



Members of the European Parliament  
Members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe  
Member of the German Bundestag

Madam Chancellor  
Dr. Angela Merkel  
Federal Chancellery  
Willy-Brandt-Straße 1  
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Brussels, 23 April 2021

**Subject: Summit of the „Berlin Process“ 2021 in Berlin**

Dear Chancellor,  
Dear Dr Merkel,

we, Members of the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and of the German Bundestag, are writing to you regarding the forthcoming summit of the “Berlin Process”, planned for summer 2021 in Berlin.

We are addressing you as Chair of this timely and important conference, which has the potential to be a crucial moment for the Western Balkans in Europe. The conference you convened in 2014 remains a landmark; its conclusions recalled:

*A hundred years after the outbreak of the First World War, the heads of government, foreign ministers and economics ministers of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia, as well as representatives of the European Commission, the future host Austria, and France, met in Berlin on 28 August 2014 for the first Conference on the Western Balkans.*

*We will further our endeavours to make additional real progress in the reform process, in resolving outstanding bilateral and internal issues, and in achieving reconciliation within and between the societies in the region.*

Today, seven years later, “real progress” requires further strong commitment to the values of genuine European unity, based on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, including truth and justice, the end of hate speech and information disorder spread by politicians. Without such a clear and unambiguous commitment, no reconciliation can be achieved. This fact has to be recorded in the final statement of the conference this summer, reflecting your work, and of the European Union, the Council of Europe and many regional initiatives of states and civil society over the last two decades.

We as Parliamentarians continue to support and promote activity to end impunity and to fight against crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, including their denial. Europe and the European Union are an area of shared values, values that are incompatible with the denial of crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes, including crimes committed by totalitarian regimes. States have their own approach to this issue, but in the interests of reconciliation, the memory of those crimes must be a collective memory, shared and promoted, where possible, by us all. Yet, the glorification of war criminals and attempts to rehabilitate persons involved in war crimes has become commonplace in public and political discourse undermining the rule of law and efforts of reconciliation. The conference of the Berlin Process should advance proposals covering publicly condoning, denying or grossly trivializing crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes directed against a group of persons defined by reference to criteria other than race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin, such as social status or political convictions.

We appreciate your personal involvement in the issues of the Western Balkan countries and your continuous effort to support their European integration and their democratisation, as do the political leaders of the Western Balkan countries themselves. Therefore, we encourage you, in your capacity as Chair of the conference and Chancellor of Germany, to confirm in the conference conclusions such important commitment and steps. We are expecting also that Germany will lead by example among its EU peers by furthering cooperation and by ensuring appropriate resources to the processes of truth, justice and reconciliation based on rejection of misinformation and hate speech.

The legacy of the Berlin Process will be measured against the benchmark of “real progress” in these matters of crucial importance for peace in Europe, based on i) the need to establish the facts about the about the conflicts and its victims; ii) to revisit and holistically relaunch the instruments of transitional justice, iii) to empower youth and foster opportunities for dealing with the legacy of the past; iv) and, critically important, to urgently end hate speech.

In this respect, there is also an immediate need to move away from existing one-sided history-teaching practices and divisive narratives in schools. In particular, elementary and secondary education. In this regard, Council of Europe standards and recommendations on multi-perspective history researching, teaching and learning should be recalled. The participation in the Council of Europe Observatory on History Teaching in Europe, which started its work during the German Presidency of the Council of Europe, of countries of the Berlin Process, such as Albania, France, Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia, alongside several EU members and other states, is welcome practical step of regional cooperation which Germany should support by joining the enlarged partial agreement of the Observatory.

Without genuine commitment of the highest political level of the Berlin Process countries “real progress” will remain slow. The region’s governments with your and other governments’ support need to effectively endorse and promote transitional justice strategies and co-ordinate action through agreed plans of action. The existing commitments made at the London Summit of the Berlin Process (2018) and elsewhere must be followed up and honoured. The need to address the lack of political will across the region to dedicate genuine efforts to confront legacies of nationalism and conflict, to refrain from instrumentalising fear and guilt, for short term political gains, and to create a public space off- and online conducive to establishing the truth in full, remain at the heart of the problem.

These steps are essential elements in the process of reconciliation but are not sufficient to bridge existing divides. As Parliamentarians we underline the importance of a positive forward-looking agenda, with a focus on youth and disrupting trans-generational trauma, people to people contacts and building cultural links. We are committed to be a partner of civil society, institutions, governments and international organizations in this common effort.

Dear Chancellor,

as the Chair of the conference in summer 2021 you have the unique opportunity to commit your peers of the Berlin process countries to take the necessary action and recall to them the conviction that the pursuit of peace based upon justice and international co-operation remains vital for the preservation of a humane society and a Europe without fear. This commitment of the conference chaired by you may in turn help to mobilise and reconfirm that first and foremost the victims of the conflicts and their families, those who are still missing, well-intended citizens and civil society at large not only have you by their side, but that they have a growing, not a shrinking, space in their societies for developing genuine reconciliation und sustainable peace as precondition of successful and lasting European integration and unity.

In confidence of your personal commitment to reconciliation in Europe and the Western Balkan, we are offering our availability for further exchange on this matter. Please accept, Dear Chancellor, Dear Dr Merkel, the renewed assurances of our highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

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