

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTS:

The new composition of the Macedonian Assembly

The new Government of the Republic of Macedonia.

Macedonian DIPLOMATIC BULLETIN



The Members of the European Parliament from the Group of the European People's Party and European Democrats (EPP-ED), Othmar Karas, Ingo Friedrich and Anna Ibrisagic extended support in the European Parliament in Brussels for the Macedonian commitments to receiving a date for starting EU membership negotiations by the end of 2008.

**BUDGET COUNCIL HELPS REALIZE
ONE OF KEY EU INTEGRATION PRIORITIES**

*Interview with H.E. Mr. Trajko Veljanovski,
Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia*

**Ivica Bocevski: MACEDONIA WITH FLYING COLORS
TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**S.E.M. Bernard Valero: LA PERSPECTIVE EUROPÉENNE DES BALKANS
EST UNE PRIORITÉ DE LA PFUE**



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
No. 16 / June-July 2008

The sixth Parliamentary Elections in the Republic of Macedonia

The sixth parliamentary elections are behind us. As usual, in the end what has been done is being evaluated. The question asked is what grade the early elections will be given? Everybody will most probably assess them from their own viewpoint. From the point of the view of the State Election Commission, the elections were conducted almost flawlessly and the Commission's work is deserving of high grades. This has already been voiced by the representatives of the OSCE/ODIHR in their preliminary report, which inter alia says, "In general, the State Election Commission worked in a transparent, efficient and professional manner and succeeded in meeting almost all tight deadlines. All its formal sessions, as well as most of its working meetings were open to the international and domestic observers." These assessments are certainly a result of the fact that the Commission prepared on time the entire election material, trained voters through the media, held special training courses for the members of the municipal electoral commissions and the members of the electoral boards and revealed the results in the shortest time possible. However, when the elections are viewed as a whole, the assessment changes and at times touches the bottom. This shows that in conducting a very complex activity, such as parliamentary elections, the activities of a number of institutions and factors have an enormous effect. If each of them effectuates laws and takes timely response to irregularities as they emerge there will by no means be incidents such as those that happened on 1 June 2008, which were the reason for a revote in certain election units and for the negative impact on Macedonia's international credibility. Hence, someone decided to impede the conduct of the elections as a democratic process. It is hard to imagine that an ordinary citizen would dare to instigate election irregularities unless being directed to do so by a party leadership. And the party leadership believes it is almighty and capable of giving those who transgress protection before courts and other authorities. Some of those who broke the law in the previous elections either received mild punishments or were not tried at all. Foreign institutions are those react most to such cases. They believe that with such actions by those same authorities that should sanction the election irregularities, transgressors are rewarded and encouraged to create even greater problems in the future. Therefore, Macedonia should not turn a blind eye this time around. Those behind the fraud were caught red-handed. There is evidence.

*Elections, continued on page 10
in the special supplement*

President Crvenkovski meets with Russian President Medvedev

Branko Crvenkovski, President of the Republic of Macedonia, held a meeting with Dmitrij Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, at the sidelines of the 12th International Economic Forum, which was held in Saint Petersburg on 7 and 8 June year 2008.

The Macedonian President expressed gratitude for the principled policy that the Russian Federation has led toward the Republic of Macedonia ever since the state gained independence.

"Regardless of some demands that are continually being made of Moscow by Greece, the Russian Federation will not change its principled position, that is, it will respect and observe the constitutional name of our country," Macedonian President Crvenkovski said after the meeting.

Crvenkovski stressed that they also talked about the bilateral relations between the two countries, the possibilities for Russian companies to invest in the Republic of Macedonia, and the issue of Kosovo.



Nimetz holds talks with state leaders in Macedonia

Matthew Nimetz, Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary General mediating the Macedonia-Greece talks over the difference regarding the constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia, met with Macedonian President Branko Crvenkovski and Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski in Skopje on 27 June.

"At all our meetings, both in New York and here, we discuss a number of ideas, which are not concrete proposals. I can't say the rift has been reduced, but it is a shared assessment that this is a very good time for seeing what can be done. I think there is will here to seek out a solution and bridge the differences," Mr. Nimetz said after the meetings.

President Crvenkovski and Prime Minister Gruevski reaffirmed in the course of the talks Macedonia's position as regards its future active involvement in this process.

According to the Macedonian media, Prime Minister Gruevski asked at his meeting with mediator Nimetz that in resolving the difference regarding the constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia the issues relating to the rights of the Macedonian minority in Greece, and the right of the ethnic Macedonians exiled from Greece during the Greek Civil War of 1946-49 to Greek citizenship and to reclaiming their property or to reimbursement should also be taken into consideration.

The last round of talks took place in New York on 12 June.



Demarcation of border on part with Kosovo starts

The laying of a border stone at the three-border junction point at Serupa on the Sar Mountain on 30 June officially marked the start of the demarcation of the Macedonian state border on the part with Kosovo. The total length of the border line to be marked is approximately 150 km, which will be marked with main and auxiliary enumerated state markers. Due to the terrain configuration and depending on the weather conditions, the border will be demarcated at an accelerated pace during the summer.

The demarcation is being performed in accordance with the Agreement on spread and description of the state border, signed between Skopje and Belgrade in February 2001, and Article 3.3 of Annex 8 of UN Special Representative Martti Ahtisaari's plan.

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Dame Gruev 6, 1000 Skopje, Republic of Macedonia
www.mfa.gov.mk • bulletin@mfa.gov.mk

Editor: Zvonimir Popovik

Editorial Board: Vasile Andonovski
Shpresa Jusufi; Vladimir Efremovski
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MACEDONIAN INFORMATION CENTRE

Translation: Aleksandra Ilievska, Aleksandra Noveska

Director: Dragan Antonov

Address: Naum Naumovski Borca 73,
1000 Skopje, Republic of Macedonia

www.micnews.com.mk



PM Gruevski appeals to Greece to recognize Macedonian minority

Nikola Gruevski, Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia, sent a letter to his Greek counterpart Kostas Karamanlis on 14 July in which he called on Greece, as a democratic country and member state of the EU and NATO, to recognize the existence of the Macedonian national minority and grant it basic human rights. The letter also raises the issues of the citizenship and property rights of the persons exiled from Greece during the Civil War of 1946-1949.

Prime Minister Gruevski said he was confident that Greece would demonstrate political will and that in the service of improving the relations between the two countries would approach these problems in an unbiased and objective manner and would resolve them in compliance with the international human rights standards.

Following Prime Minister Karamanlis's response denying the existence of an ethnic Macedonian minority in Greece and the historical facts pertaining to the deportation of numerous members of this ethnic group during the Civil War and the confiscation of their property, Prime Minister Gruevski sent letters raising these issues first to European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and then to the top officials of the Council of Europe, the OSCE, NATO, the prime ministers of the permanent member states of the UN Security Council, the member states of the EU, and other relevant representatives of the international community.

In addition, Macedonian Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio Milososki sent a letter to EU Commissioner for Multilingualism Leonard Orban, in which he stressed that the linguistic distinction of the ethnic Macedonian minority in Greece was not observed and said he expected the European Commission to make sure that Greece set a constructive example of respecting basic human rights, including one's right to speak their one language.

Former Interior Minister Ljube Boskoski acquitted on all counts

Following a one-year trial, the Judicial Council of the Hague Tribunal pronounced Ljube Boskoski, former Interior Minister of the Republic of Macedonia, not guilty.

The Council concluded that Boskoski was not guilty on any of the counts of his indictment and ordered that he be released from the Tribunal's detention facility.

However, the Judicial Council pronounced Johan Tarculovski guilty on all three counts of his indictment and sentenced him to 12 years in prison.

Boskoski and Tarculovski were the only two Macedonian citizens indicted by the Tribunal in relation to the Macedonian armed conflict of 2001. Their trial commenced on 16 April 2007 and ended on 8 May 2008.

President Crvenkovski visits Montenegro

Branko Crvenkovski, President of the Republic of Macedonia, paid a working visit to the Republic of Montenegro on 3 July year 2008, and he met with the President of Montenegro Filip Vujanovic in Milocer.

"We concurred that the bilateral relations are at an exceptionally high level and that they are characterized by sincere and cordial relations of mutual support, which is founded on many aspects from the past and on our common goals for the future. Macedonia and Montenegro are both determined to become members of the EU, which binds us to mutual cooperation and support, which will continue in the future," President Crvenkovski stressed.

