

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT:
"DAY OF THE TREE – PLANT YOUR FUTURE!"

Macedonian DIPLOMATIC BULLETIN



During the visit to the Kingdom of Norway toward the end of November, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski also met with Norwegian King Harald V.

*MACEDONIA FILES PROCEEDINGS AGAINST GREECE
WITH INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE IN THE HAGUE*

*ENLARGEMENT PROCESS, IMPORTANT INSTRUMENT
FOR INCREASING STABILITY, SECURITY AND PROSPERITY*

*Interview with H.E. Mr. Jozef Braun,
Ambassador of the Czech Republic to the Republic of Macedonia*



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
No. 20 / November 2008

*REGIONAL ECONOMIC FORUM
OF SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE IN OHRID*

Let us tear down the wall

On this day (9 November) nineteen years ago the internal German wall was torn down and after decades of separation friends and families were allowed to visit each other. However, few Germans know that today there is another invisible administrative wall in Europe, which, although invisible, very efficiently keeps Europeans apart and that is the Schengen visa regime of the European Union. The Schengen system, in fact, draws upon a very noble idea of politicians: no EU citizen should face border checkpoint barriers. However, in order to achieve this, the EU bureaucrats introduced a visa policy toward their neighboring countries and future EU member states from Southeast Europe, a restrictive barrier unknown even at the time of the Ottoman Empire. And so today when businessmen, journalists, students and, of course, tourists from Southeast Europe want, for example, to travel from my homeland, Macedonia, to Germany, in addition to the extortionate fees they have to pay for the visas, they also have to provide invitations, guarantees and salary reports. On top of that all, the procedure is very time-consuming. Spontaneous travels, for example to visit friends, are impossible. As a result, our young people, whose chance to pass through this red-tape wall are nil, are growing up without any European experience whatsoever. The important ties of our scholars are cut off, as our businessmen face difficulties when entering deals with Germany, even though Germany is Macedonia's most important trade partner. My fellow citizens find this utterly incomprehensible. My country, Macedonia, which has been an EU candidate member state since 2005, with barely 2 million people poses no threat of overrunning the EU with its 500 million inhabitants. On the contrary, our police force has been extending notable assistance to the EU member countries in fighting drug and human trafficking the final destination of which is the EU and has been highly praised by European institutions on many occasions thus far. The generations of my father and grandfather who lived in Yugoslavia traveled throughout Europe without putting anyone in danger. Their sons and grandsons, however, thank to the Schengen regime have troubles getting even to Bulgaria and Greece, because they are EU member states. A trip by plane to Tunisia or Egypt is frequently simpler than a trip to Germany although Germany is a country of much greater interest to us. Therefore the plea of my fellow Macedonian citizens and of all the citizens of Southeast Europe is: Dear Europeans, tear down your internal European wall and let us be part of the European life!

*A column by Foreign Minister
Antonio Milososki in the weekend issue
of Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*

(9 November 2008)

President Crvenkovski in Poland

At the invitation of his Polish counterpart Lech Kaczynski, Macedonian President Branko Crvenkovski attended the marking of the 90th anniversary of the National Independence Day of the Republic of Poland on 10-11 November in Warsaw.

At the ceremony, attended by numerous world leaders, Poland celebrated the 90th anniversary of its birth as a modern nation with waving flags and booming cannons.

President Crvenkovski met his Polish counterpart Kaczynski, on which occasion the Polish support for Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integration was confirmed and the Polish position to the use of Macedonia's constitutional name in the bilateral communication was reaffirmed.



Bocevski meets Vondra in Prague

"I know that one day Macedonia will be part of the Union and we are going to team up in making sure this happens as soon as possible," Czech Vice Prime Minister for European Affairs Alexander Vondra underlined after meeting his Macedonian counterpart Ivica Bocevski.

On the eve of the Czech Presidency of the EU, Vice Prime Minister Ivica Bocevski discussed Macedonia's European integration and expectations from the coming Czech Presidency also with the Head of the Lower House's Foreign Committee, Jan Hamáček, Deputy Vice Prime Minister for European Affairs, Marek Mora, and Deputy Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic, Helena Bambasova, in Prague on 3-4 November.



