

28 Apr 2006 -16:06

OSCE Chairman commends authorities in Skopje on their reform efforts

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OSCE Chairman commends authorities in Skopje on their reform efforts and encourages them to continue on this path. SKOPJE, 27 April 2006 - During his two-day visit to Skopje, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht, congratulated the country on its progress toward Euro-Atlantic integration. He also encouraged authorities in Skopje to continue on this path of reforms. Minister De Gucht welcomed the commitment expressed by government and opposition representatives to ensure free and fair elections. "A very important step for the country was the adoption of the new electoral code, which consolidates election legislation and should serve as a foundation for free and fair elections, if implemented properly," he said. "The OSCE will continue to assist the country in this regard." The Chairman-in-Office also welcomed the country's announcement that it would invite the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to monitor the upcoming elections. The Chairman-in-Office welcomed the Government's efforts to strengthen the independence and the capabilities of the judiciary and to strengthen the rule of law. "The OSCE is committed to supporting further reforms in this field," he said. He urged authorities to adopt a law on police reform that would further strengthen efforts to build a transparent, professional and multi-ethnic police force. The Minister encouraged the country to continue its efforts to fight organized crime and corruption. He also welcomed the decentralization process and encouraged further progress of these reforms. "All in all, decentralization is working well," he said, adding that the OSCE would continue to actively support the process. The Chairman-in-Office also indicated that the OSCE mission and its field stations still have a constructive role to play in the country for years to come, especially in the field of monitoring rule of law. During his visit to Skopje, the Chairman-in-Office met President Branko Crvenkovski, Prime Minister Vlado Buckovski, Vice Prime Ministers Radmila Sekerinska and Musa Xhaferi, and Foreign Minister Ilinka Mitreva, as well as parliament members and key opposition leaders.

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