The two presidents also promised to further intensify the economic cooperation between the two countries, and they discussed the situation in the region.

"There are excellent opportunities for the economies of the two countries to work together. Thus, the task of the chambers of commerce and firms is to do everything in their power to utilize the compatibilities of the two economies and to secure economic cooperation," President Vujanovic stressed.

Asked by a journalist to comment on the letter of French President Nicolas Sarkozy, President Crvenkovski stressed that it is of great importance that Sarkozy, as president of a state that has presidency of the EU, wrote to him and underlined France's key priorities and assessments as regards Macedonia and its aspirations for accession to the European Union.

PM Gruevski participates in traditional meeting in Salzburg

At the invitation of the Federal Chancellor of the Republic of Austria, Alfred Gusenbauer, Macedonian Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski participated in the meeting focusing on the stability in Southeast Europe in the 21st century in Salzburg, Austria, on 27 July.

At this traditional meeting of the prime ministers of Southeast Europe, issues relating to economy, traffic, energy and stability were raised.

"We support the European future of all the countries of the Western Balkans," Chancellor Gusenbauer said. "The economic situation in the Western Balkans is developing in a positive direction even though the international situation is not excellent. As regards the issue of energy we may turn to alternatives in view of the huge potential of the renewable energy resources."

FM Milososki takes part in Croatia Summit 2008

Macedonian Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio Milososki took part in the Third International Conference "Croatia Summit 2008 – Security, Development, Prosperity", which was organized by the Government of the Republic of Croatia and was held in Dubrovnik on 4 and 5 July 2008.

"Macedonia is prepared to fulfill the criteria set by the European Commission so that it can start the negotiations for membership in the EU by the end of this year," the Macedonian minister stressed. He added that the European Union must protect its credibility by preventing the name issue from becoming an additional burden on the Copenhagen Criteria.

Milososki also emphasized the importance of liberalization of the visa regime, noting that this would Europeanize the region and the EU would confirm its commitment to Southeastern Europe.

Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, host of this conference, underlined that the future of Southeastern Europe is important for the future of the world and Europe.

"The peoples in our southeastern neighborhood have the right to achieve their aspirations. Our friends in Macedonia have full right to our support and encouragement," Sanader stated in his address.

At the sidelines of this Conference, Macedonian Foreign Minister Milososki held meetings with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried, Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski, and Montenegrin Foreign Minister Milan Rocen.



PRESIDENT CRVENKOVSKI VISITS ALBANIA

Branko Crvenkovski, President of the Republic of Macedonia, paid a working visit to the Republic of Albania on 16 and 17 July year 2008, and he met with his host Albanian President Bamir Topi in the city of Durres. The two presidents expressed satisfaction with the development of good neighborly and friendly relations between the two countries, and they voiced hope that these relations would intensify further, especially in the areas of investments, tourism and energy.



President Crvenkovski said that the Durres Port could be a serious alternative to the Thessaloniki Port with respect to the Macedonian economy and it can provide a better-quality offer to the Macedonian firms and companies.

“Albania is in favor of joint cooperation with regards to energy production and there is an interest for construction of small hydroelectric power plants, as well as a tendency for switching from hydroelectric to thermal capacities,” Albanian President Topi said at the joint press conference.

Crvenkovski and Topi also reaffirmed Macedonia and Albania's position as regards the EU-integration processes.

“Macedonia is ready for a compromise and a resolution. But we are not prepared to accept a diktat, that is, someone else defining the name that we will use in our international communication,” President Crvenkovski said at the press conference regarding the name issue with Greece.

The presidents of the two countries also exchanged views about the current situation in the region, with an emphasis on Kosovo.

ISRAEL LIFTS VISAS FOR MACEDONIAN CITIZENS

The State of Israel lifted travel visas for the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia. This decision of the Israeli Government was approved by the Commission for Internal Affairs of the Knesset on 29 June.

The technical implementation of this decision was endorsed on 27 July 2008 whereupon Macedonian citizens are allowed to travel to Israel visa free, the Embassy of the Republic of Macedonia in Tel Aviv said.

FACILITATED VISA REGIME WITH RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Antonio Milososki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia, and Vladimir Solocinski, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation, signed in Skopje on 19 June the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and the Government of the Russian Federation on travel conditions for citizens of the Republic of Macedonia and the Russian Federation.

Based on reciprocity, the Agreement establishes a facilitated visa regime between the two countries, identifying the categories of citizens exempt from the visa responsibility, as well as the categories of citizens allowed to enter, transit and exit the countries with free-of-charge visas.

USA TO KEEP SUPPORTING MACEDONIA

Rosemary DiCarlo, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the USA, visited Macedonia on 27 June and met with President Branko Crvenkovski, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, as well as with representatives of the political parties from the governing coalition and the opposition.

Expressing regret over the outcome of the NATO Summit in Bucharest, DiCarlo reiterated Washington's support for Macedonia's prompt NATO accession, emphasizing that, “the country deserves it”.

“It is obvious that there is consensus in Macedonia over the country's NATO membership. The USA will keep supporting Macedonia in accomplishing its goal,” DiCarlo said after meeting Prime Minister Gruevski.



She added that the NATO membership of the Republic of Macedonia and the other countries of the region had a crucial importance for ensuring stability.

In her view, the swift resolution of the difference with Greece regarding the name is indispensable so that Macedonia can join the Alliance as soon as possible.

DiCarlo said she expected the new Government to continue the reforms, progress further in its Euro-integration process and sanction those responsible for the election irregularities.

The determination of the Republic of Macedonia to meet the conditions set by the EU as a responsibility before being given a date for starting membership negotiations and its commitment to seeking out a solution to the name issue that will not affect its national and state interests were reaffirmed by President Crvenkovski and Prime Minister Gruevski in the course of their meeting with the representative of the U.S. Department of State.

DiCarlo also said she was pleased with the support Macedonia gives to UN Special Representative Martti Ahtisaari's plan, which in Macedonian Foreign Minister Milososki's words, will continue in the future.



MACEDONIA AND NORWAY SIGN VISA FACILITATION AGREEMENT

Macedonian Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio Milososki and Carl Wibye, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway to Macedonia, signed an Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and the Government of the Kingdom of Norway on facilitation of the issuance of visas in Skopje on 28 July.



“This is our first agreement, and I hope that the next thing that we will sign with Norway will be the visa liberalization agreement, something that we have been working on as an objective with all Schengen countries,” the Macedonian foreign minister stressed.

Even though Norway is not a member of the European Union, it is part of the Schengen zone, and it is the 25th country with which Macedonia has signed such agreement.

CZECH REPUBLIC REAFFIRMS SUPPORT FOR MACEDONIA'S EUROPEAN AND EURO ATLANTIC ASPIRATIONS

Tomáš Pojar, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, paid a visit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia on 17 and 18 July, and he met with State Secretary Igor Ilievski.

Ilievski and Pojar expressed satisfaction with the intensification of the bilateral relations between Macedonia and the Czech Republic, and they agreed that economic trade between the two countries should increase.

The opening of a Macedonian Embassy in Prague and the designating of the first resident ambassador of the Czech Republic to the Republic of Macedonia were assessed as clear signs that the two countries want to intensify the cooperation in the future.

Pojar conveyed the Czech Republic's support for Macedonia's expectations regarding liberalization of the visa regime.

State Secretary Ilievski expressed hope that the Czech Republic's constant support for Macedonia's EU and Euro Atlantic aspirations would intensify during the Czech Republic's presidency of the European Union.

DIRECTOR OF BULGARIAN DIPLOMATIC INSTITUTE VISITS MACEDONIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY

Prof. Milan Milanov, Director of the Diplomatic Institute at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria, held talks on 17 July with representatives of the Macedonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs responsible for diplomatic education.

The two sides expressed interest for fur-

ther intensification of the good cooperation between the two ministries in the sphere of diplomatic education, and they stressed the need for signing of a document that would regulate this cooperation.

The Bulgarian delegation also included Miho Mihov, Ambassador of the Republic

of Bulgaria to the Republic of Macedonia, and Stefan Stratiev, Head of the Strategic Research Department at the Bulgarian Diplomatic Institute.

