

Conclusions of the Leaders' Meeting of the Brdo–Brijuni Process

Montenegro, 8 June 2015

The Leaders of Brdo Brijuni Process met in Budva on the 8th of June.

In the discussion at the plenary session they reaffirmed commitment to the membership in the EU as the guarantee for maintaining peace and stability in the region. The Leaders also commit themselves to cooperation and addressing all political and economic issues through open and constant dialogue.

The Leaders agree to further contribute to a stable and prosperous region. Any rhetoric or actions increasing tensions should be refrained from.

The enlargement process has proven to be an efficient tool for transformation and modernisation of applicant countries in order to enable them accession to the EU. It however, cannot replace the responsibilities of the countries themselves to ensure the implementation of ambitious structural reforms, reinforce the rule of law, and the resolution of outstanding bilateral and regional issues among the countries of the South East Europe.

The difficulties of some countries from the region in timely fulfilment of the established criteria is slowing down the accession process and decreasing the momentum for internal consolidation of the region; in turn this cultivates the sense of disappointment among the population and provides fertile soil for populism, which ushers in revision of unresolved political and interethnic tensions. This further affects the support of EU enlargement among the EU Member States and thus reinforces this vicious circle.

In addition to the slow down of the enlargement process, the economic crisis and current global security challenges, especially radicalisms, make the region even more vulnerable to external destabilising factors.

It is therefore indispensable to augment the political engagement of the European Union as regard to the enlargement process and making it again an item high on the EU political agenda. Having in mind that the region needs a refreshed long-term strategy, the Leaders of the Brdo–Brijuni Process express their commitment to contribute to a clear vision and a plan to ensure stability of the South East Europe within the EU:

- The Enlargement process should become more comprehensive. Together with enhanced regional cooperation and high-level regional forums should support the countries in establishing functioning market economies with sustainable economic growth, help improving the investment climate of the region, as well as develop the transport and energy infrastructure and promote rule of law. As previously stated by the European Commission and recalled in the Council conclusions, improved economic environment and better interconnectivity among the countries and with the EU have become important elements of the Union's enlargement endeavours, achieving sustainable development and ensuring employment, especially among the young.

An improved programme of mobility for youth, including more scholarships and professional training opportunities, should also represent a constituent part of the renewed EU engagement in the region. The Leaders support joint university programs and exchange programs between students of the countries from the region and with the EU. In this regard the Leaders of the Brdo-Brijuni Process will continue to support and elaborate on a Positive Agenda for the Youth in the Western Balkans, initiated through the Brdo Brijuni Process and launched with the support of the European Commission at the Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs at Brdo on 23 of April this year, and will be further implemented at the Vienna Western Balkans Summit. In this regard the Leaders recognize the “Dialogue for the Future,” project and encourage the expanding it to the South East Europe.

- The Leaders note the need to coordinate the various regional initiatives and ensure coherence among them.

- Regional fora and initiatives present an additional tool for searching mutually acceptable solutions for outstanding political issues through regular political dialogue. The Commission and the EEAS with the support of EU Member States, should use their political leverage and expertise to assist as appropriate.

The debate among the leaders has again pointed to the necessity to organise a high-level EU event at which the Union would reaffirm its commitments and concretise its approach to maintain stability and prosperity of the region through renewed approach to the EU accessions.

The Leaders agreed to address a letter to the President of the European Council proposing to hold a special session of European Council on the future of the Enlargement.

The Leaders of Brdo Brijuni process welcome progress in the EU accession negotiations with Montenegro. A further progress on the rule of law leading to tangible results on the ground in Montenegro will be conducive to advancing in EU accession negotiations. Albania, Croatia and Slovenia strongly support Montenegro's membership in NATO as an important incentive for the regional stability.

The Leaders welcome the ambition of the new government in Bosnia and Herzegovina to carry out socioeconomic reforms and further democratic optimization of its legal and political system in line with the renewed approach set by the European Union. The Leaders also recognize the necessity for continuous active engagement of the European Union at the highest political level in order to support the implementation of all necessary reforms and ensure that Bosnia and Herzegovina keeps moving forward on its path towards the European Union. The Leaders encourage Bosnia and Herzegovina to immediately start implementing the initial reform agenda and apply for the European Union membership as soon as it makes some progress on the implementation of that agenda. Albania, Croatia and Slovenia also call for progress of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards the membership in NATO by granting it the activation of the Membership Action Plan.

The leaders recognise the important role of Serbia in regional stability and welcome that accession negotiations are underway. The Leaders understand that the progress in line with the accession negotiations framework, including the full implementation of the Belgrade Priština dialogue agreements, will allow the first negotiating chapters with the EU to be opened as soon as possible.

The Leaders recognized the constructive role of Albania in regional cooperation and support opening of accession negotiation with the understanding that identified conditions in particular in the rule of law are met in time.

The leaders welcomes that the Council has started its deliberations on the draft decisions to sign and conclude a Stabilisation and Association with Kosovo and look forward to its signature, conclusion and entry into force as soon as possible. The leaders underline the importance of SAA implementation and of the necessary reforms linked to it. It is also important that Kosovo continues to engage in the dialogue with Serbia and progress towards the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. The Leaders recognize the progress made in the fulfilment of the visa liberalization criteria and encourage the European Commission to accelerate this process.

The Leaders of the Brdo Brijuni Process welcome the engagement of the EU in the stabilization of the current political situation in Macedonia by re-establishing of political dialogue and restoring the trust in the institutions through fair and legitimate investigations of the allegations. A fair, credible and transparent investigation of the events in Kumanovo is indispensable.

Therefore, the Leaders of Brdo Brijuni Process expect the next meeting of the political leaders from Macedonia in Bruxelles will bring a final and lasting solution of the current political crisis. The resolution of the political crisis together with full field recommendations on rule of law, independence of justice and freedom of media would lead to the continuation of the EU and NATO integration of the country.

The Leaders welcome the intentions of the President of Slovenia and Croatia to visit Skopje and contribute to the reestablishment of the political dialogue and overcoming the current political crisis.

In view of the 2015 Paris Climate Conference, the submission of the EU's intended, nationally determined contribution to the global agreement was an important political signal in support of agreeing in Paris an ambitious, universal and legally binding agreement applicable to all Parties. The Leaders indicates they will communicate their intended nationally determined contributions well in advance of Paris.

The Leaders agreed Bosnia and Hercegovina will host next Summit of Brdo Brijuni Process