

Beyond Berlin: What Does the Next Decade Hold for the Western Balkans?

Chatham House, London, UK

Tuesday 10 July 2018

08.30 Welcome – European Fund for the Balkans and Chatham House

08.35 Opening remarks by

Nikola Dimitrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia

Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations

09.15 – 10.30 tbc

Session 1. Assessing the Track Record of the Berlin Process So Far - Towards a New European Balkans Partnership?

Speakers:

Christian Danielsson, Director-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission

Zoran Nechev, Head of the Center for EU integration, the Institute for Democracy 'Societas Civilis', Skopje

Srdjan Majstorovic, President of the Governing Board, European Policy Center (CEP), Belgrade

Milica Delevic, Director of Governance and Political Affairs, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Chair: **Professor Richard Whitman**, Associate Fellow, Europe Programme, Chatham House

In this session, speakers will offer their thoughts on how the Berlin Process has evolved since the first Summit was held in 2014 and how they see the future of the initiative in the context of wider EU-Balkan relations. The panel will consider the following questions:

- What are the concrete achievements of the Berlin Process and how can we build on them going forward?
- What are the initiative's main shortcomings? Does the Berlin Process still have added value in the context of the new EU Strategy for the Western Balkans?
- The European Fund for the Balkans has proposed that a new European Balkans Partnership is needed to relaunch EU-Balkan relations in 2018. In this context, what are the biggest challenges facing the region and how would the new partnership contribute towards addressing these?
- How can the EU better communicate in the region, both with the citizens of the six Western Balkan states, as well as with the local political elites? Can it be more forthright in communicating problems publically and addressing the current trend of 'stabilitocracies' in the region?
- Looking out to 2025 and beyond, how will the EU itself change? And how might internal reform change what it means to be a member?

10.30 – 10.50 Coffee break

10.50 Opening remarks by

Baroness Ashton of Upholland, Senior Adviser, Chatham House; Chair, Global Europe Program, Woodrow Wilson Center; High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (2009-14) and First Vice President of the European Commission (2010 – 2014)

11.05 – 12.20 tbc

Session 2. Exploring the Role of Non-EU Actors in the Western Balkans – Partners or Competitors?

Speakers:

Angelina Eichhorst, Deputy Managing Director, Europe and Central Asia; Director, Western Europe, Western Balkans and Turkey, European External Action Service

Nikola Burazer, Executive Editor, European Western Balkans

Tena Prelec, Research Associate, European Institute, London School of Economics and Political Science

Florian Bieber, Professor of Southeast European Studies, University of Graz

Chair: Vessela Tcherneva, Deputy Director, ECFR; Head, ECFR Sofia Office

Since the late 1990s, the countries of the Western Balkans have been firmly on track to full Euro-Atlantic integration. However, progress has been slower than many had hoped for, with six countries still remaining outside the EU and four are yet to join NATO. In recent years, a number of other actors have also become active in the region. What are their goals and interests? Could they be effective partners for the EU in promoting needed reforms in the region or do they act as spoilers? Is there a real threat of the Western Balkan states choosing an alternative path and turning its back on the Euro-Atlantic community? In this context, speakers will consider the following questions:

- What is Moscow's strategy in the region? What place does the region play in Russian foreign policy? How does the country exercise its soft power in the Balkans?
- With China and the UAE increasingly interested in the region and investing large sums of money in infrastructure and real estate projects, what are the geopolitical implications of such investments?
- With Turkey's EU membership prospects uncertain, has its policy towards the Balkans changed? Does it still see value in being the EU's partner in the region or will it look to form other partnerships?
- Is the American interest in the region limited to counteracting Russian influence? Does the US have other strategic priorities and how does it go about achieving these?
- Finally, could the UK have a distinctive role in the region post-Brexit? Is there interest on the part of the UK in staying engaged in the Balkans?