

EPP SUPPORTS THE START OF EU-CROATIA ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS

03-03-2005



In view of the European Council decision of December 17, 2004, the Political Bureau of the European People's Party unanimously approved today a Resolution, which supports Croatia's intention to start accession negotiations on March 17, 2005.

The EPP expressed its concern of the "negative effect" for the stability in the region that a negative decision on the opening of the negotiations will have by not rewarding the efforts of Croatia in several fields, including cooperation with the ICTY.

"The EPP is convinced that the Croatian authorities have cooperated fully and without reservation with the ICTY and have taken exhaustive and far-reaching measures in their effort to arrest war-indicted criminal General Ante Gotovina", according to the Resolution.

Croatian Foreign Affairs Minister, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, who participated in the EPP Political Bureau, thanked the EPP for this initiative *"that comes at a crucial moment for Croatia and the entire South-East European region"*, she said.

EPP President, Wilfried Martens, declared: *"We are unanimously behind Ivo Sanader's Government and its initiatives. The decision of starting negotiations with the EU on March the 17th is an essential step of vital political importance for this country"*.

The full text of the EPP Resolution:

In view of of the European Council decision of December 17, 2004, the European People's Party re-affirms its commitment taken by all EPP Member Parties in December 2004 to unreservedly support Croatia's intention to begin accession negotiations on March 17, 2005.

The EPP recognizes the efforts and impressive achievements of the Croatian government, led by Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, in cooperation with the ICTY, in particular the fulfilment of more than six hundred demands of the prosecution with the case of the accused Gotovina remaining the only exception.

The EPP is convinced that Croatian authorities have cooperated fully and without reservation with the ICTY and have taken exhaustive and far-reaching measures in their effort to arrest war-indicted criminal General Ante Gotovina.

The upcoming evaluation, by the EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs, for the fulfillment of the set criteria, should be based exclusively on concrete facts and not on speculation. Ultimately, the political decision to start accession negotiations with Croatia is the exclusive right of the European Union, regardless of the opinion of other organizations, non-EU countries, and individuals.

The EPP expresses its concern about the negative effect and signal for political stability in the region, that a negative decision on the opening of the negotiations will have by not rewarding the efforts and achievements of Croatia in the fields of cooperation with ICTY, minority policy, market economic reforms and the successful political fight against nationalism.

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