

**Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the
Common Security and Defence Policy**

15-17 February, Sofia

Statement of the Heads of Delegations

The Inter-Parliamentary Conference,

EU as a Global Player:

1. Takes the view that the EU needs to take on more responsibility on the international scene in order to successfully address the global challenges and threats it faces; insists that the EU needs to be an effective, credible and values- based global player, with a capacity for swift action and effective dialogue with other global players; Recalls that the EU should speak with one voice, act together and focus its resources on strategic priorities.
2. Encourages the Heads of State and Government of the EU Member States to continue working within the European Council on the objectives set out in the Rome Declaration of 25 March 2017; Calls on the European institutions to act jointly at all levels in response to the expectations of the Union citizens to build “a safe and secure Europe; a prosperous and sustainable Europe; a social Europe; and a stronger Europe on the global scene”.

Implementation of the EU Global Strategy:

3. Reaffirms the importance of promoting through the EU Global Strategy the common interests of EU citizens as well as the values and principles of the EU, and stresses that an effective implementation of this strategy requires strong commitment and support of the Member States and of the EU institutions; Calls for a continuous strengthening of the EU’s voice in the UN, as the EU is committed to a global order based on international law; supports the progress made on the guidelines of the Global Strategy of the EU from June 2016 and the focus on building inclusive and ambitious Permanent Structured Cooperation through the development of specific projects and modules.

4. Reaffirms the role of the EU in security and defence of Europe and that of NATO as a guarantor of the common defence of its members, taking into account the fact that not all EU Member States are NATO Member States; supports the efforts of the two organisations to complement and reinforce each other, as both organizations are in possession of unique set of tools, which are necessary to tackle multidimensional challenges, such as hybrid threats or instability in our neighbourhood. Underlines the need to develop the EU's civilian and defence capabilities for the benefit of both organisations.
5. Notes that the stability and security of our neighbours adds to the security of the entire EU, and effective EU policies in its neighbourhood are essential to our global activity. Therefore, enhancing the resilience of the EU's neighbours should remain a priority.

Accelerating Reforms in View of the Accession of the Western Balkans to the EU:

6. Reiterates the need for a strategic focus on the Western Balkans region and welcomes the 2018 EU Enlargement Strategy. Urges the EU Heads of State and Government to redeclare at their Sofia Summit on 17 May 2018 the European membership perspectives of the Western Balkans countries. Believes that democracy, prosperity and stability are the key priorities for further development in the region; calls on the Western Balkan countries to put more efforts in improving the socio-economic and political conditions of the region; believes that the strengthening of social and economic rights makes an important contribution to the enhancement of security.
7. Is convinced that European integration, regional cooperation, reconciliation and resolution of bilateral disputes are the best means to address the dangers that the region is currently facing, stemming from political and historical grievances. Underlines existing threats of destabilizing the region resulting from foreign interference and influences, as well as extreme nationalism and xenophobia. Calls on the countries of the region to align with the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy.
8. Stresses the need to remain fully dedicated to the respect of the rule of law, fostering highly effective political and civil societies, and free media in the region, along with good governance, judicial independence, freedom of expression, minority rights, fight against corruption and organised crime.

9. Emphasizes that strengthening security, capacity building and reinforcing resilience in the Western Balkans and other partner countries must be an essential element of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, including the EU Common Security and Defence Policy and an area of enhanced EU-NATO cooperation. Notes that the European aspirations of each country of the region can only be fulfilled according to each country's progress and merit.
10. Underlines the high importance of strategic communication in fostering a dialogue and understanding between EU and Western Balkans, countering disinformation and maintaining stability.
11. Welcomes **Montenegro's** undeniable progress in the negotiation process, ascertained by all political and economic indicators, while underlining that Montenegro is a stabilizing factor in the region – with its NATO membership and the Agreement on the Borders signed with BiH in 2015. Welcomes the opening of negotiations on Chapters 2 and 3. Expects that by the end of the current Presidency Trio, Estonia-Bulgaria-Austria, the process of opening of the remaining chapters will be completed. Urges to step up domestic efforts on the consolidation of democracy, the rule of law and media freedom; urges to step up the fight against corruption and organised crime. Calls for starting the process of discussing the indicators for closing Chapters 23 and 24. Commends Montenegro's continued full alignment with the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. Emphasizes that the enlargement process is based on an assessment of each of the negotiating parties' individual progress; urges the country to complete the necessary reforms by 2025.
12. Welcomes the progress of **Serbia** in the accession negotiations with the EU and expects steady progress with regard to the remaining chapters. Encourages further reforms in key policy areas of the integration process. Urges to step up efforts on fighting corruption and enhancing judicial independence and media freedom. Urges the country to complete the reforms by 2025. Welcomes an internal debate and calls for furthering the dialogue with Pristina - a factor for improving relations and stability in the region as a whole. Calls for closer cooperation and stronger alignment with the EU in the sphere of Common Foreign and Security Policy and in the process of Serbia's accession to the EU. Asserts that cooperation with neighbouring countries to tackle the migration crisis has produced results and should continue. Encourages better further integration of minorities and ethnic communities in the field of culture and education, which is important for social cohesion based on the common values of the Union.

