

Opening of EU Accession Negotiations

The Congress of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Party convening in Athens, Greece, on 24-26 October 2019:

Recalls:

- the 2003 EU Thessaloniki Agenda for the Western Balkans which confirms the ultimate EU membership of the countries from the region;
- the ALDE Party European Election Manifesto 2019 which supports greater strategic EU engagement and the future enlargement perspective for the countries of the Western Balkans;
- the EU Council conclusions from June 2018 with regards to the opening of EU accession talks;
- the ALDE Council Resolution from February 2019 on North Macedonia's membership in NATO and the EU.

Welcomes:

- the efforts made by the coalition government in Skopje towards building a free and democratic society after years of democratic stagnation and authoritarianism;
- the judiciary reforms undertaken by the government in Tirana;
- the progress made by Albania and by North Macedonia as noted in the Progress Report by the European Commission from May 2019.

Recognises:

- in the EU accession process every country should be evaluated on its individual merits.

Expresses:

- disagreement and deep regret that on 18 October 2019 the European Council failed to agree on the start of the accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia;
- concern that the EU risks politically destabilising the region if accession talks with North Macedonia and Albania do not proceed as soon as possible

Takes note:

- that North Macedonia is the only country in the Western Balkans that has internationally delimited borders and no open issues with the neighbours;

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- the discussions and the conclusions of the European Parliament, as well as the parliaments of Germany and the Netherlands with regards to the opening of the EU accession talks;
- of the statement of the French President on 18 October that the only compromise at the EU Council would have been to decouple the accession talks of North Macedonia and Albania.

Urges:

- the European Council at the first next meeting to set dates for start of EU accession talks with Albania and with North Macedonia;
- the potential reform of the accession process not to delay the start of the EU accession negotiations;
- to take concrete steps to ensure that trust and confidence in Europe's commitment is restored with our partner countries in the Western Balkans.

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