienna and Strasbourg on Monday, March 3.

ALBANIA'S CANDIDATURE TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 2015-2017

Albania, an iconic case of how a society has managed within two decades to embark into one of the most remarkable transformations, has presented its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the term 2015-2017.

Once one of the most hermetically closed societies under a primitive dictatorship that lasted almost five decades, Albania is now a leading model in the region in respecting and protecting Human Rights. Albanian society has become a living example of what such a profound change means for the life of every of its citizens. Bringing this experience in the Council is a major motivation to present this candidature.

A particularly rich experience in the forefront of the promotion of regional peace and security, human rights and economic growth, in the domestic and international arena, constitutes yet another strong motivation for the presentation of this candidature. Furthermore, given its geographical location, the multicultural legacy and an exemplary tolerant nature its society, Albania has continuously been a fervent promoter of dialogue, respect and harmonious coexistence between different religions, cultures and civilizations. Albania will be proud to bring and share this record in the work of the Council.

How did Albania achieve this?

Right after the establishment of the democratic system, in early '90s, the Government of the Republic of Albania assumed an entirely new approach in the protection and promotion of human rights. This approach has been a challenging revolution in multidirectional levels: improvement of the legal framework starting from a new Constitution which devotes a whole chapter to the protection of human rights; establishment of internal monitoring and evaluation mechanisms including the Ombudsman; promotion of public awareness and inclusion of human rights into the educational system, adoption of

a strategy of inclusiveness of non-governmental organizations and actors in the promotion of human rights along with the staging of open debates among national and international actors. This has definitely placed the human rights issues in the very heart of the political and social system in Albania.

This transformation has naturally brought Albania to comply with the international human rights obligations. In doing so, a thorough major legislative reform has been carried out to bring the national legislation in compliance with the relevant international requirements. In this respect, Albania has submitted periodic reports to the UN bodies on the implementation of the main human rights Conventions, under its legal obligations as a state party.

Albanian perspective on Human Rights.

In Albania, the respect and promotion of Human Rights is considered a process rather than a product. This is due to the dynamics that accompany the development of the society associated with a vivid discourse among different groups of interests within Albania and those in the international institutions and multilateral interactions. Human Rights are also seen as a crosscutting component in a large specter of institutional reforms from judiciary to policing, from legislative to education, from employment to infrastructure.

Albania will continue to meet all its obligations in the human rights field, by attaching priority to the a continued increase of public awareness, inclusion and harmonization of work among actors from the civic society, the Government and private sector. NGOs are and will remain actively operating in this field.

Albania will continue to promote human rights based approach through a better integration of Human Rights, both in the decision-making process and policy implementation.

The respect for and the practical promotion of minority human rights remains a priority of the domestic policy for the Albanian Government. Big strides have been already made in the field of minority education, conduct of their own rights in the spheres of political, economic, social, cultural and religious life.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs announces the winning logo of Albania's Candidature to the Human Rights Council

Albania has submitted its candidacy for the Human Rights Council, one of the most important bodies of the United Nations. Elections for new members for the term 2015-2017 will be held in autumn 2014. In the upcoming months until the holding of elections, there is a campaigning period where Albania must do its best to achieve the required number of supports. This campaign, which is led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also requires a representative logo, which will be used in all official publications and communications of Albania in the world.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in order to increase public participation and assessing the contribution coming from civil society, launched an open competition where art design students, NGOs engaged in promoting human rights, graphic design studios were invited to participate by presenting their ideas and design on the logo of Albania's candidacy to the Human Rights Council in 2015- 2017.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is pleased to inform that in the closing of the competition for the design of the representative logo of Albania's candidature to the Human Rights Council 2015-2017, the ad hoc committee established to evaluate the submitted proposals, has selected the logo designed by McCann Tirana.

The logo embodies the essence of candidature of Albania to the Human Rights Council. In its heart, in the symbols of Albanian flag the eagle and colors are formed by the silhouette of two dynamic figures reaching for higher standards in Human Rights. Position and their dynamics

suggest Albanian aspiration towards higher standards in the field of human rights. The logo carries a youthful, contemporary and dynamic style.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs would like to thank all participants in this open contest for the proposals and expressed submitted during this open contest, which speaks for the wide interest of Albanian society in issues related to human rights.