13. Welcomes **Albania's** progress on the five key priorities which are a prerequisite for starting accession negotiations with the EU. Supports the judicial reform, including the vetting process, undertaken by the country and expects that this reform moves to completion, as a key element contributing to the fight against corruption and organized crime. In this regard, welcomes the recent launch of the action plan on the fight against organized crime. Takes note of the recently adopted Law on the Protection of National Minorities and encourages Albania to draft swiftly the necessary legislation and executive orders that will establish the rights of minorities in practice, including the right to self-identification. Commends Albania's continued full alignment with the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. Supports starting the accession negotiation process upon the fulfilment of the commitments; Calls for inclusive political dialogue and cooperation of political parties in the integration process.
14. Welcomes the constructive approach of the **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** on improving relations with its neighbours and to seek mutually acceptable solutions to long pending issues. Encourages cooperation with its neighbours on tackling the migration crisis and other regional challenges. Calls for close regional cooperation and asserts that infrastructure connectivity with neighbouring countries has the support of the European Union. Calls for an inclusive internal political dialogue and social integration of ethnic communities in all spheres of public life and the reduction of youth unemployment, which will greatly contribute to the success of the undertaken reforms.
15. Encourages **Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)** to continue implementing the reforms linked to integration with the EU and calls on BiH to continue progress on the Reform Agenda. Further strengthening institutions at all levels in cooperation with the European Union must remain a priority. Underlines that the successful development of the country depends on guaranteeing the functioning of the rule of law by implementing the Constitutional principles and the decisions of the Constitutional Court , strengthening public administration at all levels, as well as long-term reforms going beyond the internal short-term political and electoral cycles; calls for strengthening the parliamentary cooperation with the European Union, and calls for adoption of the Rules of Procedure of the EU-BiH SAPC; urges to respect the rule of law and to abide by decisions of the Constitutional Court; calls upon all parties to urgently implement the necessary changes in the Election Law in due time ahead of the next general elections.

16. Asserts that the entry into force of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and the programme for its implementation provide an opportunity for **Kosovo**¹ to achieve successful reforms in cooperation with the EU, provided that this is done in full accordance with international law. Expects the new government to seize the opportunities provided by this cooperation for sustainable progress in the fight against organized crime, unemployment, strengthening institutions, functioning of public administration and the defence of individual freedoms at all levels. Urges Kosovo authorities to urgently address rule of law and justice issues. Calls on the local Assembly to ratify the Agreement on Border Demarcation with Montenegro and continue with improving the track record in prosecution of high-level organised crime and corruption cases in order to move forward on EU visa-liberalisation. Welcomes implementation of the Justice agreement and calls for continued engagement in and commitment to the dialogue with Belgrade and the implementation of the already reached agreements; underscores the importance of the undisturbed work of the Specialist Chambers of the Kosovo court system for the country's international and Euro-Atlantic integration.

The Common Security and Defence Policy:

17. Reiterates that the EU has all the means to be an influential global player able to project stability towards its neighbourhood and beyond and shape a rule-based international order. In this context, calls for even deeper cooperation and coordination between the EU institutions and the Member States. Stresses the need to enhance cooperation with other global and regional powers on global threats and challenges.

18. Commends the progress in implementing the EU Global Strategy in the area of security and defence made in 2017 and encourages Member States to swiftly continue with further implementation works. Welcomes the launch of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and urges the member states to implement it in the most ambitious way possible.

19. Calls on the Member States to develop the Lisbon Treaty's full potential with regard to the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) as a step towards political union

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

through the progressive framing of a common defence policy, and welcomes in this context the Implementation Plan on Security and Defence.

