



Publisher: [Slovenska tiskovna agencija](#), Ltd., Ljubljana, Tivolska cesta 50, in cooperation with the Slovenian Foreign Ministry, E-mail: desk@sta.si

Editor-in-Chief: Borut Meško, Editors: Polona Štekar and Maja Cerkovnik

On the web: [Eye on Slovenia](#) * [Slovenija v žarišču](#)



© STA 2006-2007

Display Issue No. 22 (30.11.2007) ▼

SLOVENIA PLEASSED WITH EU PROGRESS REPORTS FOR WESTERN BALKANS

Slovenia received with satisfaction the annual reports released on 6 November on the progress made by countries of the Western Balkans towards the European Union. It was pleased the most by the clear signal of a European future for the countries contained in what it said was a balanced and well-considered account of the situation.

"Slovenia is working to help these countries make speedy progress on their European path," said the Foreign Ministry, which added that this was one of the priorities of Slovenia's upcoming EU presidency. The ministry added: "Slovenia stands ready to help these countries with all available means, so that they may fulfil their commitments and overcome the issues that have been raised by the European Commission."

The Foreign Ministry also attributed great importance to the emphasis given in the report on Croatia on the need to resolve the status of Croatia's Adriatic ecological and fisheries zone for the EU members. The report says that the decision of the Croatian parliament to implement the zone for EU countries as of 1 January 2008 constitutes a violation of the political agreement reached by Slovenia, Italy and Croatia in June 2004, which was included in a decision of the European Council adopted the same month.

MINISTER RUPEL TOURS WESTERN BALKANS, SAYS SLOVENIA WANTS TO ASSIST SERBIA ON PATH TO EU

Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel visited Belgrade, Skopje and Priština on 24 and 25 October as part of Slovenia's ongoing preparations for the EU presidency in the first half of 2008. The European future of the countries visited and the status of Kosovo topped his talks with top officials and representatives of the international community in Kosovo.

Following talks with his Serbian counterpart Vuk Jeremić on 24 October, Minister Rupel stressed that Slovenia wanted to use its presidency to speed up the EU accession process in the countries of the Western Balkans and to assist Serbia in "gearing up for the next steps towards the EU". Slovenia hopes that Serbia will sign the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU in the beginning of 2008 and then receive candidate status before the end of Slovenia's presidency. Full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) remains a condition that Serbia must fulfil before the SAA can be signed.

Minister Rupel also spoke with his Serbian counterpart about the troika-sponsored negotiations on the future status of Kosovo. Asked if Slovenia would recognise the independence of Kosovo after 10 December, Minister Rupel said "Slovenia will align its actions to that of the EU". "You will not see any one-sided actions from

Minister Rupel emphasised the importance of the EU forming a united front on Kosovo, which is something that Slovenia will be striving to achieve. The EU is responsible for finding a "suitable solution for Kosovo, for resolving relations between Belgrade and Priština", he said. Slovenia wishes to resolve the Kosovo issue before the end of its presidency and believes that the negotiating troika needs to be "given a chance". Minister Rupel would not speculate on the possibility of Kosovo declaring independence unilaterally. "We are in the middle of the troika-led process. Let's wait until it finds additional solutions," he said.

Minister Rupel also met Xavier de Marnhac, the commander of the NATO-led mission in Kosovo, KFOR, and members of the Slovenian Armed Forces. Slovenia currently has 160 troops of the 10th Motorised Battalion serving in Kosovo, who are stationed in Peć. He also visited the Albanian village Zahać, stopping at a local school renovated by Slovenian soldiers with aid donated by Slovenian companies, the Serbian village Goraždevac and the Serbian Orthodox monastery at Dečani.



Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel and Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu (Photo: BOBO)

MINISTER RUPEL ON KOSOVO: SLOVENIA CONCERNED WITH STABILITY

Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel said in Brussels on 19 November that in solving the issue of Kosovo Slovenia was concerned with how one or another solution can contribute to the stability of the region. "The question of stability must not be lost from sight...the issue of Kosovo and Serbia should be viewed from a wider perspective," said Rupel at the meeting of EU foreign ministers.

Minister Rupel announced that the foreign ministers of the four future EU presiding countries - Slovenia, France, the Czech Republic and Sweden - would in the near future pay a visit to the Western Balkans. There they will try and "get a feel for what awaits us in the beginning of next year".

Slovenia," he added.

The pair also spoke about Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša's letter to European leaders in late September calling for Serbia to be granted the status of an EU candidate country during Slovenia's presidency at the latest, irrespective on the progress in Kosovo talks. Minister Jeremić said Serbia appreciated Slovenia's support and hoped that it would be granted this status. Minister Rupel also met Serbian President Boris Tadić and Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica.



Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel and his Serbian counterpart Vuk Jeremić (Photo: BOBO)

MACEDONIA PRAISED ON PROGRESS, BUT ISSUES REMAIN

Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel travelled from Belgrade to Skopje on 24 October, where he met local officials for talks on bilateral relations, the situation in the Western Balkans and Macedonia's efforts to join Euro-Atlantic organisations. "Macedonia is making good progress, although it still faces some issues and prejudice," he said. According to him, Slovenia is ready to help overcome the prejudice and pass on experience to Macedonia in implementing EU and NATO standards.

He said it was too early to say for certain what the roadmap for Macedonia's accession to the EU would be. He added that Slovenia would continue giving Macedonia its support during its spell at the helm of the EU and would be striving to ensure that a debate on giving Macedonia a date for launching accession talks took place as soon as possible.

Minister Rupel labelled Slovenian-Macedonian relations as excellent and friendly. He said he was pleased that the programme of expert assistance was being carried out across nearly all fields. Economic ties are developing well and Slovenian companies are interested in boosting their presence in Macedonia, he added.

The ministers further discussed the outcome of the general election in Kosovo, won by Hashim Thaçi and the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK). While welcoming the orderly manner of elections, they expressed their disappointment with the low turnout. Minister Rupel congratulated the leader of the PDK Hashim Thaçi on his party's success. In the letter he said Slovenia ascribed great importance to the good relations and cooperation among all the people of Kosovo. In the light of Slovenia's nearing EU presidency, Rupel expressed a hope that Kosovo would continue to work closely with the Union.

EU ACTIVITIES OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER

Minister Rupel in Paris for EU Presidency Seminar

Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel took part in a seminar of foreign ministers of the current and next EU presiding troika hosted by the French government in Paris on 17 November. The minister said after the meeting that those who had already presided over the EU shared their experience with countries which are to preside over the bloc for the first time.

The seminar was attended by the foreign ministers of the current troika (Germany, Portugal and Slovenia) and by ministers of the next troika (France, the Czech Republic and Sweden). Minister Rupel used the occasion to brief his counterparts on the priorities and timetable of the Slovenian EU presidency and outlined Slovenia's preparations for the job. Rupel highlighted the future of the EU, economic development, environmental topics, intercultural dialogue, the Middle East and the Western Balkans in his address.

The meeting, chaired by French Prime Minister François Fillon, was very important, as it featured six countries which have had a key role in the process of shaping and adopting the reform treaty and will be heavily involved in its implementation.

Chronology:

24 October, Belgrade, Skopje - Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel visited Serbia and Macedonia as part of his Western Balkans tour.

25 October, Priština - Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel visited Kosovo on the final stop of his Western Balkans tour.

6 November, Lisbon - Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel took part in the ninth session of Euromed foreign ministers, where he outlined Slovenia's initiative to launch a Euro-Mediterranean University seated in Piran.

7-11 November, Beijing - Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel accompanied Prime Minister Janez Janša on his official visit to China. The visit was dedicated to bilateral relations and Slovenia's upcoming presidency of the EU.

9 November, Lisbon - State Secretary at the Foreign Ministry Andrej Šter took part in the European Development Days, stressing that climate change should be a priority for the EU and its citizens.

13 November, London - Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel met his British counterpart David Miliband during a working visit to the UK. The meeting focused on topical international issues and Slovenia's upcoming presidency of the EU.

16 November, Prague - Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel



Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel and Macedonian Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski (Photo: BOBO)

paid an official visit to the Czech Republic. He met his Czech counterpart Karl Schwarzenberg and delivered a lecture at the Czech Foreign Ministry on the Western Balkans and Slovenia's plans for the EU presidency.

17 November, Paris - Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel took part in a seminar hosted by the French government on the EU presidency.

19 November, Brussels - Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel took part in a meeting of EU foreign ministers.

27 November, Annapolis - Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel took part in the conference on the Middle East, presenting Slovenia's views on efforts to resolve the crisis.

29 November, Rome - Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel met his Italian counterpart Massimo D'Alema during a visit to Italy. The pair discussed bilateral relations and the situation in the Western Balkans.

DISCUSSIONS IN KOSOVO FOCUS ON FUTURE STATUS AND ELECTIONS

Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel concluded his Western Balkans tour with a stop in Kosovo on 25 October, where he met the head of the UN mission (UNMIK) Joachim Rucker, Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu and Interim Prime Minister Agim Çeku. The talks revolved around the negotiations on Kosovo's status and the 17 November parliamentary elections.