

# TELEGRAM DIPLOMATIK

## ALBANIAN MFA NEWSLETTER

### EU Council grants Albania candidate country status

On June 27, 2014, the EU Council granted Albania the status of candidate country, as recognition of the achievements in the integration related reforms.

We consider this act as the beginning of a new phase that requires far deeper reforms in order to prepare the country for the accession negotiations. The Government is committed to move forward, considering that only a profound and modernizing transformation will make the Albanians' aspiration come true.

The Council's decision is good news for the region as well. It confirms the engagement of the EU in the Western Balkans, and gives to its people the sense of a common future, thus promoting the spirit of cooperation, all-inclusiveness and good neighbourly relations.

Albania plays and will continue to play a dynamic and constructive role in maintaining regional stability and fostering further cooperation with the other countries of the region. At the same time, Albania is grateful to the European political forces that believe in the benefits of the enlargement process and encourage and support the integration process of the Western Balkans in the EU.

#### Issue No. 2. JUNE 27, 2014

- Albania granted EU candidate country status
- Europe's Security Catalyst
- Council of Foreign Ministers of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative meets in Brussels
- MFA organizes "Meet the Albanian Ministers"
- Highlighting some of the Minister's visits abroad
- Albania takes over the Presidency of SEECF
- The bust of Ismail Qemali is unveiled in Bucharest
- Cultural Diplomacy



Minister Bushati chairs the sixth meeting of the SA Council between Albania and the EU

## Europe's Security Catalyst

by Ditimir Bushati, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania  
published on Project Syndicate on April 18, 2014



Russia's annexation of Crimea and ongoing threats against Ukraine are a reminder to the countries of Eastern Europe, particularly those in the Balkans, of NATO's centrality to national – indeed, European – security. But maximizing NATO's effectiveness requires deeper engagement with and among its most vulnerable members.

If any country understands the value of such engagement, it is Albania. Before the Berlin Wall fell almost 25 years ago, Albania boasted of its self-reliance, and, spurred by relentless propaganda, vilified everyone outside its borders. Then the Iron Curtain was lifted, and Albanians realized that the outside world had not spent decades plotting to invade their country. Building some 300,000 bunkers to repel an invasion by the West had perhaps been more than a little paranoid.

Albania's perceptions of NATO underwent a similar transformation: the imperialist aggressor became a champion of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law. Albanians realized that, through collective defense, the Alliance preserved Europe's peace and security.

Immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the specter of disintegration loomed over the Balkan countries. Then, in 1995, NATO intervened to establish and preserve peace in Bosnia. And, four years later, NATO stopped the genocide in Kosovo. Since then, NATO has undergone three rounds of enlargement – always eastward – with Albania and Croatia being the

last countries to join, five years ago.

But, despite these achievements, there is no time for complacency. Russian President Vladimir Putin's annexation of Crimea, undertaken in open contempt of international law, has put European security back at the top of the global agenda, serving as a stark reminder that a free, cooperative, and peaceful Europe – the dream of countless Europeans since the 1950's – remains a distant prospect.

Making matters worse, NATO engagement in the Western Balkans – a fragmented region that continues to struggle with issues of statehood, the rule of law, and inequality – remains inadequate, putting an already unstable part of Europe at considerable risk. Despite various regional cooperation mechanisms, the countries of the Western Balkans remain insufficiently engaged with one another. While they are not yet in a position to be considered for European Union membership, neither Europe nor NATO can afford to ignore the challenges that they face.

The fact is that security black holes in Europe are growing darker and deeper. This, together with conflicting enlargement agendas, has created conditions whereby international law and basic democratic principles can be flouted with virtual impunity – as Putin's actions in Ukraine have clearly demonstrated. It is not only Europe's security interests that are under threat, but also its values.

*Continues on page 3*

It is time for NATO to acknowledge its indispensable role – not as a security blanket, but as a security catalyst in Europe that responds to concerns about existing security gaps, many of which are having serious social and economic consequences. Postponing tough decisions regarding the Alliance’s future role and capabilities, or offering half-hearted cooperation, will not work.

More generally, Alliance members must recognize that NATO-protected territory has become a competitive security zone. Adapting to this new reality will be the main challenge at the NATO summit in Wales this September.

Fortunately, the Alliance seems to be moving in this direction. Recently, after an emergency meeting in Brussels, US President Barack Obama announced that a “regular NATO presence” would be established in the “vulnerable” member countries of Eastern Europe – an important step toward bolstering NATO’s role in the region.

But much remains to be done. For starters, NATO should build on its “open door policy,” which states that

NATO would welcome any European country capable of fulfilling the commitments and obligations of membership, to institutionalize further its relationships in Eastern Europe.

Albania has repeatedly expressed support for the policy, which we view as vital to promoting democratic development and good neighborly relations – and thus to enhancing national and regional security and stability. In a region that is not yet firmly anchored in structures like NATO and the EU, ethnic, territorial, or religious divisions could have catastrophic consequences. Deeper integration into NATO – achieved through a credible engagement process, instead of short-term reassurances – would help to mitigate this risk.

Today, NATO, the EU, and the Western Balkan countries share the need for more comprehensive, rules-rich cooperation mechanisms that account for the political, economic, and military components of security, and that are backed by the necessary financial commitments and instruments. No effort should be spared in reinforcing NATO. Otherwise, Putin’s annexation of Crimea could be only the beginning.

## Council of Foreign Ministers of the **Adriatic-Ionian Initiative** holds meeting in Brussels

On May 13, 2014, the Adriatic and Ionian Council of Ministers, which is the decision making body of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, held its meeting in Brussels.

This meeting was held under the Albanian Chairmanship of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative for the period of June 2013 - May 2014.

Minister Bushati, in his capacity as chair of the meeting, provided a detailed description of all the activities held during the Albanian Chairmanship, focusing on the special meeting of Foreign Ministers held on February 6, 2014, which ran parallel with the activity organized by the European Commission for the first six months of 2014.

“The Special Meeting of the AIC made a necessary connection between the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative and the EUSAIR Strategy, enabling the full support of Member States for this important European strategy.”

The Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, held on April 28, 2014 in Tirana, marked the introduction of the parliamentary dimension in a serious commitment on the EUSAIR Strategy. The conference decided to formalize this commitment by establishing *ad hoc* delegations of all member countries on issues related to All and EUSAIR.

The Meeting of All Ministers of Foreign Affairs adopted a special political statement, named the *Brussels Declaration*. At the end of the meeting, the All Chairmanship was transferred to Bosnia and Herzegovina during a ceremony.

## MFA organizes "Meet the Albanian Ministers"

In the framework of the official visit of the Austrian Federal President, H.E. Mr. Heinz Fischer, who was accompanied by a group of Austrian business representatives (70 businesses), the MFA held in its premises an activity titled "Meet the Albanian Ministers".

The activity, which reaffirmed the MFA role not only as a promoter of economic interests of the country, but also as a communication bridge between foreign businesses and the Albanian government, aimed at promoting potentials, opportunities and advantages that Albania offers in various fields of economy, such as tourism, transport and infrastructure, energy and industry, etc.

Conceived as a meeting which put together Austrian potential investors and Albanian Ministers, respectively the Minister of Urban Development and Tourism, Ms. Eglantina Gjermeni, the Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, Mr. Edmond Haxhinasto and the Minister of Energy and Industry, Mr. Damian Gjiknuri, the meeting enabled participants to listen individually to the presentations of each minister and ask questions about topics of interest.

In his welcome speech, Minister Bushati, while assessing businesses as a promoter and main actor of the economic development processes, commended this activity as an opportunity to strengthen the close historical ties between our two countries, as well as promote Albania as a destination for foreign investments.

Minister Bushati praised the friendly relations with Austria and its historical role, since the establishment of the



Albanian state, through its support for Albania's independence and its contributions to the restoration of the rule of law, the establishment of basic infrastructure, strengthening of the institutional structure, Albania's integration process, as well as through significant investments in economic sectors.

After providing a general overview of the investment climate in Albania and the measures undertaken by the government to improve the economic situation in the country, Minister Bushati reminded the audience that the great Austrian experience in terms of environmental sustainability and renewable energy, in *e-government* projects, tourism and other areas, would help and guide Albania in terms of service, diversification, customer service, nature and the environment, with regard to the development of sustainable tourism, as an important source of national wealth.

The floor was further taken by other ministers, who focused on specific area and issues of economy, as well as investment opportunities.

## Official visits of the **Minister** of Foreign Affairs abroad:

On May 4, 2014, Minister Bushati made a tour of visits to EU countries, where he held series of meetings in Austria, Poland and Greece. In the framework of his visit to Austria, Minister Bushati held a bilateral meeting with the Austrian Foreign Minister, H.E. Mr. Sebastian Kurz, and attended the proceedings of the 124<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. During his visit in Warsaw, Minister Bushati met with his counterpart, H.E. Mr. Radoslaw Sikorski, and was received in a meeting by the Deputy Speaker of the Polish Parliament. The tour was concluded in Greece, where Minister Bushati attended the EU – Western Balkans Ministerial Conference.

Also, Minister Bushati paid an official visit to Israel on June 22-23, 2014, a working visit to Slovenia on June 16, 2014, an official visit to Denmark on May 26, 2014 and a working visit to Slovakia on May 15, 2014.

## ALBANIA takes over the Presidency of the SEECP

This year will be particularly important for the regional foreign policy of Albania. From June 2014, till June 2015, our country holds the Chairmanship-in-Office (CiO) of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP).

Our CiO of the SEECP represents a significant political and diplomatic endeavor, and not only for the MFA structures. Such relevance derives from the role and importance of the SEECP itself, as the main political forum of dialogue and cooperation in SEE, created and owned by the member states, based on the principles of regional ownership, all-inclusiveness and regional responsibility.

The SEECP was created in June 1996 and has 12 participating members, namely: Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Moldavia and Rumania.

The SEECP has as its core objectives the strengthening of good neighborly relations among countries in South-East Europe and its transformation in a zone of peace, security, stability and cooperation. The SEECP seeks to create the political and economic conditions for integration in European and Euro-Atlantic structures; the development and implementation of common strategies for regional stability, prevention of crisis and conflicts and support for peaceful operations undertaken by the international community.

The Process is based on a key document, namely the *“Charter on good neighborly relations, stability, security and cooperation in South-Eastern Europe”*. In the SEECP framework and activities, all the decisions are taken by consensus.

Apart from political cooperation, materialized at frequent meetings of Heads of State/Government, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Political Directors of MFAs, a very important aspect of the SEECP is the intensification of regional sectorial cooperation in relevant areas like: parliamentary, justice and home affairs, fight against organized crime and corruption, transport, energy, tourism, culture, agriculture, academic institutions and NGOs.



Albania will serve its year as Chair of the SEECP during a crucial period for the present and future of the organization.

Our Chairmanship will be guided by the principles of the SEECP Charter, the SEECP Summit Declarations, and decisions taken by the Ministers of member countries. Our Chairmanship will follow the programs and activities of previous chairs, cooperating closely with the SEECP Troika and the RCC Secretariat, as well as with all SEECP members.

### The Albanian CiO will focus on three main pillars:

- Strengthening the regional role of the SEECP.
- Promoting dialogue among members, with a view to improving the functioning of the SEECP.
- Consolidating the sectorial relevance of the SEECP.

The Albanian Chairmanship will aim to focus on fields of shared interest for the SEECP participating States, promoting the principles good-neighborliness and all-inclusiveness. Albania aims for concrete results that will benefit the whole region.

In this regard, the CiO foresees 8-9 high level Ministerial meetings and more than 15 other activities at expert level. Many activities in the program will be organized by civil society, the academic community and the private sector.

Albania is determined to play an *Active, Moderate and Constructive* role in the regional cooperation process. For us, regional cooperation and good neighborly relations are pillars that guarantee peace, security and stability in the region, as well as preconditions to the region's Euro-Atlantic integration.

In our regional foreign policy, we are guided by three core principles: constructiveness in the relations with our neighbors, regional ownership and all-inclusiveness.

Albania takes the CiO of the SEECP for the second time, the first being in 2001-2002.



## The bust of Ismail Qemali unveiled in Bucharest

On June 20, 2014, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ditmir Bushati attended and held a speech at the unveiling ceremony of the bust of Ismail Qemali, the founder of the Albanian state, in Bucharest.

After more than a century, the bust of Ismail Qemali was placed in the center of Bucharest, where the journey of Albania's national independence began. The realization and placement of the bust were made possible thanks to the cooperation of the Embassy with the Municipality of Bucharest, under the auspices of Foreign Minister Ditmir Bushati, the Albanian Ambassador to Romania, Mr. Sami Shiba and the Mayor of Bucharest, Mr. Sorin Mircea Oprescu.

The ceremony was attended by the State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, Mr. Gheorghe Ciamba, the Secretary of State at the Ministry of Culture, Ms. Irina Casal, the former President of Romania, H.E. Mr. Ion Iliescu, Romanian officials of state institutions, the Parliament, the Senate, representatives of religious communities, civil society, arts, business and academia representatives, intellectuals and friends of Albania, journalists and Romanian media representatives, as well as the Albanian Diaspora living in Romania.

The Mayor of Bucharest and Minister Bushati praised the very good level of relations between Albania and Romania, the historical friendship ties between the two peoples, the contribution of Albanians in Romania to the preparation and declaration of independence and their role in sustaining bridges of friendship and cultural dialogue between our countries, which date back to the National Renaissance.

Minister Bushati stated that the work of Ismail Qemali and all his contemporaries is clear proof of our country's state formation and state-building abilities.

Minister Bushati extended his thanks to the President of the "EUROSIG" company, Mr. Kadri Morina, who financially supported the crafting of Ismail Qemali's bust, a work of the sculptor Artan Hajdari.

## Kosovo becomes member of the Venice Commission

On June 11, 2014, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe reviewed Kosovo's request for membership to the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) of the Council of Europe.

The Committee of Ministers decided to accept the request of the Republic of Kosovo to become member of this important institution of the CoE, renowned for its expertise in issues related to constitutional and electoral law. The decision for the accession of Kosovo to the Venice Commission marks the successful coronation of the efforts of the Government of Kosovo to come closer to the Council of Europe, and is a result of the continuous support of the majority of CoE member states.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania welcomes this important decision and expresses its conviction that the accession of Kosovo to the Venice Commission will play an important role for the further consolidation of democracy and human rights for all citizens of Kosovo, thus supporting Kosovo's European perspective.

## Kosovo gets SEECF invitation

Minister Bushati welcomed the invitation for participation of Kosovo representatives to the SEECF, by stating that "It is time for Kosovo to be a full-fledged participant in all activities of the organization, to realize, in practice, the principle of all-inclusiveness in regional cooperation. The absence of Kosovo in regional initiatives makes the process of regional cooperation deficient. Kosovo's participation in such forums would be a good contribution to the normalization of relations and confidence building in the region."

## Cultural DIPLOMACY



### Celebrating Europe Day in Tirana

On the occasion of Europe Day, on May 5, 2014, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, supported “*The First Time*” ballet performance at the Theatre of Opera and Ballet in Tirana.

Because Europe Day is an annual celebration of peace and unity in Europe, this project, an idea of dancers Kledi Kadiu and Anbeta Toromani, under the artistic direction of Gentian Doda, aimed to bring on stage some of the best Albanian dancers living and performing in various European countries.

The performance received great attention and positive reviews in the media, as a powerful project involving different ballet figures in a single gala event, conveying particular emotions to the spectator through pieces ranging from neoclassical to modern, with a flair of Albanian folklore.



### Carnegie Hall in New York echoes with the sounds and voices of Albanian classical music

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Albania to the UN organized at Carnegie Hall in New York an event titled “*An Evening with Albanian Classical Music*”. The event was attended by representatives of the United Nations diplomatic corps, officials of New York City, as well as key figures from NYC life, friends of Albania and representatives of the Albanian community in the USA.



### The establishment of tourist information corners at Albanian diplomatic missions starts with Prishtina

In cooperation with the Albanian National Tourism Agency, the MFA has started the opening of “Visit Albania” tourism information corners in all its diplomatic missions in the world. This forward looking step was symbolically taken first in Prishtina.



### Diplomatic “Garten Fest” in Vienna

On 13 June 2014 the Board of Vienna Economic Forum together with the Ambassadors part of the traditional meeting between Adriatic Sea and the Black Sea organized the “*Garten Fest*”. This event is seen as a yearly culinary and musical journey through the countries of the Region and is held in the garden of the Diplomatic Academy. Albanian embassy, along with the other participating embassies spared no effort to indulge the guests with traditional culinary specialties.



### Commemoration ceremony for Colonel Thomson in the Hague

On Monday, June 16, 2014, the dedication ceremony of a special rose for Colonel Thomson was held in the Rose Garden of the Peace Palace. Colonel Thomson lost his life on June 15, 1914, while part of the first Dutch Peacekeeping Mission in Albania