Ambassador Jolevski, new name issue negotiator

Zoran Jolevski, Ambassador of the Republic of Macedonia to the United States of America, has been appointed as new negotiator in the name issue talks with the Republic of Greece conducted under UN auspices with Mr. Matthew Nimetz's mediation. Jolevski has taken Nikola Dimitrov's place.

Prime Ministers Thaci and Berisha Visit Skopje

Marking the 100th anniversary of the Albanian Alphabet was the reason for the visit of the Prime Ministers of Albania and Kosovo, Sali Berisha and Hashim Thaci, to the Republic of Macedonia on 22 November. The two prime ministers and their host, Macedonian Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, attended the ceremony organized on that occasion by the Macedonian Government at the House of the Macedonian Army in Skopje.

At their separate meetings the prime ministers discussed the possibilities for promoting further their neighborly and regional cooperation, laying stress on their economic ties.

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REGIONAL RESPONSE TO EFFECTS OF GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS

The Fifth Regional Economic Forum of Southeastern Europe (REF-SEE 2008) was held in Ohrid on 20 and 21 November this year, under the sponsorship of the President of the Republic of Macedonia, Branko Crvenkovski. The Presidents of the Republic of Montenegro, the Republic of Croatia, the Republic of Albania, and the Republic of Bulgaria, the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as numerous economic experts and businessmen from the region all took part in this forum.



The Presidents agreed that the global economic crisis would not bypass the region and they stressed that urgent coordinated measures and bigger mutual cooperation are needed for the effects of this crisis to be reduced. In their addresses, the Presidents appealed for regional cooperation and a new strategy for regional development, building of modern energy, transport, and communications infrastructure networks, and economic development and macroeconomic stability.

Businessmen from various spheres, representatives of banks and leading companies, representatives from the sphere of science, and representatives of media houses from the region also participated actively in this forum.

MACEDONIA FILES PROCEEDINGS AGAINST GREECE WITH INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE IN THE HAGUE

The Republic of Macedonia filed legal proceedings against the Republic of Greece with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague on 17 November. With this Application, which was filed with the Registrar of the Court, the Republic of Macedonia requests that the ICJ establishes and declares that the Republic of Greece, through its state organs and authorities, violated its obligations under Article 11 of the Interim Accord, which was signed by the two countries in year 1995 and which is legally binding for both sides, and that it orders Greece to immediately take all necessary steps to comply with its obligations under Article 11 of the Accord, which pertain to the Republic of Macedonia's accession to international, multilateral, and regional organizations and institutions.

The reason why these legal proceedings were filed is the Republic of Greece's violation of the aforementioned regulations of the Interim Accord at the NATO Summit in Bucharest, when Greece objected



to NATO extending an invitation for membership to Macedonia.

“The only reason why we filed this Application with the ICJ is to protect our rights under the Interim Accord. We hope this action might encourage Greece to bring its actions into compliance with its international legal obligations and that it might also encourage our two countries to reach a final settlement on outstanding issues, in the spirit of the good-neighborliness and cooperation envisaged with the Interim Accord. We are not asking the Court to deal with other political issues, so the dispute over the name is not the subject of our Application. We also want to stress that we remain strongly committed to all aspects of the Interim Accord, in particular to the process of negotiations with Greece, which are mediated by the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General,” Antonio Milososki, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Macedonia's representative before the Court, said with regards to the filing of this Application.

SEEGROUP MEETING IN BRUSSELS

Kire Ilievski, Ambassador of the Republic of Macedonia to NATO, chaired the SEEGROUP (South East Europe Security Cooperation Steering Group) meeting at ambassador level in Brussels on 6 November, which was also attended by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. Stressing the importance of SEEGROUP as an important forum that contributes to regional cooperation and emphasizing its main priorities and accomplishments, Ambassador Ilievski stressed in his address, “Without full integration of all countries in NATO and the EU, there can be no lasting stability and prosperity in the region”.



“The Republic of Macedonia is firmly convinced that success in the cooperation efforts in South East Europe is of utmost importance. Such success shall be a strong signal to the international community that the countries of this region belong to the Euro-Atlantic community,” Ilievski underlined.

