
ALBANIA CONTINUES TALKS ON MARITIME BORDER DELIMITATION WITH GREECE

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The Albanian authorities continued on Friday talks over the delimitation of the maritime border with the neighboring Greece, an issue which has sparked strong reactions among Albanian politics and public opinion.

The President of Albania Ilir Meta met a group of lawmakers from the majority and opposition parties, members of the parliamentary foreign committee, to discuss over the negotiations being held with Greece on the issue of the sea border delimitation, said a press release of president's cabinet.

This meeting was held a week after President Meta refused the government's request to authorize continuation of negotiations with Greece over the two countries' Ionian Sea maritime border.

Meta justified his decision by saying that he needed more transparency and information on what and how the Albanian government would negotiate in order to authorize Albanian Foreign Ministry to continue talks with the Greek party.

The Foreign Ministry reacted by saying that it would send the president a letter with all clarifications required while it also invited Meta to be part of this process.

In its press release issued after Friday's meeting, presidential spokesman Tedi Blushi said that President Meta voiced support to every incentive for a new agreement with Greece and that he was ready to collaborate with the government and parliament in a constructive, responsible and transparent way.

"President Meta said all acts should be in full compliance with the ruling of the Constitutional Court to avoid any unpleasant surprises in the future," the spokesperson cited President Meta as saying during the meeting with MPs.

Meanwhile, after the meeting, representatives of the majority and the opposition said that they were happy with the president's engagement.

The chair of the Foreign Committee Mimi Kodheli said after the meeting that they had agreed on the absolute need there existed for the maritime deal with Greece not to fail, in particular due to the fact that Albania was in front of a historical moment which is the launch of accession talks with the European Union.

Kodheli also spoke about the importance of reaching an agreement with Greece and for continuing

Albania's EU process.

Kodheli, also former minister of defense, stressed that the Constitutional Court that rejected the agreement of 2009 had made a very clear division of the roles of the president, the government and the parliament.

Albania signed an agreement with Greece in 2009 after two years of negotiations, but the Albanian Constitutional Court annulled it in 2010 after finding it in breach of the constitution and international norms.

The negotiating group didn't get the president's authorization for talks was the reason that the agreement was turned down by the Court.

Therefore, the current government sent a letter to President Meta asking for his authorization to continue the talks, which could lead to an agreement.

The delimitation of sea border is deemed by both sides as an unresolved issue. During the last year, the two countries have intensified their efforts to reach a deal.

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