The Bulgarian delegation also met with State Secretary Igor Ilievski.

VISA DIALOGUE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA – EU

A Macedonian delegation headed by Igor Ilievski, State Secretary of the Macedonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, met with representatives of the European Commission led by Jean-Louis de Brouwer, Director for Immigration, Borders, and Asylum at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice, Freedom, and Security, in Brussels on 18 July. This meeting was held within the frames of the visa liberalization dialogue between the Republic of Macedonia and the European Union.

At the meeting, the Macedonian delegation informed the EC representatives about the achievements in the sphere of justice and internal affairs, and it was mutually agreed that the Republic of Macedonia had made great progress in the past period.

The European Commission presented the itinerary for fulfilment of the criteria set in the Roadmap for liberalization of the visa regime.

The two sides also exchanged views as regards the future activities within the frames of the visa dialogue.

State Secretary Igor Ilievski also held a consultative briefing on 16 July with the resident consuls of the member states of the Schengen zone who are accredited in the Republic of Macedonia.

WEU ASSEMBLY DELEGATION VISITS MACEDONIA

A high-level delegation of the Assembly of Western European Union (WEU) comprising Jean-Pierre Masseret, President of the Assembly, Pedro Agramunt, Chairman of the Assembly's Political Committee, Theodoros Pangalos, Chairman of the Socialist Group, and Robert Walter, Chairman of the Federated Group visited the Republic of Macedonia on 9 July.



The WEU Assembly officials met with President Branko Crvenkovski, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, Parliament Speaker Trajko Veljanovski, Foreign Minister Antonio Milososki, Defense Minister Lazar Elenovski and a number of parliamentarians. The issues raised during their talks included Macedonia's strategic interests, that is its membership of NATO and the EU, its economy, the EU visa regime, as well as the name issue with Greece.

**Entretien avec S.E.M. Bernard Valero,
Ambassadeur de La République Française en République de Macédoine**

LA PERSPECTIVE EUROPÉENNE DES BALKANS EST UNE PRIORITÉ DE LA PFUE



Son Excellence M. Bernard Valero est un diplomate de carrière français. Il a suivi des études secondaires au Lycée Lyautey de Casablanca. Il est diplômé de l'Institut d'études politiques de Paris.

M. VALERO a été nommé Ambassadeur de la République française en République de Macédoine en Décembre 2006. En Macédoine il vient de la position de Consul Général de France à Barcelone.

Votre excellence, la France assurera au second semestre 2008 la présidence de l'UE. Quelles seront les priorités de la présidence française?

La présidence de l'Union européenne dont la France vient de prendre la responsabilité depuis le 1er juillet dernier s'emploiera à apporter des réponses concrètes et efficaces aux questions, aux attentes, voire aux inquiétudes des citoyens de l'UE.

Dans un monde globalisé, où les menaces de tous ordres sont nombreuses, il est important de rassurer. C'est pourquoi nous sommes mobilisés pour obtenir des progrès sur des dossiers aussi importants que le climat environnement, l'énergie, la maîtrise de l'immigration, la politique agricole commune, la politique européenne de sécurité et de défense. Il s'agit d'autant de dossiers sur lesquels les Européens attendent des réponses et des actions, sur lesquels l'UE a un rôle à jouer sur la scène globale, et sur lesquels nous pouvons, tous ensemble, faire avancer les choses.

Bien évidemment, et cela n'entraîne pas dans la préparation initiale de la PFUE, nous allons devoir gérer la situation nouvelle créée par

le résultat du référendum en Irlande. Il s'agit désormais de travailler sur la bonne solution, dans la perspective du conseil européen du mois d'octobre, et de poursuivre par ailleurs le processus de ratification du traité de Lisbonne.

La perspective européenne des Balkans, et de votre pays en particulier, est une priorité de la PFUE. Nous sommes en cela fidèle au sommet UE-Balkans de Zagreb qui, lors de la précédente présidence française de l'UE en 2000, avait ouvert la perspective européenne des Balkans. En ce qui concerne la Macédoine nous allons œuvrer pour soutenir et encourager tous les efforts que mèneront les nouvelles autorités de Skopje dans cette direction.

La France est promoteur de la perspective européenne des pays de l'ESE. Vous attendez-vous que la République de Macédoine obtienne une date pour entamer des négociations d'adhésion à l'UE, au cours de la PFUE?

Je le souhaite de tout cœur. Mais n'oubliez pas que la première étape consistera à obtenir, d'abord un rapport annuel positif de la commission assorti d'une recommandation dans ce sens.

Dès lors, la Macédoine doit accomplir des efforts et des progrès, très vite, et de manière convaincante, afin de satisfaire aux huit « benchmarks » posé par la commission de Bruxelles. Nous encourageons fortement le gouvernement macédonien, mais aussi tous les acteurs politiques du pays à se mobiliser autour de cet objectif.

Le projet « Union pour la Méditerranée », a été inauguré le 13 juillet 2008, à l'occasion du Sommet de Paris pour la Méditerranée. Votre excellence, pourriez-vous partager avec nous votre point de vue sur ce sujet?

Lancé par le président Nicolas Sarkozy et agréé avec nos partenaires européens ainsi que ceux du sud de la méditerranée, le projet d'union pour la méditerranée est un projet majeur, qui s'inscrit dans le fil du processus de Barcelone.

L'enjeu de ce projet, dont le sommet de Paris a marqué le lancement, consiste à favoriser l'apparition d'un espace de dialogue et de coopération entre tous les pays riverains de cette mer qui représente le berceau de l'humanité. Il s'agit d'y développer un dialogue politique intense mais aussi d'y réaliser des projets concrets de coopération entre les Etats concernés. L'UE a un rôle essentiel à joué dans cet espace, notamment par sa force d'entraînement et en raison de ses responsabilités globales.

En tant qu'Ambassadeur de la République française vous résidez dans notre pays presque deux ans. Quelles sont vos impressions sur notre pays?

Votre pays occupe une place particulière dans mon cœur. Je me réjouis chaque jour de la qualité de l'hospitalité dont je bénéficie depuis bientôt deux ans, et de la qualité des relations humaines que j'entretiens avec tous vos concitoyens. Le moment venu, j'espère le plus tard possible, j'emporterai avec moi de merveilleux souvenirs de mon séjour ici. La Macédoine est un pays captivant, qui séduit, qui est un véritable joyau serti au milieu des Balkans, et qui ne laisse personne indifférent. Je ne suis sûrement pas le premier à porter ce jugement, mais en le faisant je m'inscris naturellement dans cette tradition d'amitié fidèle de la France et que beaucoup de mes compatriotes entretiennent par ailleurs avec votre pays.

Macedonian DIPLOMATIC BULLETIN



Six parliamentary elections have been held in the Republic of Macedonia since the country declared independence and introduced political pluralism. In this period, the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia had seven presidents.

At the moment Trajko Veljanovski has the honor of being President of the Assembly. He has rich experience, which he gained in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia and within the frames of the Government and the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Macedonia.

Interview with H.E. Mr. Trajko Veljanovski,
Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia

BUDGET COUNCIL HELPS REALIZE ONE OF KEY EU INTEGRATION PRIORITIES



In my address at the Parliament's inauguration session I underlined that I view the Parliament as a genuine temple of democracy. The Parliament as an institution in all democratic countries is the right place for articulating the interests of diverse political entities. At the same time democracy implies responsibility. Therefore I trust that the majority of the VMRO-DPMNE-led coalition For Better Macedonia, the same majority that put me in office, has huge responsibility. It is for this reason that in my first address as President of the Parliament I said that I would do all in my power to strike a balance between the majority and the opposition. I would like to underscore that I took the decision for the 79 laws that I mentioned earlier in coordination with all the groups of MPs. And I think that the coordination meetings as a mechanism are very important in these democratic processes, as well as for the responsibility of all of us.

Your Excellency, is your idea to establish Budget Council reflecting your commitment to greater autonomy of the legislative branch vis-à-vis the executive and judicial branches? How can the Parliament be made stronger, more efficient and more autonomous?