NATO Secretary General Scheffer stressed the success of Macedonia's presidency of SEEGROUP and the SEDM process this year, noting that integration is the key for the future of this region.

RESOLUTION ON NAME ISSUE

The Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia adopted a Resolution on defining a strategy for the dispute imposed by the Republic of Greece as regards Macedonia's constitutional name. The strategy, which should be defined as soon as possible, should stress clearly and unambiguously the Macedonian state leadership's united position in the talks. The objectives of this strategy are defense of the name and the highest state and national interests, preservation of the identity of the Macedonian people, language, history, and culture, confirmation of the existence of a Macedonian national minority, and affirmation of the Republic of Macedonia's position as a sovereign and independent state. Speaking at the assembly session, Macedonian President Branko Crvenkovski informed the parliamentarians about the decision and reasons for dismissal of Ambassador Nikola Dimitrov, representative of Macedonia in the talks on the name that are led under the auspices of the UN.



Interview with H.E. Mr. Jozef Braun

ENLARGEMENT PROCESS, IMPORTANT INSTRUMENT FOR INCREASING STABILITY, SECURITY AND PROSPERITY

H.E. Mr. Jozef Braun has been Ambassador of the Czech Republic to the Republic of Macedonia since 20 March 2008. From 1999 to 2004 he was Czech Ambassador to Turkey and Azerbaijan. He also served as Chargé d'affaires and Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Czech Republic in The Hague, and Director of the Department of Eastern European Countries and Counter-terrorism Coordinator in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic. In 1992 he was a member of the OSCE mission to Nagorno-Karabakh and was part of government delegations to the Netherlands, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Your Excellency, as a country presiding over the EU as of the start of next year, the Czech Republic will certainly have on its agenda numerous internal issues the Union is facing and over which there are differences among its member states, such as the Irish No to the Lisbon Treaty, the ways of weathering the ramifications of the global financial crisis, etc. What the top priorities of the Czech Presidency in this regard will be?

We would like to encourage development of the common internal European market to ensure a safe, competitive and sustainable energy system for Europe. We will open cooperation with the new president of the United States, and be active participants in the accession negotiations with Croatia, Turkey and Macedonia, and the Middle East talks, which is a broad and difficult agenda.

The main motto of the Czech Presidency is "Europe Without Barriers" with the emphasis on competitiveness and the liberal trade policy. In connection with the main programme area, Prague has determined three chief priority areas: A Competitive Europe, Tackling Energy and Climate Changes and an Open and Secure Europe.

The three main foreign policy priorities of the Czech EU Council Presidency are: development of transatlantic relations, the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe. We consider the enlargement process as an important instrument for increasing the stability, security and prosperity of the countries striving for EU membership as whole EU.

The progress of the Western Balkan countries achieved on the road leading to European integration in the last year is impressive and we support its further acceleration. The Czech Republic is determined to realize, to a maximum extent, the conclusions of the enlargement strategy so that individual countries can approach the perspective of their European Union membership, provided they successfully fulfill the conditions set in the Accession and European Partnerships and remove the shortcomings referred to in the Summary Progress Reports.

The Czech Republic already said that one of the foreign policy priorities during its EU Presidency would concern the Western Balkans. What are your forecasts as to the

possibility for the EU to decide to liberalize the visa regime toward Macedonia during this period and do you think Macedonia's progress in meeting of the political criteria for being set a date for starting membership negotiations could be tabled over the course of the Czech Presidency?

Prague fully supports the intention of the European Commission to advance the perspective of EU membership towards the citizens of the Western Balkans through visa liberalization as early as 2009, provided these countries fulfill the defined conditions.

The areas of what is known as a roadmap for visa liberalization include security of documents, border management, strengthening of national and international law enforcement, protection of personal data, anticorruption measures, fight against organized crime and terrorism, respect of democratic values and protection of civil rights. It is difficult homework, which will be evaluated by international groups of experts.

Nobody can say whether it will be finished during the Czech Presidency.