Agreements signed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the last 3 months:

With the UAE

1. Agreement for the avoidance of double taxation and prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and capital between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the United Arab Emirates" (UAE) ,Tirana, 13 March 2014.

2. "Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment of a Joint Cooperation Commission between the United Arab Emirates and the Republic of Albania, Tirana, 13 March 2014.

With Kosovo

Action Protocol between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo on the consular representation of the Republic of Albania in Canberra and the Republic of Kosovo in Milan, Pristina, 14 March 2014.

With Croatia

Agreement between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the Republic of Croatia, "on European Partnership ", Zagreb, 21 March 2014.

Institutions

Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Urban Development and Tourism on cooperation in promoting Albanian tourism, February 24, 2014.

Albania's regional initiatives

Situated at the intersection of the Balkan Peninsula, Central Europe and the Mediterranean, the Adriatic-Ionian basin has a geostrategic position. Historically, the separated spaces of national sovereignty on one hand and the further regional integration on the other have exerted centrifugal and centripetal forces, which are still active. Despite fundamental improvements in terms of democratic stability, today our region faces two different geopolitical dynamics: progress, in terms of the European integration, and strengthening of the Mediterranean dimension of the EU.

Since June 2013, Albania holds the one-year Chairmanship of the Adriatic - Ionian Initiative (AII), an initiative of regional cooperation among eight states, four of which are EU member states (Italy, Croatia, Greece, Slovenia) and four "not yet " (Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and Bosnia - Herzegovina). Under this initiative, cooperation between these eight states is developed and deepened by touching key areas such as tourism, culture, cooperation at university level, small and medium enterprises, transport, cooperation in the maritime field and environmental protection.

But this cooperation has encountered several obstacles, among which the most prominent is the variety of administrative and organizational practices at local and regional level. Moreover, regardless of geographic affiliation, the lack of close ties that have hitherto existed between the Adriatic and the Mediterranean basins reflects the lack of a common geopolitical approach of the Adriatic countries to the Mediterranean, in general.

the Mediterranean, in general.

Taking impetus from previous successful practices as the strategies for macro - regions of the Danube and Baltic countries, the EU has responded to these challenges by strengthening its Mediterranean dimension. This dimension is embedded in the strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian macro - region (EUSAIR), expected to be adopted by the EU in 2014.

In accordance to obligations arising from this strategy and macro - regional approach of the EU, Albania drafted the priorities of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative, which are the improval of the economic situation of the region, promotion of the touristic dimension and cooperation in order to enhance the quality of living conditions.

In this context, we have undertaken numerous consultations with the European Union and other regional actors, with the ultimate goal of creating a synergy between the program of the AII Chairmanship and the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian macro -region. Albania worked to provide full support from the European Commission in order to organize the meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (AII), at the same time as the conference on the Strategy of the European Union, which took place on 6-7 February 2014 in Athens, during the Greek Presidency of the EU.

The outcome of this meeting was the "Athens Declaration", confirming the full commitment of eight states to the approval and implementation of the EU strategy for the macro - region, as the right instrument to

economic development and social - territorial cohesion in our region. This instrument is the embodiment of a joint work of EU and regional countries to create an integrated development package that combines infrastructure, energy, coast management and transport.

The "Athens Declaration", proposed during the Albanian Chairmanship, set before us new responsibilities related to the drafting of specific projects as well as the harmonization of administrative practices for a long-term and sustainable development, taking advantage of the interaction of public and private actors through financial support by EU programs.

All this relates utterly to the orientation of Albania's foreign policy in the region. Strengthening and improving the regional infrastructure network, according to the main axis of movement and exchange, and connecting it to the European and Eurasian energy network infrastructure, will have a positive impact on the region. It will make the region safer, increase its geopolitical dimension, expand its market and give impetus to the interest for foreign investments in the region.

Albania believes that this strategy can be implemented in the most efficient way through existing instruments. The strategy has a direct impact on the economy of the country, thus enabling the achievement of required standards for EU membership. This approach is clearly expressed in the motto of the Albanian Chairmanship of the Adriatic - Ionian Initiative, "Closer to each other, closer to the EU."

By: *Ditmir Bushati* Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania