



TELEGRAM DIPLOMATIK

ALBANIAN MFA NEWSLETTER

➤ Second joint meeting of the governments of **Albania** and **Kosovo** takes place in **Tirana**



In the framework of the strategic partnership between the government of the Republic of Albania and the government of the Republic of Kosovo, sanctioned last year in Prizren, the Albanian and Kosovan PMs Rama and Mustafa co-chaired the second joint meeting of the two governments, which took place in Tirana.

Both Prime Ministers praised the excellent relations between our two countries and agreed that the signing of the Strategic Partnership Document has further developed and modernized intergovernmental dialogue and action.

In today's meeting, parties assessed the outcomes of one year of strategic partnership between the two countries and signed a considerable number of agreements and documents of cooperation in the fields of economy, commerce facilitation, education, finance, agriculture and culture. The Prime Ministers of Albania and Kosovo also signed the Declaration for Regional Development of Cross-border Areas, which aims at supporting a number of projects for the development of cross-border areas between Albania and Kosovo.

Prime Ministers Rama and Mustafa noticed that the Declaration of Strategic Partnership achieved its goal and transformed the already excellent relations between our countries into an instrument of governmental coordination, thus accelerating the integration processes and improving the life of our citizens. Today, our two countries play a meaningful and important role by contributing in the strengthening and consolidation of democratic stability, security, peace and economic prosperity in the region and beyond.

Mr. Rama and Mr. Mustafa reaffirmed their joint commitment for the intensification of intergovernmental dialogue in all matters of mutual interest, stressing that the agreements signed today are clear indicators of the Euro – Atlantic vision of our two countries. Albania and Kosovo are furthering their joint political and diplomatic action for the increase of the number of new recognitions of the Republic of Kosovo and its proactive commitment in all regional initiatives and processes.

Both Prime Ministers expressed their conviction that the agreements signed today will bring the cooperation process between our countries to a new phase of dynamic development, towards a common economic market.

In their remarks, Ministers of Foreign Affairs Bushati and Thaçi highlighted that the accession of our countries into the common European family, as well as the anchoring in the Euro-Atlantic alliance remain our key priorities.

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- Minister Bushati receives Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovakia, Miroslav Lajčák
- Ministers Bushati and Haxhinasto attend meeting of Foreign Ministers and Ministers of Transportation of Western Balkan countries
- Minister Bushati participates in the 28th regular session of the Human Rights Council
- SEECF progress, Minister Bushati meets with Commissioner Hahn
- Minister Bushati and Minister Tahiri attend the international ministerial conference on "Tackling Jihadism Together" in Vienna
- Sixth Session of the Joint Committee on Economic Cooperation between Albania and Bulgaria
 - Albania in the International Culinary Festival of Jesenice
 - Vatra school in Belgium celebrates 10th anniversary
 - Language and culture festival in Switzerland

During the meeting, Minister Bushati stated that Albania and Kosovo have shown that they can be influential actors in the region by coordinating their political activities, with a view to reduce the economic and social gap which still divides the Western Balkans with the European Union.

► Minister **Bushati** attends the informal meeting of EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Riga



Minister Bushati attended the informal meeting of EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs, which took place in Riga, Latvia on 6-7 March 2015. Despite the informal meeting being between foreign ministers of member states, EU candidate countries such as Albania, Turkey, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia, were also invited. Albania took part for the first time since being granted candidate status.

In the framework of the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy towards its neighbours, during the working sessions Ministers discussed the current developments in Ukraine, EU's relations with Russia, the Eastern Partnership and the Security Strategy of the EU to cope with a crisis.

In his speech, Minister Bushati conveyed Albania's foreign policy viewpoint on the situation in Ukraine, as well as threats coming from the south of Europe such as Syria, Iraq, Libya, etc., underlining that "all these threats underline the importance of the Western Balkans in ensuring EU security, thus, a successful EU enlargement policy in our region is in the best interest of the EU"

Minister Bushati focused on measures taken in the fight against terrorism and the need for interaction between countries in the region and beyond. He emphasized that situations created by the current events call for the consolidation of security in the Western Balkans, strengthening of cooperation and substantial assistance from the EU in the continuation of reforms.

► Minister **Bushati** receives Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovakia, **Miroslav Lajčák**



On 9 March 2014, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ditmir Bushati received the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovakia, Miroslav Lajčák, who held an official visit in Tirana.

During the meeting, Ministers discussed bilateral cooperation and the intensification of economic exchanges in relevant areas of cooperation. They examined regional developments, challenges of regional and global security and the importance of the constructive role played by Albania in the region.

Both counterparts discussed the prospects of Albania's EU integration, focusing on advancing towards the opening of accession negotiations. In this context, Minister Bushati thanked Minister Lajčák for the continuous support that Slovakia has given to Albania in its European integration process and gave a comprehensive overview of Albania's efforts in meeting the five key priorities.

Ministers Bushati and Lajčák signed the Protocol of Cooperation between the two Ministries of Foreign Affairs, which will intensify cooperation between the two countries in terms of foreign policy and in the field of integration. In conclusion, Minister Bushati and Minister Lajčák addressed the conference "Convention for European Integration", organized with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of European Integration, Slovak Aid and European Movement Albania.

➤ Ministers **Bushati** and **Haxhinasto** attend meeting of Foreign Ministers and Ministers of Transportation of Western Balkan countries

Minister of Foreign Affairs Ditmir Bushati and Minister of Transport and Infrastructure Edmond Haxhinasto attended the meeting of Foreign Ministers and Ministers of Transportation of the Western Balkan countries, which took place in Pristina. This meeting, which is a follow up of the Western Balkans Conference organised in Berlin on 28 August 2014 and the Ministerial Meeting held in Belgrade on 23 October 2014, was also attended by Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations.

The meeting reaffirmed the commitment of the WB countries to the process initiated by the Berlin Conference, which aims at producing tangible results from the processes of EU integration and regional cooperation, starting from the Vienna Summit, which will be held on 27 August 2015.

For this reason, the Ministers agreed upon a network, which will link the region's capitals, economic centres and main ports by 2030. This network includes the Adriatic – Ionian motorway, which will link Croatia to Greece via Albania; the port of Durrës; the railway that will link Albania to Montenegro; Corridor 8, etc.

Projects for this network shall be presented during the Vienna Summit as priority projects, whose financing will assure interconnectivity and economic growth for our region. Interconnectivity is a key element for the revitalisation of the European integration of the region, initiated with the Berlin Conference.



In his speech, Minister Bushati stated: "I highly appreciate the progress of regional cooperation and such meeting formats, which have enabled a better cooperation in the Balkans. Interconnectivity is about bringing people closer, translating geographic proximity into a common development area. The challenges that the European security architecture faces today impose a greater interconnectivity for our region".

Analysing the weaknesses of our region with concern to infrastructural connectivity, Minister Bushati emphasized that "because of the financial crisis of the Euro zone, financial instruments for infrastructural projects in Southern and South-eastern Europe have not been made available. Alongside the realistic methodology of the European Commission for infrastructural connectivity in the Western Balkans, European institutions should work for a development package of the region".

➤ Minister **Bushati** participates in the 28th regular session of the Human Rights Council



In the framework of the accession of the Republic of Albania to the HRC for the period 2015-2017, Minister Bushati took part in the political debate in the 28th regular session of the Human Rights Council (HRC), which is conducting proceedings in Geneva.

Albania remains committed to the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights, freedom of expression and supports the integration of human rights in all United Nations policies.

In his speech, Minister Bushati praised the contribution and values of the Council and the High Commissioner for Human Rights and presented Albania's commitment for protecting, promoting and respecting these rights everywhere in the world. As members of the HRC, Minister Bushati focused on Albania's objectives for respecting minority rights, rule of law, fight against corruption and the commitment to reduce gender inequality and promote the protection of children's rights, in accordance with international commitments.

Moreover, Minister Bushati emphasized the strength of Albania's religious harmony, as an encouraging model and one that Pope Francis praised during his visit in Tirana. Referring to the phenomenon of violence in the name of faith, Minister Bushati acknowledged that religious freedom should never be used as a pretext for action against fundamental freedoms and dignity of people.

During his stay in Geneva, Minister Bushati held a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria, Mr. Ramtane Lamamra. During the meeting, both Ministers discussed the further intensification of bilateral cooperation and encouraged an exchange of visits between the two countries. They also talked about current developments in their countries and regions and shared views on common security challenges. Minister Lamamra invited Minister Bushati for an official visit to Algeria.

► SEECP progress, Minister Bushati meets with Commissioner Hahn



Minister of Foreign Affairs Ditmir Bushati presented the progress made in the Southeast Europe Cooperation Process (SEECP) under the Albanian Chairmanship to the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET). He presented the activities in the framework of the SEECP this year, with the main focus being the calendar prepared under the Albanian Chairmanship. In particular, Minister Bushati mentioned the SEECP Ministerial, held in Tirana on 23-24 February 2015 and the joint statement against terrorism adopted during the proceedings. The European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs praised the ambitious agenda of Albania's SEECP Chairmanship. The meeting was also attended by Goran Svilanovic, Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).

Following the presentation, Minister Bushati met with the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Mr. Johannes Hahn and MEP Kukan.

During these meetings, Minister Bushati presented the progress made in terms of reforms and government efforts to timely meet the criteria provided in the roadmap for the five key priorities. Minister Bushati noted the importance of having a date for the opening of negotiations, with regard to the reforms progress, administrative motivation and public support.

During the meeting, they also discussed regional cooperation in the framework of the Berlin Process and preparations for the Vienna Conference, scheduled to be held in August this year.

Commissioner Hahn praised the ongoing reforms' progress and Albania's constructive role of in the framework of regional cooperation. He promised to support Albania's integration process, noting that the speed of this process depends on the implementation and sustainability of undertaken reforms.

► Ministers Bushati and Tahiri attend the international ministerial conference on "Tackling Jihadism Together" in Vienna



Minister of Foreign Affairs Ditmir Bushati and Interior Minister Saimir Tahiri, attended the conference on *measures in facing terrorist threats and the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters*, organised by the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Austria. The meeting was attended by Foreign and Interior Ministers from the Western Balkan countries, Italy, Slovenia, representatives of the European Commission and the Commissioner for Migration and Home Affairs, Dimitris Avramopoulos.

The main focus of this meeting were discussions on terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, which currently constitutes the most serious threat to peace and security in the world. Participants underlined the vital importance of cooperation and efficiency in action, nationally and globally, in the fight against the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters and unjustified criminal acts of terrorism, regardless of where and by whom they are carried out.

Minister Bushati, in his speech during the second panel's discussion on "reaction - measures taken in the fight against terrorism and foreign terrorist fighters: stated:" Today's meeting proves the importance of cooperation in facing the phenomenon of terrorism, because no single nation can do this alone. As a region very close to areas affected by crises and from a geographical standpoint, the Balkans is of particular importance when facing these challenges which have included the southern and eastern Mediterranean. Sanctions and preventive measures taken by the Albanian government in 2014 have had an impact in the decrease of the number of Albanian citizens engaged in foreign conflicts. The role played by religious leaders has been irreplaceable, showing that commitment and cooperation with them is a key element in addressing this phenomenon. In order for the measures to take effect and be sustainable, the Western Balkan region should become a real region in terms of security and by sharing a comprehensive agenda and common methodology with the EU. Lack of commitment and coordination threatens to turn this weakness into instability".

In his speech during the press conference, Minister Tahiri said: "The fight against terrorism is a challenge for all countries in the Balkans, Europe and beyond. We must ensure that cooperation between the Balkan and EU countries is qualitative, because the fight against terrorism cannot depend on a state being a member of the European Union or not, given that terrorism is a common threat to everyone.

Albania is an example of religious harmony, but like every other state, we cannot avoid the threat posed by terrorism. Albania is fully committed and willing to collaborate with our partners. We believe that regional cooperation is the only way.

Strengthening the rule of law, democratic reform, justice reform and increasing economic growth levels remain important tasks, as well as proceedings and legal changes against the phenomenon of foreign fighters".

Economic and Public Diplomacy ↓

➤ Sixth Session of the Joint Committee on Economic Cooperation between Albania and Bulgaria



In the framework of Economic Diplomacy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with the Ministry of Economic Development, Tourism, Trade and Entrepreneurship held the 6th Session of the Joint Intergovernmental Commission for Economic Cooperation between Albania and Bulgaria on 19-20 March 2015, in Tirana.

The head of the Albanian delegation was the Minister of Economic Development, Tourism, Trade and Entrepreneurship, Mr Arben Ahmetaj, while the Bulgarian delegation was headed by the Minister of Transport, Information Technology and Communications, Mr. Ivaylo Moskovski

The 6th Session of the Joint Commission was held in a warm atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding, reaffirming the commitment of both parties to further promote bilateral economic relations and to strengthen dialogue and cooperation at all levels.

Over the two days, (on the first day technical aspects of the talks were the main focus and on the second day, the plenary session) representatives of the two delegations discussed various issues of mutual interest, which aimed at promoting institutional, economic and trade cooperation and investment between the two countries, paving new ways and further intensifying bilateral economic cooperation.

Both parties exchanged information on the general economic situation in their countries, current development of macroeconomic indicators, policies implemented to improve the investment climate and develop the private sector, as well as measures taken to achieve sustainable economic growth in both countries.

After discussing the current level of bilateral economic and trade cooperation, they proposed and determined the perspective of future cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

The Heads of Delegations agreed that the main areas of economic cooperation between Albania and Bulgaria will be trade cooperation, foreign direct investment and the participation in regional projects and initiatives, participation in forums and international organizations and the exchange of official visits and business representatives.

Economic cooperation and development of bilateral trade, investment, accreditation, metrology and standardization, patents and trademarks, cooperation in infrastructure especially with regard to transport and communication, ICT, energy and industry, finance, agriculture and rural development, tourism, culture, urban development and territorial planning, environment, education, health, social welfare, etc. were considered as current and future important areas of cooperation, expected to yield more concrete results.

The Protocol marked concrete achievements in the field of economic cooperation and will serve as a platform of tangible commitments, on which relevant institutions in both countries will cooperate and implement joint projects and activities, promote direct investment and enhance contacts between business institutions by offering them assistance.

In conclusion, they agreed to hold the next session in Sofia, on a date which will be agreed upon by both parties, through diplomatic channels.

► Albania in the International Culinary Festival of Jesenice



An International Culinary Festival was held on 27 March 2015 in Jesenice, Slovenia. This activity showcased some of the culinary delicacies of over 20 countries, amongst which was Albania. The participation of Albania to this Festival was made possible by the Albanian Embassy in Slovenia, thanks to the help and support of Mr. Besim Bytyçi, an Albanian living and working in Slovenia.

Apart from culinary delicacies from Albania and Kosovo, the Albanian stand also offered promotional materials for the Albanian and Kosovan tourism.

► Vatra school in Belgium celebrates 10th anniversary

On 28 March 2015, the Ambassador of Albania to the EU attended the ceremony for the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Albanian school "Vatra" in Molenbeek, Brussels.

The ceremony gathered a large number of Albanians living and working in Belgium and was attended by the Mayor of Molenbeek, the Ambassador of Kosovo and other dignitaries.



► Language and culture festival in Switzerland



The Albanian Embassy in Berne took part in the Language and Culture Festival to represent our unique language and culture, among many other things.

The Language & Culture Festival (SKFS) serves as a platform for cultural exchange, where people can present their culture and learn from other cultures. It is also a communication school, because it encourages the development of a diverse society.