

WEEKLY NEWS

A WEEKLY BULLETIN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

YEAR 2/ NUMBER 64

25-31 OCTOBER 2008

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Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini: Premier Berisha kept his promises made to Europe

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Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The two prime ministers pointed to the very good relations that exist between the two government and countries. Premier Erdogan reconfirmed to Premier Berisha the full support of the government of Turkey for Albania full NATO membership. We are making efforts, said he, to stimulate the Turkish businessmen to come and invest in Albania. On his part, Premier Berisha acquainted the Turkish premier with the sweeping reforms the government of Albania has implemented and focused especially on the significant achievements towards creation of a favorable business climate through important infrastructure projects, like the industrial parks etc. Premier Berisha thanked his friend Mr. Erdogan for the incitement of the Turkish entrepreneurs to come and invest in Albania and said that the Turkish investors are confirming their success story in the Albanian market. Also he stressed that the Turkish direct investments have recorded 860 million euro as compared to 135 million euro they used to be in 2005. Both prime ministers reiterated their willingness to consolidate further the close cooperation in all the fields in accordance to the extremely high level of traditional friendship between the two peoples. Also the two dignitaries discussed the regional developments and focused on Kosova independence as a necessary condition for the security and stability of the region. Premier Berisha is attending the proceedings of the World Economic Forum for Europe and Central Asia that is taking place in Istanbul.

Premier Berisha: Albania is recognized among most successful countries in fight against corruption by international assessments

During proceedings of the World Economic Forum in Istanbul, Prime Minister Sali Berisha attended today the panel dedicated to European Union enlargement. Speaking about Albania commitments in the framework of meeting EU standards, Premier Berisha pointed to Stabilization Association Agreement that the government of Albania has signed with the EU and said that it is being implemented in accordance with

the EU standards. The application of these standards is to the benefit of our citizens. I consider rather important the application of these values to the benefit of our people, said

the premier. Premier Berisha considered the EU membership as a driving force for development of the whole Balkans region. In the past, the Balkans, - said Premier Berisha - has been an area of problems and in this context; EU membership is a driving force for development of the region.

This is a very worthy process. The reforms we implement are incited by the EU membership project. We are spiritually nourished by the NATO and the EU. This is what should happen; the states get inspired as they get into the road of development and integration. In this process, said the premier, the difficulties cannot be avoided and the performance of a country should be evaluated. In this context, Premier Berisha assessed EU enlargement process as a success story and expressed the satisfaction that 95% of the Albanian citizens back EU integration.

I believe that enlargement is a success story. No evidence confirms enlargement has hurt EU countries, on the contrary, the opposite is true. 95% of the Albanians support EU integration and this brings about confidence, new energy and positive elements to the process, said the premier. Speaking about economic developments and the reforms the government of Albania has implemented, especially to eradicate corruption, Premier Berisha emphasized that from its first days in office he declared a tough fight against corruption. Albania, - said the premier- has suffered a lot from corruption, which was turned into a system. In the beginning we focused on some major reforms. We managed to prevent the conflict of interest in exercise of public office and set crystal clear standards in this direction. We used the revenues to the benefit of the public and not for private interests.

We pursued the policy of a small, but efficient government; we approved laws and set e bonus to everyone denouncing corruption acts. The operational expenses of the administration have been notably reduced and in three years time 3.2 billion USD were collected. As compared with the EU standards,- said further the premier- we have imposed the lowest taxes in Europe, we launched a successful privatization process, we reduced licenses and permits and we are introducing e-procedures at the customs and tax offices. Thanks to the government economic and financial reforms, said the premier, Albania has become a very attractive country for the foreign investors.



Premier Berisha meets with Stuart Jones, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania Sali Berisha received today the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Stuart Jones.

PM Berisha expressed profound gratitude to President Bush and the U.S. Government for the historic assistance provided to Albania and Albanians.

The Premier stressed that ratification in the Senate and the signing by President Bush of the Protocol for Albania's accession to NATO make up the most crucial event in the relations between the two countries, since the recognition of Albania's independence by the USA. Premier Berisha expressed gratitude for the U.S.

assistance in the fight against organized crime, corruption and concrete projects such as the Millennium Account, and familiarised Jones with the developments and progress of reforms in all domains of the country.