Your Excellency, media report announcements from top Czech officials that during the Czech Presidency a summit would be held of the heads of state of the 27 EU member states and U.S. President Barack Obama. When could such a meeting take place and what its outcome is expected to be?

I don't expect the first possible date of the summit of the 27 member states with President Barack Obama to be earlier than end February and early March next year.

The outcome of this summit is difficult to predict. Its topics, however, will definitely include: cooperation between the EU and the new US government, facing the world economic crisis, energy, common fight against terrorism, etc.

The bilateral relations between the Czech Republic and the Republic of Macedonia are characterized by openness, friendship and mutual cooperation. Your Excellency, what are your views regarding the further promotion of the bilateral ties, the economic cooperation in particular?

Development of contacts at the highest political level in the past two years, the opening of the Czech Embassy in Skopje in September 2006

and the Embassy of the Republic of Macedonia in Prague in the beginning of this year have significantly contributed towards intensifying not only political, but also economic cooperation.

Intensifying and deepening of economic cooperation between Czech and Macedonian companies now represent the biggest potential of the advancement of bilateral relations between the two countries.

I would like to emphasize the increasing interest of Czech companies in participating in development and investment projects in Macedonia and entering its market, as evidenced by the rising trade, which totaled 42 million euros in 2007 and 37 million euros in January-August 2008, noting a 60 percent year-on-year increase.

Trade should be further promoted through Czech investments or participation in Macedonia's privatization process. The main areas of the Czech companies' interest are the energy sector and the transport and communal infrastructure, including environmental protection.

I would like to mention several projects implemented with Czech financial aid, focusing mainly on environmental protection, the last major one being the project concerning the chemical plant OHIS in Skopje, in which the Czech Republic invested cca 400,000 euros and which is still underway.

I would like to underline the continual interest of the Czech energy company ČEZ, which, despite its failure to take over state-run ESM Distribution in 2006, is still focused on entering the local energy market, especially by way of building new energy production capacities.

A good reference for the Czech companies in Macedonia is the Czech firm Hydropol, or its daughter company MacHydro, which in 2001 received a concession for modernizing and operating seven small hydro plants. Hydropol is for the time being the biggest Czech investor in Macedonia.

We consider the Republic of Macedonia as a promising economic partner. I am also sure that the Macedonian businessmen and companies are capable of capturing the Czech market. We are fully aware of the quality of the Macedonian wine and also of the long tradition and good references of the Macedonian construction firms, which in the past realized several projects in our country.

Macedonian DIPLOMATIC BULLETIN



The employees of the diplomatic and consular missions of the Republic of Macedonia abroad also took part in the afforesting campaign “Day of the Tree – Plant Your Future”, which was covered extensively by the electronic and printed media in the countries in which they are accredited.

“DAY OF THE TREE – PLANT YOUR FUTURE!”



MFA Paet and MFA Milososki, Skopje



London

I think that this day should be a day of celebration and unification for all of us, regardless of where people plant and regardless of their ethnicity, religion, and party affiliation,” eminent opera singer and UNESCO Ambassador Boris Trajanov, who is also one of the initiators of this campaign, stated. Government representatives, mayors, public individuals, artists, pensioners, representatives of the diplomatic corps, nongovernmental organizations, media, and companies all took part in this campaign in large number.

“This is an excellent campaign that will give excellent results in the future,” Macedonian Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski said. He stressed that the Government would continue to support the afforesting campaign and he expressed hope that it will become a traditional event. The Army of the Republic of Macedonia also took an active part in this campaign. Over 1,800 troops from seven army garrisons planted approximately 200,000 trees at 14 locations in the country.

The representatives of the diplomatic corps planted trees in the area around the Boris Trajkovski sports hall.

“This is worth getting your shoes dirty, absolutely. I will especially get my shoes very dirty on Wednesday. On this day I will put on boots and jeans so that I can plant trees throughout Macedonia all day,” H.E. Mrs. Simone Filippini, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Republic of Macedonia, stated. H.E. Mr. Dariusz

Approximately 6 million trees were planted at 15 locations in the Republic of Macedonia on 19 November, within the frames of the campaign “Day of the Tree – Plant Your Future”. The afforesting campaign was realized with the support of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. The aim of this campaign is preservation of the environment and raising ecological awareness, and the first time that this campaign was conducted in the Republic of Macedonia was in March this year, when two million trees were planted. “Despite the bad weather conditions, the Macedonian citizens came out in large number. I am proud to belong to a people that manifests high ecological awareness.