20. Supports further efforts to increase European defence capabilities through defence investments, enhanced cooperation and sustainable development of European defence industries across the EU with a view to develop better responses to crises and military threats; highlights the important role in this process of the European Defence Fund, the European Defence Research preparatory action and the European Defence Industrial Development Programme in providing incentives for more European armaments cooperation, encouraging cross border participation of SMEs and mid-caps by fostering investments in defence supply chains, delivering urgently needed capabilities and in consolidating the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base.
21. Believes that a more ambitious approach to the EU-NATO partnership is needed, in full respect for the decision-making autonomy of each organisation. In this respect, welcomes the new proposals for EU-NATO cooperation in areas such as hybrid threats, the fight against terrorism, cyber security, cross-border military mobility in Europe and maritime security issues. Collaboration between the two organisations should be further stimulated in areas such as operational cooperation, exercises, cyber security, strategic communication, defence industry and research, capability development as well as capacity building and strengthening the resilience of partner countries.
22. Supports the efforts to assume greater responsibility for protection of Europe and for response to external crises, while deepening cooperation with NATO; Stresses the need to strengthen the internal resilience of the EU ensuring real progress in countering hybrid threats, cyber security, protection of critical infrastructure, strategic communication, and fight against terrorism.
23. Encourages a review of the EU's approach to civilian CSDP missions in order to ensure they are properly devised, implemented and supported; considers that the European Defence Agency (EDA) should be endowed with the necessary financial and human resources following the recent long-term review; stresses that the EU Battlegroups could be a useful tool for the implementation of the CSDP and should be used to their full responsive potential; encourages Member States to provide effective funding to that end; invites Member States to consider the possibilities to improve CSDP advanced planning through the establishment of a European Civilian-Military Capability consisting of the recently established Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) and the existing

Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC), to plan and conduct military operations and civilian missions coherently .

Black Sea Region:

24. Notes that the changed security environment in the Black Sea region is a serious challenge for the EU, and it continues to have a major impact on security and stability throughout the Euro-Atlantic zone. Believes that the EU must remain a driving force for continuing reforms in neighbouring countries towards democratisation, inclusiveness and growth on the basis of the Euro-Atlantic values. Backs the outcome of the 5th Eastern Partnership Summit, contained in a roadmap for cooperation in the nearest future the “20 deliverables for 2020”, aimed at building a democratic, stable, prosperous and sustainable region; encourages effective implementation of sectorial commitments from that document, with a particular focus on connectivity, youth and resilience.
25. Supports EU-NATO cooperation on the management of migratory flows in the Aegean Sea and the Central Mediterranean as a measure that enhances international law and the protection of forced migrants. Appropriate measures are needed to prevent such pressure in the Black Sea region along with development policies in the migrants’ countries of origin, aiming at addressing the root causes of mass migration. Adequate funding to EU countries receiving migrants and hosting asylum-seekers should continue and measures should comply with relevant EU decisions. Additional measures should be implemented towards the co-management and co-financing of migration policy at European borders.
26. Calls on the European institutions to increase visibility of the Black Sea region, including by enhancing connectivity with the Danube region, and by exploiting the potential of other EU macro-regional strategies.

Eastern Partnership:

27. Emphasizes the shared EU’s commitments to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Eastern Partnership countries, peaceful resolution of any disputes and application of international law, democratic standards and the respect of human rights, the rule of law, and good and transparent governance.

28. Underlines the need to increase the focus on reform agenda in these countries by applying the more for more principle, implementing the “20 deliverables for 2020”, building incentives and conditionality, streamlining international assistance, boosting growth and investments.
29. Emphasizes that Russia remains a crucial factor for the security and stability all across Europe, and beyond. Deplores Russia’s violations of international law and its hybrid warfare and calls on the VP/HR and the Council to play a more active and effective role in solving protracted and frozen conflicts; stresses the importance of balance and integrity of five principles for the EU’s relations with Russia, agreed by the Foreign Affairs Council in March 2016. These guidelines include an effective implementation of the Minsk agreements as a prerequisite for any substantial change in EU-Russia relations, and serve as a credible deterrence, including against the use of hybrid warfare. Reiterates its support to the EU’s imposition of restrictive measures against individuals and entities in Russia in response to the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula, and military aggression in Eastern Ukraine and stresses that these measures will remain in force until Russia returns to following the principles of international law. Urges paying close attention to the status of human rights, democracy and rule of law in Russia as well as enhancing support to Russia’s civil society as it faces permanent pressure and threatening.

Southern Neighbourhood:

30. Notes the necessity to promote a peaceful and prosperous Mena region as a condition for the stability of the European Union; calls on the EU to give a strong contribution to solve conflicts and promoting development and human rights in the countries of the south and east shore of the Mediterranean to addressing the threat of terrorism, the challenges of demography, migration and climate change, and to seizing the opportunity of shared prosperity.
31. Reaffirms that a secure Mediterranean is a necessary pre-condition for a secure Europe; supports the efforts of the United Nations to stabilise Libya, urges all parties to commit to a unite country in which all different components are fairly represented and calls for a wider commitment of the European Union in this respect; welcomes the achievements of

Tunisia in the field of democratic development and calls for an ever-increasing assistance from the European Union in order to allow the country to continue on this path.

32. Takes note of the position of the European Union on the region of Cyprus and its exclusive economic zone. Calls for compliance with international law and treaties, the *acquis communautaire*, the principles upon which the European Union is founded, as well as the principles of good neighbourliness.