Further on, he underlined that the major event of next year are the general election, adding that Albanian government is determined to do its utmost to hold free and fair elections, so that the country finally puts an end to the tradition of discussing election quality. Premier Berisha pledged that the government was preparing the digital register of citizens, the new ID cards and biometric passports.

Likewise, PM Berisha assured the senior U.S. official that the Albanian government remained committed to laws of better standards, to the consolidation of institutions' independence and to the zero-tolerance fight against crime and corruption. It was an open and friendly meeting.

Premier Berisha: DOS privatization, a success story

While presenting the decision for privatization of the Distribution Operator System (DOS) during the Council of Ministers meeting, Premier Berisha said that the government puts an end in this way to a process the previous governments have delayed and thus, it implements a successful privatization process in all aspects. The Premier said that DOS privatization with twice as much the price of its assets is also a result of the success of this privatization.

Premier Berisha: We encourage development of private sector in education and will facilitate fiscal burden for them

-Premier Berisha attended today the inauguration ceremony of new education complex of college "Turгут Özal", a private 14 million euro investment of Turkish investors

Premier Berisha considered doubling of number of students as one of the most spectacular results of the reforms in education system, assuring that reforms in this sector remain a priority for achievement of better results. Considering this complex, the best private investment in education, in the last 20 years, Premier Berisha said that government will encourage private sector and support private education through a special fiscal treatment.

Premier Berisha considered anachronistic and primitive the concept that considers universities as a reservoir of the unemployed.

The premier promised that private universities will have the same treatment as public universities.

Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini: Premier Berisha kept his promises made to Europe

Prime Minister Sali Berisha received today the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs Franco Frattini. Both dignitaries pointed to the great relations between Albania and Italy and the growing opportunities for increase of the cooperation in all the fields of mutual interest. The Italian Foreign Minister Frattini said that Premier Berisha has already delivered to the promises made to Europe, thus guaranteeing Albania successful progress toward EU integration and NATO full membership. Expressing the view that the way to EU depends on the reforms and results of Albania will achieve, Minister Frattini ensured that on this way Albania will always have Italy support. Premier Berisha expressed to Mr. Frattini and through him to the government of Italy and the friendly Italian people the deep gratitude for the generosity, solidarity and the great assistance they have provided Albania with in building of democracy, the market economy and advance of the integration processes.

Speaking about economic cooperation, the premier guaranteed that the government of Albania will make constant efforts to transform Albania into the country of the best opportunities for attraction of foreign direct investments, thus increasing the interest of the Italian entrepreneurs to invest more and more in our country. At the end of their meeting, Premier Berisha and the Italian Foreign Minister Frattini made the following comments to the media:

Premier Berisha: We have just concluded a very cordial meeting with my distinguished friend and of the Albanian people as well, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy Mr. Franco Frattini. It was a golden opportunity for me to express to Mr. Frattini, the Italian government and the friendly Italian people my deep gratitude and of the Albanians as well for the generosity, solidarity and the great assistance they

have provided Albania with in building of democracy, the market economy and integration into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions.

The Albanians find in Mr. Frattini a great advocate for their European and Euro-Atlantic integration efforts. There are still fresh in their memory the important messages that Mr. Frattini conveyed as vice President of the European Commission, his contribution, respect and love to the Albanians, during the period he was leading the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other important tasks in the government of Italy.

Today, we made a detailed overview of relations and cooperation between two countries. I am very pleased because today I present to my friend, Franco Frattini the panorama of another Albania. I would like to start with a demonstration of our efforts for biometric passports and ID cards. I am doing this because, Foreign Minister Frattini, as a friend of Albania and Albanians has brought a few months ago the message of opening of negotiations for visa liberalization.

I promised Frattini that Albania will do the utmost to have the best identity cards, best control of borders, in order to meet the entire requirement deriving from visa liberalization.

Minister Frattini and I discussed for the economic cooperation in all fields. Three years ago. I have visited Rome and met with Premier Berlusconi. Italian Institute for Foreign Trade organized an excellent meeting with Italian business. I pledged before them that my government will do the utmost to turn Albania in a favorable country for investments.

Mr. Minister, one year ago, together with Ambassador D'Elia have visited an Italian enterprise in Shkoder. President of this enterprise, Cottonela said: Mr. Premier, if you manage to realize the fiscal reform you have declared, you would create a real paradise for investors.