Washington



Berlin





Istanbul



Copenhagen

Bachura, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the Republic of Macedonia, expressed support for this campaign, stressing, "This is the start of a new era of afforesting of the regions that were caught by fires. This campaign will flourish; it will grow together with the trees that we planted".

Urmas Paet, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, also took part in this campaign by planting a tree with Antonio Milososki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia, in the park outside the Foreign Ministry during his visit to the Republic of Macedonia.

The employees of the diplomatic and consular missions of the Republic of Macedonia abroad also took part in this campaign, which was covered extensively by the electronic and printed media in the countries in which they are accredited.

This campaign was observed by representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture of the Republic of Slovenia, the Republic of Croatia, the Republic of Serbia, the Republic of Montenegro, the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Republic of Albania, and the Republic of Kosovo. In March year 2009 the original Macedonian ecological campaign "Day of the Tree – Plant Your Future" is expected to become a Balkan campaign, as the other Balkan countries are also expected to realize the same operation and plant 6 million trees in each country.



Brussels



Bucharest

Ottawa



Prague



DIPLOMATICS CORPS SOCIAL EVENTS

ALBANIAN NATIONAL DAY - On the occasion of 28 November, Albanian National Day, His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Prela, Ambassador of the Republic of Albania to the Republic of Macedonia, hosted a reception at the "Den i Nok" restaurant on 27 November for numerous guests from the political and social life and representatives of the diplomatic corps.

THE DAY OF INDEPENDENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND - His Excellency Mr. Karol Bachura, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the Republic of Macedonia, welcomed numerous guests, including Macedonian central and local government officials, religious dignitaries, as well as representatives of the diplomatic corps and the Polish community, at the Army Hall in Skopje on 3 November 2008 on the occasion of 11 November - the Day of Independence of the Republic of Poland (the 90th anniversary of regaining independence).

The program consisted of a concert of compositions by modern Polish composers (Baird, Karłowicz, Kilar) conducted by Maestro Janusz Przybylski from Poland and performed by the Macedonian Philharmonic, and two exhibitions, the first being an interactive performance entitled Smiles From All Over the World, in which guests were able to participate as well, sharing their smiles by drawing them on posters and paper, and the second being dedicated to the film icon of independent Poland, the Queen of the Polish cinema of the 1930s, Jadwiga Smosarska. The celebration ended with a reception.

EMINENT JAPANESE DECORATION FOR HONORARY CONSUL GENERAL TO REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

H.E. Mr. Akio Tanaka, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Macedonia with residence in Vienna, awarded Dr. Kosta Balabanov, Honorary Consul General of Japan to the Republic of Macedonia, with "The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon" at a formal reception in the Holiday Inn Hotel on 18 November, before numerous representatives of the diplomatic corps and the political and public life in Macedonia, as well as members of the Association for Japanese-Macedonian Friendship.

Ambassador Tanaka also awarded Ms. Kazu Lesnikovska, Liaison Officer at the Honorary Consulate-General of Japan in Macedonia, with the Commendation of Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura.

The Government of Japan awards this Order every spring and fall to foreign nationals who have contributed significantly to the enhancement of mutual understanding and friendship between two countries. Dr. Balabanov is the first Macedonian citizen to whom the Japanese Order is awarded.

