

## 2<sup>nd</sup> High Level Dialogue on the Key Priorities

6 March 2014

### **Joint Conclusions**

1. Prime Minister Edi Rama and Commissioner Stefan Füle chaired the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the High Level Dialogue (HLD) on the Key Priorities between Albania and the European Commission on 6 March 2014. The plenary session included the participation of Government Ministers, as well as of an extended participation of the opposition through the chair of the parliamentary committee for European integration, Ms Majlinda Bregu, and two additional members of Parliament.
2. The meeting welcomed the Parliament Resolution on EU integration unanimously voted in November 2013 which demonstrated the existing political consensus. Implementation of commitments undertaken by this resolution is essential. In this respect, commissioner Füle stressed the importance of ensuring coherence and an inclusive approach to all reforms undertaken by Albania by taking into due consideration the country's EU agenda. The systematic consultation and involvement of the Parliament, as well as of other stakeholders, in the reform process is key.
3. The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the HLD takes place after the December 2013 Council, which "welcomed the adoption by Albania of the relevant key judicial, public administration and parliamentary reform measures with cross-party consensus as well as the successful conduct of the parliamentary elections in June". The Council also welcomed "the further action taken in the fight against corruption and organised crime, the commitment of the new government and commends its intensified efforts in these areas and encouraged the authorities to maintain this new momentum". The Council decided to "examine, on the basis of a report to be presented by the Commission, continued implementation of anti-corruption and judicial reform strategies and of recently adopted relevant legislation as well as a continued trend of pro-active investigations and prosecutions, including in the area of organised crime". It added that, "on the understanding that Albania continues to build on the encouraging progress made so far", it "looks

forward to a decision regarding granting candidate status to Albania in June 2014, subject to endorsement by the European Council".

4. The meeting agreed that it is therefore essential that Albania continues to deliver on its reform efforts and continues to present evidence of the results achieved with a focus on the rule of law, including the fight against corruption and organised crime. Commissioner Füle welcomed Albania's continuing progress in EU-related reforms in the past period, and underlined that joint constructive work of government and opposition notably in Parliament is key to consolidate and further strengthen these efforts. In this respect the Commissioner stressed that confrontational politics do not help the EU integration process. The Commissioner also recalled the importance EU Member States attribute to a culture of cooperation and inclusiveness in Parliament that would allow a sustainable reform process. As regards the functioning of the country's independent institutions he stressed that both opposition and government should show moderation and ensure full respect of applicable legislation and its principles. The Commissioner welcomed actions taken in the framework of the government's plan of action on the fight against corruption and organised crime, such as the broad consultation of the anti-corruption strategy conducted in December and the setting up of a network of anti-corruption contact points, the signature of the operational agreement with Europol, and ongoing important work on police reform. He also welcomed the focus on adopting the secondary legislation for the Civil Service Law.
5. Commissioner Füle welcomed the draft Roadmap on the 5 Key Priorities as a well-structured document with realistic timelines. He stressed the importance of giving particular attention in the coming months to ensuring its solid and timely implementation, notably as regards short-term measures in the area of the rule of law including the fight against organised crime and corruption.
6. Commissioner Füle underlined that the Commission stands ready to support Albania with expertise and financial support.
7. Prime Minister Rama confirmed his government's commitment to further strengthen the considerable progress achieved in

EU-related reforms, in particular to continue the implementation of reforms in the area of the rule of law, including anti-corruption policy, judicial reform, and fight against organised crime. Prime Minister Rama expressed the confidence that the continued implementation of key reforms constitutes a sound basis for the decision regarding granting candidate status to Albania in June 2014. He also confirmed his government's commitment to create a strong link between economic governance and the rule of law leading to a more transparent business environment. In this respect he welcomed the increased focus on the side of the EU to economic governance issues.

8. The Albanian Government confirmed its commitment to a constructive and sustainable political dialogue with the opposition which is vital for the sustainability of the reform process. In this context, the Albanian Government views the HLD as a useful instrument whereby Albania and the EU take stock and review the progress made by the country in a framework of comprehensive discussions.
9. Commissioner Füle welcomed the commitments of the Albanian Government to ensure the smooth implementation of the Civil Service Law in the same spirit of dialogue and cooperation that led to its adoption in May 2013; to finalise the anticorruption strategy and to start taking determined steps for its implementation in view of improving the overall efficiency of action in this area; to engage with the Venice Commission in view of the process of reforming the judicial system and to ensure smooth implementation of legislation in this area; and to intensify the fight against organised crime through targeted activities and reinforced coordination among law enforcement bodies.
10. The government remains committed to the involvement of civil society organizations and groups in the reform process. For this purpose, the Roadmap on the 5 key priorities has been shared with civil society actors and organizations for their comments and suggestions. The mechanism of consultation with stakeholders, which was agreed at the 1<sup>st</sup> High Level Dialogue meeting, needs to be set up , building on some initial steps taken. This broad consultation process will contribute to consolidate the nationwide consensus on EU integration and would provide a framework to channel expertise and energy

within Albanian society into the policy making and implementation.

11. To prepare for the next meeting of the HLD foreseen for June 2014, it was agreed for contacts on working level to intensify and reports on the implementation of the roadmap to be provided by the Albanian side on a regular basis. Albania will provide input in view of the Commission's next Report. Commissioner Füle underlined that in this period Albania should continue delivering concrete results as regards all five Key Priorities, with particular focus on anti-corruption, organized crime and judiciary reform.