I am happy you asked this question. I have immediately raised the issue of establishing Budget Council, a body of the Parliament that will enhance its financial autonomy and capacity, an issue over which a general consensus was reached among the MPs at the conference in Wilton Park earlier this year. The Budget Council helped us realize one of the key priorities (benchmarks) in partnership with the European Union pertaining to the political criteria for the Parliament on our way to receiving a date for starting membership negotiations. At the same time I expect the work of this recently established body to raise the Parliament's legislative capacity in general by way of enhancing the support the MPs receive from the professional services in initiating and drafting laws coming from MPs and in considering and amending laws coming from the Government. The establishment of the Budget Council has already resonated positively with the international community.

Your Excellency, first of all congratulations for your election as Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia. What does this election mean to you?

Thank you. My election as Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia is of course a great honor for me, and even more a responsibility arising from the constitutional provisions defining the role of the Parliament as a legislative branch independent of the two other branches of government, the executive and judicial. My responsibility as Speaker also draws upon the Parliament's Rules of Procedure that closely define my terms of reference, that is my work in Parliament. At the same time my work and the work of all the MPs is utterly transparent, because as you know the plenary meetings, as well as the work of the committees is broadcast live on the parliamentary channel and it is my personal belief that this transparency, which needs to be kept and upgraded, imposes on us even greater responsibility if we truly wish to be serious and accountable politicians.

You have been appointed to this position in a highly important period for the Euro-integration process of the Republic of Macedonia. What are your priorities and the priorities of the incumbent Parliament?

As you know this Parliament's makeup started its work right away, without wait-

ing for the new Government to be set up. The reasons behind this are very clear. This Parliament's makeup inherited from the previous one some 140 laws, stuck in procedures I would say. I, as Parliament Speaker, based on the Rules of Procedure took a decision to put 79 of these 140 laws, many of which pertain to our EU integration, on the agenda for debate and I believe that we will adopt them by the end of July. I want to stress that we have already adopted over 20 laws and in the process many amendments from the opposition that helped improve the laws were accepted. With this rate of work, without waiting for the new Government to be set up, in a way we will make up for the time lost because of the elections. The sole purpose of all this is meeting our benchmark responsibilities set by the EU, in which case I believe in the report to be drafted and released by the EU in the autumn we will receive a recommendation for a date for starting accession talks with Brussels. This is an objective over which there is a political consensus among all political parties, as well as enormous public support of more than 90 percent.

Would you please tell us if the absolute majority of the For Better Macedonia coalition represents a favorable circumstance or an additional responsibility to your presidency of the Macedonian Parliament?

I would like to mention one more of my projects, or just an idea in this stage, that I think I will manage to realize and that is the adoption of a law on the Parliament, which will serve the same purpose or in other words will complete the commitment to an efficient and independent Parliament as a temple of democracy.

How will your appointment to this responsible position reflect on your private life?

Filling this office brings about considerable changes and has an effect on anyone's private life. For example there are many protocol responsibilities as well that surely influence the everyday life. However, I will try to reduce this influence, particularly on my family life, within some normal limits. I am a family man, a husband and a father of two. I live in a family house with my parents and I will stay there. I still manage to see my friends, although I do not have as much time as I used to have. But let me tell you a little secret. I used to play football on a regular basis and I was a good football player, an amateur of course. I have neglected this hobby of mine over the recent years. But I intend to renew it now, because the office I fill requires also good condition and playing football helps stay in shape. Spending more time with my friends is a bonus.



EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 2008

The early parliamentary elections in the Republic of Macedonia were held on 1 June. The voting was repeated in 15 polling places on 15 and 29 June due to certain election irregularities. The elections were conducted by the State Election Commission (DIK), 84 municipal election commissions, and 2,976 election committees. A total of 77 lists with 1,540 candidates for members of parliament were proposed and verified.

The Coalition "For a Better Macedonia" led by the political party VMRO-DPMNE secured victory at the elections by winning 63 parliamentary seats. The Coalition "Sun" (Coalition for Europe), which was led by the political party SDSM, secured 27 parliamentary mandates; the political party BDI won 18 parliamentary seats; the political party PDSH won 11 seats; while the party PEI secured one parliamentary mandate.

Of the total number of voters registered in the electoral roll (1,779,116), 987,023 voters or 57.06 percent came out to vote. Of these, 986,991 voting slips were valid. The Coalition "For a Better Macedonia" won 481,501 votes or 48.78 percent of the total number of valid voting slips; the Coalition "Sun" won 233,284 votes or 23.64 percent; BDI won 126,522 votes or 12.82 percent; PDSH won 81,556 votes or 8.26 percent; and PEI won 14,474 votes or 1.47 percent.

On 21 June DIK presented Certificates to the new members of parliament for their election. This was followed by the constitutive session of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia.

In most part, the elections were held in a peaceful and fair atmosphere, while certain irregularities and incidents were registered at 15 polling places. As a result, the voting was repeated in these polling places, the irregularities were eliminated, and legal measures were taken to sanction the individuals responsible for the election irregularities.



The Sixth Parliamentary Elections in the Republic of Macedonia

Charges have pressed and the relevant authorities must not be lenient to those responsible. The final reports of the monitors about Macedonia's early parliamentary elections 2008 will greatly depend on this. We all want to believe that the elections are a democratic race in which only programs and ballots vie for office. That means that all those running the election race will have to use honest means to win. The vote should be over in a single day and the revote should be conceded to history in order to enhance democracy in the Republic of Macedonia.

The State Election Commission is doing all in its power to make sure that all citizens express their will freely. Consequently, some should stop to ponder over how much they helped the vote represent the highest act of democracy or contributed to its becoming a horror to the citizens, the state and Macedonia's friends.

Finally, citizens, and politicians in particular, should realize that the fact that during the elections in 2008 the state was divided into two parts, one where the elections were, to use the slang expression, Scandinavian, and the other where they were not such, holds little value before European institutions. That happened in Macedonia, they say, and the consequence is to be borne by all its citizens.

Zoran Tanevski, Spokesperson for the State Election Commission

RETROSPECTIVE OF PRESIDENTS OF ASSEMBLY OF REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Six parliamentary elections have been held in the Republic of Macedonia since the country declared independence and introduced political pluralism. In this period, the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia had seven presidents.

The President of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia is elected from among the Members of Parliament, by a majority of votes from the total number of MPs. The President represents the Assembly, he calls and chairs sessions, he ensures that the Rules of Procedure is applied, he signs decrees on declaring of laws, and he performs other tasks as stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia and the Assembly Rules of Procedure.

Stojan Andov was elected first President of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia. He performed this function within the frames of three assembly make-ups: from 1991 to 1994; from 1994 to 1996; and from year 2000 to 2002. He was elected Member of Parliament at the last elections as well, and he is the oldest MP in the Assembly.

Tito Petkovski is the second MP who has had the honor of being elected President of the Assembly. He carried out this function in the period 1996 to 1998. From 1998 to 2000 the post President of the Assembly was held by Doctor Savo Klimovski. Nikola Popovski was elected President of the Assembly in year

2002 and he held this post until year 2003. Popovski was a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and he was head of the Macedonian delegation for a certain period of time. When Popovski was appointed minister, he was succeeded on the post President of the Assembly by Ljupco Jordanovski, who performed this function until year 2006.

Following the elections in year 2006, Ljubisa Georgievski was elected President of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia. He held this post until the early parliamentary elections in year 2008.

At the moment Trajko Veljanovski has the honor of being President of the Assembly. He has rich experience, which he gained in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia and within the frames of the Government and the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Macedonia.

From a historical aspect, in the period before the Republic of Macedonia gained independence, Metodija Andonov-Cento, who was elected on 2 August year 1944, was the first president of the then Presidium of ASNOM (Anti-fascist Assembly of the National Liberation of Macedonia). Doctor Vulnet Starova was the last President of the Assembly in that period. He performed this function from year 1986 to 1991.



Macedonian DIPLOMATIC BULLETIN



Prime Minister Gruevski underlined in his address the five strategic priorities of the new Government's 4-year program:

- Fostering the economic growth and competitiveness;*
- Integrating the Republic of Macedonia into NATO and the European Union;*
- Continuing the fight against crime and corruption;*
- Keeping good and stable inter-ethnic relations and coexistence;*
- Investing in education as the safest long-term input in Macedonia's future.*

**Interview with Ivica Bocevski, Deputy Prime Minister
in the Government of the Republic of Macedonia**

MACEDONIA WITH FLYING COLORS TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN UNION



Mr. Deputy Prime Minister, on behalf of the Editorial Board please accept our congratulations on your election as Deputy Prime Minister in the Government of the Republic of Macedonia responsible for European Integration. Can you please tell us in grater detail what the priority activities of the Secretariat for European Affairs are?