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

H.E. Mr. Abdol Majid MOZAFFARI – Islamic Republic of Iran

H.E. Mr. El Ghailani DLIMI – Kingdom of Morocco

And to wish a successful diplomatic mission to our colleague:

Mrs. Jadranka CAUSEVSKA-DIMOV, Minister Counsellor
Embassy of the Republic of Macedonia in Sofia, Republic of Bulgaria

Jadranka Causevska-Dimov has authored the article entitled "Rich Agenda of Good Neighborly Relations" published on page 10 of the special edition of the Macedonian Diplomatic Bulletin

Bern



Stockholm



Sofia



Doha



President Crvenkovski on official visit to Croatia

It is time we focused on expanding the Croatia-Macedonia relations in all areas, Croatian President Stjepan Mesic said after meeting Macedonian President Branko Crvenkovski, who paid an official visit to the Republic of Croatia on 6-7 November 2008. The traditionally good political relations, the high level of parliamentary cooperation, the growing economic cooperation, the process of Euro-Atlantic integration of the two countries, the situation in the region, as well as the recent developments on the international stage were the talking points of President Crvenkovski's meetings with his host, Mr. Mesic, Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, Assembly President Vladimir Šeks and Chamber of Commerce President Nadan Vidosevic.



President Crvenkovski also opened the Macedonian Language Department at the University of Rijeka Faculty of Philosophy.

Macedonia-Albania parliamentary cooperation promoted

Macedonian Parliament Speaker Trajko Veljanovski paid an official visit to the Republic of Albania on 11 November and met with his Albanian counterpart Jozefina Topalli, President Bamir Topi and Prime Minister Sali Berisha.

Mr. Veljanovski shared views with his Albanian colleagues about the good political relations, the bilateral cooperation as regards both countries' Euro-Atlantic integration and the importance of implementing the Corridor 8 project. He underlined also the importance of promoting the rights of the Macedonian minority in the Republic of Albania. As for Corridor 8, the parliament speakers of Macedonia, Albania and Bulgaria are going to send a joint letter to the relevant European institutions.

The Macedonian delegation also met with Albanian Economy, Trade and Energy Minister Genc Ruli and Public Works, Transportation and Telecommunication Minister Sokol Olldashi.

Macedonian-Turkish partnership confirmed in Ankara

The Foreign Ministers of Macedonia and Turkey, Antonio Milososki and Ali Babacan, signed in Ankara, Turkey, the Strategy for Reinforcement of Bilateral Relations Between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Macedonia during Minister Milososki's official visit on 10-12 November 2008.

The document has a far-reaching impact and is a ground document outlining the excellent relations between the two countries and setting guidelines for their future growth beneficial for Macedonia in terms of both its presentation on the Turkish market and its international



promotion through joint ventures, Minister Milososki said after signing the paper.

The admission of the Republic of Macedonia to the Euro-Atlantic structures will be important for the regional stability and therefore Turkey is going to continue to give Macedonia unwavering support, said Turkish Minister Babacan.

Minister Milososki also met with Turkish President Abdullah Gul and Parliament Speaker Koksal Toptan and visited the Mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk where he laid flowers.

Stoltenberg: We support Macedonia's NATO and EU membership

We support the membership of the Republic of Macedonia of NATO and the EU and believe that the motion against Greece filed with the International Court of Justice in The Hague is Macedonia's legitimate right, said Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg after meeting his Macedonian counterpart Nikola Gruevski, who paid a visit to the Kingdom of Norway on 24-26 November.

We are going to continue the name issue talks. I would be happy if a solution was found as soon as possible, in which case we would not have to wait for the outcome of the legal proceedings, which we are confident would be in Macedonia's favor, Prime Minister Gruevski said and extended his gratitude for the Norwegian support in a number of areas. He also informed his host that Macedonia would open an Embassy in Oslo in 2009.



Prime Minister Gruevski also met with Norwegian King Harald V, Parliament Speaker Thorbjorn Jagland, Defense Minister Anne-Grete Strom-Erichsen and former Prime Minister and President of the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights Kjell Magne Bondevik.

The Macedonian government delegation also had meetings with officials of a dozen Norwegian companies, presenting to them Macedonia's investment opportunities, as well as with representatives of the Macedonian community in Oslo.

Estonia, committed supporter of visa regime liberalization for Macedonia

Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet opened the Honorary Consul of Estonia in Skopje during his official visit to the Republic of Macedonia on 19-20 November.

Estonia backs Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations and believes the name issue will soon be resolved and the country will join NATO, Minister Paet said at the press conference at the Macedonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "I am confident that Macedonia is going to conduct the reforms required for its EU membership in near future. As for Estonia, the EU should decide on the full visa regime liberalization next year."

We highly appreciate the fact that the Estonian Government is one of the most committed supporters of the visa liberalization with the EU and trust that Macedonia deserves it, Minister Milososki said.

Minister Paet also met with Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and Deputy Parliament Speaker Jani Makraduli and signed with Minister Milososki the Agreement on Exchange and Mutual Protection of Classified Information and with Finance Minister Trajko Slaveski the Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation and Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income.

2008 EC PROGRESS REPORT ON MACEDONIA



On November 5th, the European Commission released its annual progress report on Macedonia. Having been a candidate country since 2005, Macedonia had hoped for a recommendation concerning the perspective for opening of accession negotiations.

The Government stated that the report is realistic and embodies what has happened in the country in the past 12 months. Macedonia's progress is recognized in numerous areas, especially in respect of the police and judiciary reforms, the fight against corruption and crime, the implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, as well as in the areas of economy and harmonization with the EU acquis. The eight key priorities of the Accession Partnership, which the Commission, in March 2008, defined as benchmarks for start of accession negotiations, have been fulfilled to a good extent.

The Government has thoroughly analysed the EC Progress Report and endorsed its recommendations by translating them into a detailed Action Plan. Priority is attached to continuing the activities related to the fulfilment of the political criteria, particularly to organizing and conducting orderly local and presidential elections next spring, promoting inclusive dialogue within the institutions, continuing reforms in the judiciary and police, fighting corruption and crime and strengthening the administrative capacities, all aiming at early start of accession negotiations.

Macedonia is encouraged by the conclusion of the European Commission that the country has made good progress in fulfilling the benchmarks of the Roadmap for EU visa liberalisation, as well as its readiness to propose, on a country by country basis, the lifting of the visa obligation in 2009.

The EU Agenda remains a top priority for Macedonia. This was confirmed in the deliberations on the EC Progress Report in the relevant bodies of the Macedonian Parliament, including the National Council for European Integration.

Being a candidate country without a date for negotiations for three years now, is an unsustainable situation with demotivating effects. Macedonia has the political, administrative and institutional capacity to start the negotiations as soon as possible. We trust that the European Union will leave the door open for a positive step forward with Macedonia during the Czech Presidency, based on a reassessment on the fulfilment of the relevant conditions for start of negotiations.

Agneza RUSI

Director for the European Union at the MFA

VISA LIBERALIZATION DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Commission Assessment of the implementation by the Republic of Macedonia of the Roadmap for visa liberalization was released on 25th of November 2008. With this document the first phase of the visa liberalization dialogue has been completed.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as a responsible institution for this dossier, welcomed the findings of the Commission's assessment, where Macedonia's achievements were fairly and objectively presented. Significant progress has been noted in all areas covering the Roadmap requirements (Security of documents, Illegal migration and readmission, Public order and security and International relations and fundamental rights). Macedonia has been officially recognized as the most advanced from the countries involved in the visa liberalization process. According to the statements of high EC officials, Macedonia could expect free visa regime in the course of 2009.

Such move would be a strong signal of encouragement from the European Union, an unequivocal message of the EU's support to the Macedonian citizens. Indeed, this would be the best manner to intensify the communication and to increase the awareness of the European values and standards. This is what matters most, especially for the younger generations as holders of Macedonia's development as an EU member state. I am deeply convinced that these developments would be of mutual interest for both, the Republic of Macedonia and the European Union.

On the other hand, every delay in the process, whatever the reasons are, would provoke disappointment and confusion between Macedonian citizens and would have negative impact on the credibility, the confidence and public support for the European Union in the Republic of Macedonia.

Our expectations and efforts are currently focused on prompt and successful completion of the assessment field missions, envisaged for the first trimester of 2009. These missions would closely follow and verify the progress achieved in the respected areas. Upon finalization of these missions, we look forward to a proposal from the European Commission to the Council of the EU for lifting of the visa obligation towards Macedonia.

I sincerely hope that by December 2009, we could jointly celebrate the beginning of the free movement of people, which would also mean one step closer to the long awaited goal – full fledged membership of the Republic of Macedonia into the EU.