I have fully implemented what I have declared. Albania is not a paradise, because paradise is divine, but I guarantee the Italian investors that I would set in Albania the best practices for their investments.

Frattini and I discussed also for Corridor 8, a great work, which will transform the south of the Balkans.

During the meeting, we discussed the future cooperation project, which will start very soon, because Italian government will allocate for Albania a considerable aid in the framework of this cooperation. We will set our priorities, but a major priority for us is agriculture. In Italy, this is one of the most developed sectors in world. Our farmers need a great help to be prepared to face the EU integration process. We shared the same opinion for the topics of discussion.

Once again, I thank with a lot of gratitude the Minister for all the help, friendly feelings, and I can say this visit is another major contribution in excellent relations between our two countries.

Foreign Minister of Italy, Franco Frattini: I thank Mr. Premier for his words and I want to express the feelings of my personal friendship, but also the friendly feelings that characterize the Italian government, Italian people in the relations between two countries. Italy will continue to back the Albania's road toward Euro-Atlantic integration.

Premier Berisha kept the promises made to Europe. And this paves the way to achievement of those results that would be tangible and evident for all the Albanians.

Starting from visa liberalization regime that comes to an end now with the production and distribution of biometric passports.

Next year, Albania will become NATO full right member and this absolutely opens a new perspective for stabilization and security in the entire region. Naturally, the road toward EU depends on reforms and results that Albania would know how to achieve, but Albanian will always have the support of Italy in this road.

In the bilateral plan, our relations are excellent in all fields, and the results of Albania will certainly encourage a bigger number of Italian entrepreneurs in the future. The important agreements we signed today are a testimony of this.

We are ready to begin the determination of a new framework agreement for cooperation between Italy and Albania. We are working on this agreement, which includes other important sectors, such as agriculture. The cooperation in the sector of infrastructure is a priority and Corridor 8 is a greater priority.

Certainly, we are very interested in the possibilities that Albania offers for power generation that Italy really needs. I think that a closer cooperation in the sector of tourism would be another opportunity for Italian investors in Albania.

In conclusion, I would say that between my country and yours there exists a special relation, which will naturally be improved in the future.

Premier Berisha: Economic diplomacy should get priority

Premier Berisha greeted today the proceedings of the Ambassadors Conference 2008 which is held at the venues of the Tirana International Hotel.

In his greeting message delivered on this occasion, Prime Minister Sali Berisha said that 2008 is the year of great historic changes for the Albanian nation and the Albanian diplomats are a quality feature. Every Albanian is right to qualify 2008 a lucky year, a good year in the history of his country and nation. This current year Albania, from one of the most isolated countries of the world and the country that experienced Orwell type dictatorship, succeeded to receive NATO membership invitation thanks to the great reforms, the great transformations in the road of building

democracy and market economy, said the premier, emphasizing that On April 3, 2008 the NATO countries leaders gave the vote of confidence to the reforms of the country.

Appreciating that the reforms have always been the promoter of achievements, the premier considered of great importance the solidarity that international institutions of the friendly countries have shown as they have supported Albania with billion of euros and dollars.

Albania could not have been what it is today without this generosity and assistance, said the premier as he expressed gratitude to all those countries and international institutions.

Further on, the premier focused on the role of Albanian diplomacy in the world saying that the diplomatic missions will be transformed into missions of economic diplomacy. The economic diplomacy should get priority, said Premier Berisha.

Premier Berisha considered 2008 an historical year for the Albanians because Kosova became independent. Kosova independence marks the final transformation from oppression into freedom. Today, the Albanian nation, wherever it lives, is a free nation and builds its future based on values of freedom, said the premier adding the Albanian diplomacy will continue to defend and promote recognition of Kosova independence. The Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs Franco Frattini also greeted today the proceedings of this annual conference.

Premier Berisha pays homage to distinguished intellectual and personality Bashkim Gazidede

Prime Minister Sali Berisha paid homage today to distinguished intellectual and personality, the late Bashkim Gazidede, a former member of the Parliament in 1992, former director of the National Informative Service and recently Deputy Director of the Real Estate Registration Office. The Assembly of Albania in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice organized the homage ceremony and the funeral of the late Gazidede in the presence of top state personalities, family members and friends. Following the homage ceremony, Premier Berisha said that Albania and the Albanians are giving farewell to one of the fairest, most devoted and most intellectual sons.