I took the job of Deputy Prime Minister responsible for European Affairs at a critical juncture as Macedonia looks towards opening EU accession negotiations. To demonstrate the importance of the European agenda, I called the Special Representative of the European Union and Head of the Delegation of the European Commission, Ambassador Erwan Fouéré, along with the ambassadors from all the European Union member countries present in Macedonia on my first working day in office to share with them the future actions and plans of the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA). The commitment is to deliver real reforms on ground

and on time. Whenever Macedonia was called upon, the reforms were delivered with flying colors. Furthermore, we were pointed out by the EU as a positive example that other countries in the region should follow.

This is in ideal correlation with the other priorities elaborated in the Parliament by the Prime Minister, Mr. Gruevski, like economic growth, EU and NATO integration, fight against corruption and organized crime, stable inter-ethnic relations and investments in education. Moreover, and I will repeat myself, our utmost priority is to focus on opening accession negotiations with the EU. Macedonia will implement the benchmarks set by the Commission. However, if our progress is not judged by this postulate and if Europe imposes new criteria, which are not related to the EU affairs, I can only say that its credibility will be questioned.

Given that European integration is one of Macedonia's national policy objectives, do you expect the EC to recommend opening of membership negotiations with the Republic of Macedonia and determine a date for starting accession talks? As for the visa free regime for the Macedonian citizens, would you tell us what the expectations are in this regard?

I am confident that Macedonia will fulfil the foreseen tasks and the European Commission will recommend opening of membership negotiations. Still, the Council is the institution that has the mandate to decide whether to start negotiations or not with a candidate country on the basis of unanimity. Considering this, we have to be very realistic when facing this question. After what happened in Bucharest, nothing can surprise us anymore. However, as a Government we are completely determined to resist all pressures and immature exercising of democracy and to meet all criteria in order to obtain a date for negotiations. We do believe that at the end, we will succeed and start membership negotiations.

Concerning the second part of your question, evident progress has been made in all the relevant fields. Three meetings on a technical level were already held in Brussels and the reports are very positive. In addition, biometric passports have been introduced, new IDs and driving licenses in line with European standards have also been launched, integrated border management reforms continued, and the readmission agreement with the EU is in place. The four sets of issues covered by the Roadmap on Visa Liberalization will be met by the end of this year. Judging from the abovementioned, the future of this issue is very bright, which is all more so considering that the Council decides acting by qualified majority.

The talks with the Republic of Greece regarding the difference over the constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia are in progress. Will this issue, in your opinion, have an effect on the process of Euro-integration of the Republic of Macedonia?

The Greek problem with our name is a bilateral issue and must be reviewed in the United Nations as such. Or, as stated by the

latest report by Dutch MEP Erik Meijer, adopted with 601 votes in favour in the European Parliament, “the name issue should not represent an obstacle to Macedonia’s membership of international organizations, as provided for in the Interim Accord of 1995, which is still in force”.

The thorny path towards Macedonia’s full membership is still full of difficulties and uncertainties. In this lengthy and arduous journey, maintaining and advancing the support of our European friends would be an important asset for Macedonia particularly on critical issues such as this one.

All these years, Macedonia was the creator of peace and stability in the region. What happened in Bucharest is therefore completely unacceptable and should not be repeated ever again. In addition, it is not convenient for a country, which is considered the cradle

of democracy, to make such moves and to declare such positions. Every comment in this direction is unserious and superfluous.

Strengthening the Mission of the Republic of Macedonia to the European Communities in Brussels is one the activities scheduled for the coming period. At what rate do you plan this process to develop?

Having in mind that strengthening the Mission in Brussels is essential in promoting the European aspiration of the country, my first major decision in office was to send three SEA experts to the Mission. However, this will not be a sporadic trend. On the contrary, this trend will continue in the period to come if we want to play a more pro-active role in the process of European integration.

NEW GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA ELECTED

With 77 votes in favor the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia elected the new Government of the Republic of Macedonia on 26 July 2008. President Branko Crvenkovski, the head of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, His Holy Highness Archbishop Stefan, as well as representatives of the other religious communities and the diplomatic corps attended the parliamentary session as well.

The sixth Macedonian Government since the country's independence consists of 15 ministries and 22 members most of whom are from the former Government's makeup.

Prime Minister Gruevski underlined in his address the five strategic priorities of the new Government's 4-year program:

- fostering the economic growth and competitiveness on a lasting basis, and driving up the employment rate and the standard and quality of living;
- integrating the Republic of Macedonia into NATO and the European Union upon meeting all required reforms and criteria and resolving the name issue with Greece based on the principle of preserving the national identity.
- continuing the fight against crime and corruption and efficient implementation of laws;



- keeping good and stable inter-ethnic relations and coexistence based on the principles of mutual tolerance and respect, just effectuation of laws and completing the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement; and
- investing in education as the safest long-term input in Macedonia's future.



As some of the key internal policy goals on whose attainment the Government of the Republic of Macedonia would focus in the coming period in order to accomplish its strategic priorities, he singled out keeping a high economic growth of at least 6 percent, moderate budget deficit of around 2 percent of GDP, reducing the inflation rate to 6 percent by the end of this year and to 4 percent in 2009-2012, providing better conditions for domestic and foreign investors, carrying out the second stage of the Regulatory Guillotine Project, improving the overall infrastructure, subduing energy dependency by way of modernizing extant and building new energy facilities, promoting tourism, allocating at least 460 million euros in subsidies for creating an efficient and competitive agricultural sector, conducting an active social policy, implementing

projects in the educational system, continuing the commenced health sector projects and continuing the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

The Macedonian Prime Minister stressed that as regards Macedonia's foreign policy, the five previously identified priorities - membership of NATO and being set a date for starting European Union membership negotiations, lifting visas for Macedonian citizens, resolving the difference regarding the name imposed by Macedonia's southern neighbor and enhancing the economic and public diplomacy - remained.

Prime Minister Gruevski underscored that in the course of the talks with the Republic of Greece under the auspices of the UN the Macedonian Government would not accept ideas and proposals that would affect in any way the Macedonian national identity, the Macedonian nation and the Macedonian language.

Saying that the United States of America was still a strategic partner of the Republic of Macedonia, he also highlighted the Government's commitment to continuing working in the service of peace and enhancing the role of a factor of stability in the region, primarily through close cooperation with the neighbors and future participation of Macedonian troops in peacekeeping missions headed by NATO, the European Union, the United Nations and the USA. In addition, he laid stress on the commitment to making it possible for the Macedonian diaspora to take active part in the shaping of the political reality in the Republic of Macedonia by including it in the election process and to granting smaller ethnic communities a guaranteed quota of parliamentary seats under the election law.

Emphasizing that in the previous two years too the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, in spite of all difficulties and setbacks, showed it was capable of scoring positive results in every segment of the social development, the President of the Macedonian Government said he was confident that the Program of the new Government would contribute to motivating Macedonia's entire intellectual potential to unite over the strategic national state interests with the aim of providing a higher standard of living and a better life for the Macedonian citizens, stronger national and moral values and a better international position for the Republic of Macedonia.

The election of the new Government of the Republic of Macedonia was hailed by numerous foreign and domestic institutions and individuals.



The Government of the Republic of Macedonia:

H.E. Mr. Nikola GRUEVSKI, <i>Prime Minister</i>	Mr. Bujar OSMANI, <i>Minister of Health</i>
Mr. Zoran STAVRESKI, <i>Deputy Prime Minister</i>	Mr. Pero STOJANOVSKI, <i>Minister of Education and Science</i>
Mr. Ivica BOCEVSKI, <i>Deputy Prime Minister</i>	Mr. Xhelal BAJRAMI, <i>Minister of Labor and Social Policy</i>
Mr. Abdulaqim ADEMI, <i>Deputy Prime Minister</i>	Mr. Musa XHAFERI, <i>Minister of Local Self-Government</i>
Mr. Antonio MILOSOSKI, <i>Minister of Foreign Affairs</i>	Mrs. Elizabeta KANCESKA MILEVSKA, <i>Minister of Culture</i>
Mr. Zoran KONJANOVSKI, <i>Minister of Defence</i>	Mr. Mile JANAKIESKI, <i>Minister of Transport and Communication</i>
Ms. Gordana JANKULOVSKA, <i>Minister of Internal Affairs</i>	Mr. Nexhati JAKUPI, <i>Minister of Environment and Physical Planning</i>
Mr. Mihajlo MANEVSKI, <i>Minister of Justice</i>	Mr. Ivo IVANOVSKI, <i>Minister of Information Society</i>
Mr. Trajko SLAVESKI, <i>Minister of Finance</i>	Mr. Vele SAMAK, <i>Minister without Portfolio</i>
Mr. Fatmir BESIMI, <i>Minister of Economy</i>	Mr. Nezhdet MUSTAFA, <i>Minister without Portfolio</i>
Mr. Aco SPASENOVSKI, <i>Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Watersupply</i>	Mr. Hadi NEZIRI, <i>Minister without Portfolio</i>

MDB would like to wish a successful diplomatic mission to our colleagues:

Mr. Martin TRENEVSKI, <i>Consul General</i> Consulate General of the Republic of Macedonia in Toronto, Canada	Mr. Orce DZALESKI, <i>Counsellor</i> Embassy of the Republic of Macedonia in Warsaw, Republic of Poland
Mr. Jasmin KAHIL, <i>Minister Plenipotentiary</i> Embassy of the Republic of Macedonia in Bern, Swiss Confederation	Mrs. Dragica ZAFIROVSKA, <i>Counsellor</i> Permanent Mission of the Republic of Macedonia to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, Republic of France
Mrs. Antoaneta RUSKOVA KRCEVINEC, <i>Minister Counsellor</i> Embassy of the Republic of Macedonia in Kiev, Ukraine	Mr. Goce KARAJANOV, <i>3rd Secretary</i> Embassy of the Republic of Macedonia in Prague, Czech Republic
Mr. Sasko TASULOV, <i>Counsellor</i> Permanent Mission of the Republic of Macedonia to the International Organizations in Vienna, Republic of Austria	

MEPs SUPPORT MACEDONIA'S EU INTEGRATION

At the invitation of the Group of the European People's Party and European Democrats (EPP-ED), Macedonian Foreign Minister Antonio Milososki visited the European Parliament in Brussels on 10-11 June 2008.

At the press conferences hosted by the EPP-ED MEPs, Othmar Karas from Austria, Ingo Friedrich from Germany and Anna Ibrisagic from Sweden, the three MEPs extended support for the Macedonian commitments to receiving a date for starting EU membership negotiations by the end of 2008.

"The EU integration is a priority for Macedonia's foreign policy," Minister Milososki said and stressed that, "Macedonia is aware it is not ready yet to join the Union, but it is fully prepared for the membership negotiations. In addition to meeting the criteria, the country has administrative and political capacity to start the negotiations, which will boost the efforts and motivation for further reforms."



Asked by a reporter about Macedonia's expectations from the ongoing name talks with Greece under UN mediation, Minister Milososki said the Republic of Macedonia would keep applying the power of arguments unlike Greece which used the argument of power.

The Macedonian Foreign Minister underlined there was a possibility for coming closer and reaching a reasonable compromise if the Government in Athens did not question the national self-determination of the Macedonians and their identity.

Over the past 17 years Macedonia has demonstrated its commitment to the future whenever faced with the choice between the past and the future, Minister Milososki said.

Minister Milososki informed about the early parliamentary elections in the Republic of Macedonia held on 1 June 2008 and the measures the Macedonian Government took to sanction those responsible for the election incidents and irregularities that distorted the general positive picture of the vote.

During his visit to Brussels, Minister Milososki met with EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn. They talked about the Macedonian elections, the possibility of receiving a date for starting EU membership negotiations by the end of the year and the UN-mediated Macedonia-Greece talks over the difference regarding the constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia.

Minister Milososki met in Brussels also with MEPs Erik Meijer, Angelika Beer, Jelko Kacin, Cem Özdemir, István Szent - Iványi and Doris Pack, informing them about the current situation in the Republic of Macedonia in the wake of the early general elections and about the Government's unwavering commitment to meeting as soon as possible the eight benchmarks set as a condition for starting accession talks. The Macedonian Minister underlined in his talks how important it was for Macedonia that the EU Council in consultation with the European Parliament endorsed the visa regime liberalization by the end of this year.

MACEDONIAN GOVERNMENT PRESENTED WITH WORLD BANK AWARD



Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and Deputy Prime Minister Zoran Stavreski were presented with a World Bank award for Macedonia's reform performances in 2007, at the meeting of the Doing Business Reformers' Club organized by the International Financial Corporation (IFC) in New York on 4 June 2008. The event celebrated the achievements of the world's top 10 reforming governments in 2007, which carried out the best reforms in the areas covered in the Doing Business 2008 report.

Republic of Macedonia, the fourth best reformer according to this report, was praised in particular for reforms to alleviate the entry of new firms, speed up issuing of construction licences, cut taxes and cut down on red-tape procedures, which also refers to foreign trade operations.

At the event in the New York Stock Exchange, Prime Minister Gruevski presented to an international investor audience and the global business media the economic policy and successful reforms of the Macedonian Government aiming to improve the overall business climate, provide benefits for domestic and foreign businessmen and be the basis for creating in the future even better business conditions and cutting corporate costs.

MAJOR KOTESKI FIRST MACEDONIAN NATO MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDAL WINNER

Major Mice Koteski (44) is the first Macedonian army officer who received the NATO Meritorious Service Medal for his two successful six-month missions in Afghanistan. Major Koteski, as commanding officer in Kabul, where he led Macedonian Army troops within the ISAF international peacekeeping mission, received the medal from NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer.

"This proves that Macedonian soldiers stand side by side with their NATO colleagues and are just as good in terms of training and professionalism in executing tasks," Major Koteski said.

The Macedonian NATO contingent in Afghanistan is currently comprised of 136 officers and soldiers, all of them part of the 11th rotation of Macedonian troops.

FM MILOSOSKI AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN SUPPORT OF AFGHANISTAN

Macedonian Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio Milososki took part in the International Conference in support of Afghanistan in Paris on 12 June.

Minister Milososki addressed the representatives of over 80 delegations of countries and various international organizations. He stressed that, through the participation of its troops and officers in the ISAF Mission, the Republic of Macedonia is contributing to the establishing of a safe environment for reconstruction and development of Afghanistan.

EU MEMBERSHIP PERSPECTIVE WARRANTS SECURE AND STABLE ENVIRONMENT IN REGION

Macedonian Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio Milososki took part in the First Session of the European Policy Summit "Balkan Balance Sheet" in Brussels on 24 June 2008, titled "The implications of the EU's Balkan Enlargement Strategy". This Summit was co-organised by the "Konrad Adenauer" Foundation, Friends of Europe think-tank, the Si&Si Group, the Constantinos Karamanlis Institute for Democracy, Gallup Europe, and the OECD Investment Compact for South East Europe.



Speaking on the proven effectiveness of the EU membership perspective with regards to warranting a secure and stable environment in the Western Balkan region, the Macedonian Foreign Minister emphasized that the EU should observe the principles that it set itself and that it should evaluate the progress of the candidate countries on the basis of these principles.

"An EU member state is misusing a bilateral issue – the name issue – to exert pressure on Macedonia to give up its own right to national self-determination and to block its European integration. The EU should not be hostage to the irresponsible behaviour of some politicians" Minister Milososki stressed. He added, "We will continue the talks with the argument that a small nation has the right to national self-determination and protection of its national name".

"Member states that are immediate neighbours to candidate countries should be responsible and they should not forget that they also needed support and friendship during their accession to the EU," MEP Doris Pack said in her address.

Commenting on Ireland's "No" to the Lisbon Treaty, Macedonian Minister Milososki underlined, "The greatest challenge for the EU and the European politicians is to find a way for Ireland's 'No' not to be used as an excuse for postponement of the enlargement process."

The Summit had three sessions: the second focused on the EU's influence on Balkan politics, while the third session concentrated on the Balkan citizens' views regarding EU integration.

During this visit to Brussels, Macedonian Minister of Foreign Affairs Milososki held a meeting with Jan Marinus Wiersma, Dutch MEP and Member of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Minister Milososki stressed two main goals: fulfilment of the eight benchmarks set by the European Commission and fulfilment of the obligations necessary for securing a free visa regime with the EU.

"Macedonia will work on convincing the EC to recommend start of the membership negotiations," Milososki said.

"The socialists in the European Parliament believe that the enlargement process should continue with accession of Macedonia and the other countries in the region to the EU," Wiersma stated.

MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE BOOKS DONATION

Macedonian Ambassador to the United States of America Zoran Jolevski donated 200 books written in Macedonian with the Cyrillic script to the Hamburg Public Library in Buffalo, New York, at a ceremony organized on 6 June. The books are intended for the Macedonian immigrants who live in great numbers in Buffalo and the broader area.

The campaign for donating books in the Macedonian language is a result of the close cooperation and immediate coordination of the Braka Miladinovci Library of Skopje, the Buffalo and Erie Country Public Library, the American Corner in Skopje, the USA Embassy in Skopje and the Embassy of the Republic of Macedonia in Washington, DC.

At the ceremony at which there was also a cocktail party, an exhibition of works by professional painter Dimce Isailovski, who lives and works in Ottawa, Canada, opened. The event was attended by many representatives of the Macedonian diaspora from Buffalo and the local administration of the Buffalo and Erie County.



BOOK EXHIBITION IN SOFIA

A book exhibition titled "Macedonia from Ancient Times to Present Day" was opened on 26 June 2008 in the Cultural and Information Center of the Republic of Macedonia in Sofia, in association with the "St. Kliment Ohridski" University Library based in Bitola. Approximately 300 books were displayed that explore various periods in Macedonia's history and which date back to the ancient times, through the Middle Ages, to the present. A video entitled "A Day in Macedonia" was also shown at this exhibition.

MEMORIAL PLAQUE TO KRSTE PETKOV MISIRKOV UNVEILED IN ODESSA

A memorial plaque to Macedonian reformer Krsto Petkov Misirkov was unveiled in Odessa, outside the house in which he lived and worked during his stay in this city, during the event "Days of Macedonian science in Ukraine", which was held in Odessa between 4 and 8 June. This memorial plaque was put up in year 2008, which was declared year of the Macedonian language.

This event was organized by the Macedonian Embassy in Kiev, the Ukrainian Ministry of Science and Education, the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts (MANU), and the Odessa National University "I. I. Mechnikov". Numerous academics and renowned scholars from both countries spoke on the issue of Ukrainian-Macedonian parallels in history and contemporariness, and they discussed issues in the sphere of energy and alternative energy sources.

The Macedonian delegation was headed by academic Georgi Stardelov, president of MANU, while the Ukrainian delegation was headed by Sergei Andronati, president of the National Academy of Science of Ukraine.

DIPLOMATICS CORPS SOCIAL EVENTS

The receptions of the diplomatic corps are listed in order of occurrence

June 2, Italian National Day



The Embassy of the Republic of Italy hosted a reception celebrating 2 June, the National Day of Italy, at the Museum of Contemporary Arts in Skopje, which has been recently renovated thanks to an Italian donation, part of an education and culture project worth 3 million euros.

June 6, Swedish National Day



The celebration of the National Day of the Kingdom of Sweden took place in the residence of Ambassador H.E. Mrs. Ulrika Cronenberg Mossberg in Skopje on 5 June. Dressed in a traditional Swedish costume Ambassador Cronenberg Mossberg welcomed some 300 guests from Macedonia's public life, the diplomatic corps, as well as Swedes living and working in the country.

Special guests were five Macedonian children, who are among the 100 winners of the competition of the International Museum of Children's Art in Huddinge, just outside Stockholm. Their artwork will be shown at the exhibition "Dreams" that will open in September and last for a year.

Her Majesty's Birthday



The Embassy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Skopje celebrated the Queen's Birthday by throwing a party at the Kale restaurant on 9 June.

Guests included Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio Milososki, Minister of Health Imer Selmani, other government officials, representatives of the international community, the non-governmental sector and the media, as well as UK citizens living in Macedonia.

The UK Ambassador to the Republic of Macedonia, H.E. Mr. Andrew Key, delivered a speech on the significance of this day.

June 12, Russian National Day



On the occasion of the National Day of the Russian Federation, the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Macedonia, H.E. Mr. Vladimir Dmitrievic Solocinskij, and his wife hosted a reception at the Aleksandar Palace Hotel.

Their guests included the President of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, as well as other officials, Metropolitan of Polog and Kumanovo Kiril, the Rector of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, the Mayor of Skopje, as well as mayors of other municipalities, Members of Parliament, ambassadors, presidents of various Russian organizations and of the Federation of Macedonian-Russian Associations, journalists, businessmen and intellectuals.

Israel Independence Day



Celebrating the 60th anniversary of the independence of the State of Israel, Israeli Ambassador H.E. Ms. Amira Arnon and Honorary Consul to the Republic of Macedonia Mr. Viktor Mizrahi hosted a reception at the Stone Bridge Hotel in Skopje on 13 June.

June 23, Estonian Victory Day

On the occasion of the Victory Day, the Ambassador of the Republic of Estonia H.E. Mr. Aivo Orav organized a reception at the Club of MPs where the new Honorary Consul of Estonia was introduced.

June 25, Slovenian National Day



On the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of Slovenia and the marking of the end of the Slovenian presidency of the European Union, a reception and a cocktail party were organized at the Club of MPs. The guests were addressed by the Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia to the Republic of Macedonia, H.E. Mr. Alain Brian Bergant.

June 25, Croatian National Day



On the occasion of 25 June, the Croatian National Day, the Ambassador of the Republic of Croatia to the Republic of Macedonia, H.E. Mr. Ivan Kujundžić, hosted a cocktail event at the Club of MPs attended by numerous guests.

July 4, Independence Day of the USA

On the occasion of July 4, the USA Independence Day, which is traditionally marked every year, a reception was organized at US Ambassador H.E. Gillian Milovanovic's residence in Skopje.

July 13, National Day of Montenegro

On the occasion of 13 July, the National Day of Montenegro, the Montenegrin Embassy in Skopje hosted a reception at the Aleksandar Palace Hotel on 10 July.

The event was attended by representatives of the diplomatic corps in the Republic of Macedonia, government officials, including Foreign Minister Antonio Milososki, representatives of Macedonia's



social, cultural and public life, as well as citizens originally from Montenegro living and working in the Republic of Macedonia.

July 14, National Day of France



On the occasion of the National Day of France, the French Embassy in Skopje hosted a reception in Kursumli-an on 14 July, at which French music was played and an honorary guard welcomed some 700 guests, including representatives of the diplomatic corps, the French community and the numerous partners of the French Embassy.

MDB would like to give a warm welcome and wish a successful diplomatic mission in the Republic of Macedonia to the Ambassador:

H.E. Mr. Arslan HAKAN OKÇAL,
Republic of Turkey

And to thank the following Ambassadors for their completed diplomatic mission in the Republic of Macedonia, wishing them success in their future career:

H.E. Lt. General Syed Iftikhar HUSSAIN SHAH,
Islamic Republic of Pakistan

H.E. Mr. Philippe BEKE, *Kingdom of Belgium*

H.E. Mr. Vladimir PRELA, *Republic of Albania*

H.E. Mr. Robert McDOUGALL, *Canada*

H.E. Mr. Ralf Andreas BRETH,
Federal Republic of Germany

HONORARY CITIZENS OF SKOPJE PROMOTED

Skopje Mayor Trifun Kostovski proclaimed the former USA Ambassadors, Christopher Hill and Lawrence Eagleburger, Norwegian diplomat Torvald Stoltenberg, and Werner Trini from Nurnberg, in charge of the cooperation between the sister cities of Nurnberg and Skopje, as honorary citizens of Skopje. They were presented with certificates of honor at a ceremony held on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the catastrophic earthquake.

“The city went through difficult times, but considering the path it has walked ever since I feel that a bright future lies ahead of it,” former US Ambassador to Macedonia Hill said, adding that Skopje is his second home. Mr. Hill conveyed the same impressions on behalf of Lawrence Eagleburger, who was prevented from attending the event.

“Considering I visited Skopje 33 times I already feel like a resident of this city. However from now every time I come here I will feel more honored,” Mr. Stoltenberg said.

During his stay in Skopje, Mr. Hill, who is US Assistant Secretary of State for Eastern Asia and Pacific Affairs, met also with Macedonian President Branko Crvenkovski and Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski.

OHRID SUMMER FESTIVAL OPENS

The traditional Ohrid Summer Festival was opened by Macedonian President Branko Crvenkovski, sponsor of Macedonia's oldest cultural event, this year too. He underlined that the Ohrid Summer Festival had grown into a cultural event of the highest rank in the Balkans and Europe, a cultural forum and an open stage for the world artistic elite.



This year's 48th edition of the festival began with the performance of the opera diva Jessye Norman from the USA accompanied by the Macedonian Philharmonic and the Orchestra of the Macedonian Opera and Ballet on 12 July. Artists from the USA, Japan, Albania, France, Russia, Germany, Brazil, Korea, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Switzerland confirmed their participation.

This year's edition will consist of 50 music and theater performances and five fine art exhibitions.

The message of the president of the management board of the Ohrid Summer Festival, Gjorgji Jolevski, to the participants was the universal motto that, “art will save the world”.

VATICAN RADIO IN MACEDONIAN

Vatican Radio opened a website in the Macedonian language on 15 July. The project was implemented in cooperation with the radio of the Catholic Church in the Republic of Macedonia, which will also be responsible for the content of the website. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.radiovaticana.org/mcd/index.asp>.

HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE ATTEND TRADITIONAL GALICNIK WEDDING

The Galicnik Wedding, the pearl of Macedonian national tradition, once again assembled hundreds of tourists and devotees of the old customs in the village of Galicnik on 12 July, St. Peter's Day. At the plateau outside the “St. Petar and Pavle” church, the wedding guests of this year's bride and groom Dafina and Goran Bundaleski danced the ceremonious Wedding Dance. The authenticity of the customs and the ethno music enraptured all present, especially the foreigners.



A literary colony will be held within the frames of this event this year, and the great work of Georgija Pulevski, as well as the 120th anniversary of the formation of the first Macedonian literary group, will also be marked.

Prince Ali Khan Ghazanfar and Princess Rani Atiqa Ghazanfar of the ancient people of the Hunza, who live in Pakistan today, also attended the Galicnik Wedding. The Hunza people consider themselves to be descendants of the troops of the great army leader Alexander the Great.

MONTENEGRIN GRAMMY FOR LIFE ACHIEVEMENTS GOES POSTHUMOUSLY TO TOSE PROESKI

On the Montenegrin music festival Suncane Skale 2008 when the award Princeva nagrada (Prince's award) was given out in diverse categories, the award for life achievements was posthumously presented to Tose Proeski, the grand pop music star, who died in a car accident in October last year.

Stefan Nikolovski, Macedonian Ambassador to Montenegro, received the award on behalf of Proeski's family and Macedonia. With standing ovations and tears in their eyes, the spectators in the Kanlu Tower in Herceg Novi paid tribute on 7 July to the great singer who surpassed all barriers and borders in the Balkans and beyond with his voice and positive energy.

“He was totally dedicated to music and will still be part of us,” said festival director Slobodan Bucevac at the award-winning ceremony.

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WORLD'S BEST BUSKERS PERFORM IN SKOPJE

The third international festival of street artists and musicians "Buskerfest Skopje 2008" was held between 31 May and 8 June this year. Artists and musicians from Macedonia, together with 93 performers and musicians from all corners of the world, provided ample street entertainment. The spectators were just as active as the artists.



The first International Multicultural Street Festival in Skopje was held in year 2006.

The festival kicked off in front of the main entrance of the Ramstore Mall with the spectacular Vertical Dance. The festival program consisted of all types of performances by acrobats, musicians, comedians, performers on stilts, magicians, jugglers, puppeteers, clowns, caricaturists, pantomimists, national dancers...

The City of Skopje, the Centar Municipality, the Ministry of Culture, and the Cair Municipality were patrons and partners of Buskerfest 2008.

This international multicultural street festival raises awareness for the significance and value of street art, while at the same time promoting Macedonian art before the national and international public.

FRANCOPHONIE FESTIVAL "FÊTE DE LA MUSIQUE 2008" IN BITOLA

The sixth Francophonie Festival "Fête de la Musique 2008" or Solistis 2008 was held in Bitola. It was organized by the Bitola-based Center for Cultural Decontamination and the French Alliance.

The festival traditionally started on 21 June, the longest day of the year, on Sirok Sokak in Bitola. Six small stages were set up where numerous artists performed.

The well-known French group Gwladys was the main feature of this festival. The festival started with choir music and it continued with jazz, rock, and ambient music.

This year the festival is part of the national event "Bitola - The city of Culture 2008".

29TH SKOPJE SUMMER FESTIVAL OPENED ON WORLD MUSIC DAY

The 29th international festival Skopje Summer was opened on Makedonija Square, Skopje, on 21 June with the concert "100 Years of Film Music". The concert was performed by the FAME'S Symphony Orchestra, which brings together talented Macedonian musicians under the baton of Ivan Ilik.

The aim of this concert was to mark the 100th anniversary of film music. Guests from the United States of America, Great Britain, France, Germany, Australia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Montenegro, and Serbia are taking part in this festival.

The festival will close on 31 July. The majority of the program consists of musical events, but there will also be theater plays and a number of exhibitions and film showings.

THE STORY OF THE MACEDONIAN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY



The memories are still fresh. The reminiscence of the blink meeting with Pajo Avirovik, just outside the MFA building, is so clear, as if it were yesterday. I still remember his words, in the light of the possible prospect for me to join the newly established MFA's Public Diplomacy Directorate. *I don't need a bureaucrat,* he said. *If you are one of those, I don't need you,* he reiterated while wisely concluding his point. The opportunity to join this organizational newborn came all of a sudden. Avirovik, and his, at that time, closest associate Ivica Bocevski, were building a team to provide for the much needed concept of Public Diplomacy within the MFA. The concept itself was championed by the incumbent Minister of Foreign Affairs, who as a scholar a few years ago felt the inevitability of presenting Macedonia, its achievements and its contribution to the world's civilization via a totally different pattern. Although not utterly clear to me, I decided to accept the challenge, due to the prospectiveness of the concept and its far-reaching potential. In addition, one of the reasons which influenced me to get involved with this endeavor was the frank and enthusiastic approach from Pajo, when we first met and exchanged views and visions about the concept. Soon after, I met the rest of the team, all of them vital ingredients of the Macedonian PD story. Although understaffed, our enthusiasm, the eagerness to present and brand Macedonia differently in the eyes of the world's politicians, policymakers, think-tankers and above all citizens, enabled great atmosphere and teamwork, so the results were inevitable. New ideas were brainstormed each day, our motivation to do more was boosted regularly, creativity was tapped to full potential and the vision of the concept was becoming as lucid as possible with every single day. The scope of our work and our working methodology were sometimes perceived differently within the MFA. I was given an unrestricted freedom, the knowledge transfer from the more experienced colleagues, especially from Pajo Avirovik and Vasile Andonovski, was a usual thing invaluable for my activities, while the friendly environment was unfelt before. I was privileged to communicate with exceptional politicians such as Mark Grossman and with grandiose thinkers as Umberto Eco. *Crossroads*, the Macedonian Foreign Policy Journal is now widely acclaimed as an extremely relevant foreign policy literature worldwide. I will never forget the words of one renowned American scholar, while visiting John Hopkins University in Washington DC, who whilst going through *Crossroads* asked me, *You want to tell me that this is a Macedonian product?* Within the MFA, everyone wants to have their picture and words in the Macedonian Diplomatic Bulletin, whose editions are regularly asked for by the foreign embassies. Meanwhile, the PD Directorate has been upgraded and enhanced. Given their efforts and contributions thus far, I wholeheartedly believe that the experienced newcomers along with the new person in charge are more than capable to carry on the mission of their predecessors and to make it even more successful and fertile. The Macedonian PD story must go on...

Edvard MITEVSKI

Member of the Editorial Board of *Crossroads*, *MFPJ* and the Macedonian Diplomatic Bulletin