I would also like to use this space to express appreciation for the continuous contribution and cooperation of the colleagues from the Macedonian institutions involved in the visa liberalization dialogue, as well as to the European Commission colleagues from Skopje and Brussels.

Zoran POPOV

Member of Macedonian Visa Liberalization Team

UN SOMMET EXCEPTIONNEL

Le XII e Sommet de la Francophonie qui s'est tenu à Québec du 17 au 19 octobre 2008 fut exceptionnel et ce n'est nullement par hasard que le Secrétaire général de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, M. Abdou Diouf, dans son remarquable discours d'ouverture a lancé aux participants le défi de faire de cette

grande réunion de la famille francophone un événement historique car bien de conditions pour cela étaient réunies.

Tout d'abord le 400 e anniversaire de la fondation du Québec cette année ainsi que l'impressionnante préparation, organisation et déroulement de l'événement auquel étaient entièrement associés les plus hautes autorités du Québec, le Premier Ministre du Canada et du Nouveau Brunswick ont donné une dimension toute particulière à l'événement.

Cette dimension a aussi été assurée par présence de plus hauts responsables politiques au niveau européen et mondial, comme le Secrétaire général de l'ONU, M. Ban Ki-moon, le Président de la Commission européenne, M. José Manuel Barroso et particulièrement du Président français Nicolas Sarkozy, qui assure la Présidence de l'Union européenne accompagné du Premier

Ministre M. François Fillon et du Secrétaire d'Etat chargé de la coopération et de la Francophonie M. Alain Joyandet et par le grand nombre de chefs d'état des pays membres.

Et enfin par les thèmes, non seulement sur le renforcement de la présence de la langue française dans les pays membres et au niveau mondial mais aussi sur la crise financière mondiale avec les interventions très marquantes du Président Sarkozy, la crise alimentaire et les grands problèmes politiques et environnementaux. Toutes ces questions ont donné lieu à des débats approfondis et constructifs et qui ont débouché sur l'adoption avant tout de la Déclaration de Québec et de la Résolution sur la langue française. Ce sont de véritables feuilles de route pour les années à venir.

Saško STEFKOV

Coordinateur national pour la Francophonie



MACEDONIA'S ECONOMIC POTENTIALS PRESENTED AT BUSINESS FORUMS IN USA



A senior government delegation led by Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski presented the economic potentials of the Republic of Macedonia, as well as the possibilities for investment, at business forums in Palo Alto and Chicago, United States of America, from 10 to 14 November year 2008. Besides Prime Minister

Gruevski, the government delegation also included Deputy Prime Minister Zoran Stavreski, Economy Minister Fatmir Besimi, Minister of Information Society Ivo Ivanovski, and Vele Samak, Minister without Portfolio in charge of foreign investments, as well as Viktor Mizo, Director of the Agency for Foreign Investments.

The IT-related investments and the activities related to the opening of an IT University in Macedonia were especially stressed at these forums. Consequently, the government delegation visited a number of world-renowned IT companies: HP, INTEL, ORACLE, and Sun Microsystems. Prime Minister Gruevski signed a Memorandum of Understanding in the sphere of Information Technology with representatives of the company INTEL.

Philip Reeker, Ambassador of the United States of America to the Republic of Macedonia, also addressed the guests at these forums, which were also attended by representatives of 36 Macedonian companies. Reeker encouraged American businessmen to invest in Macedonia.

During the business forum in Chicago, USAID and the organization "Macedonia 2025" signed a Memorandum of Understanding for joint activities in the sphere of development projects in the Republic of Macedonia, while the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and the Boston University signed a Memorandum of Cooperation in the sphere of organizing postgraduate studies in Information Technology.

MILOSOSKI AT CEI SUMMIT

Antonio Milososki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia, took part in the Meeting of the CEI Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Chisinau, Republic of Moldavia, on 26 and 27 November, while on 28 November he attended the Meeting of the Heads of Government of the Member States of the Central European Initiative (CEI). Final documents on "The Role of CEI in Enhancing Regional Cooperation and EU Integration" and "The Situation in the

Region" were adopted at these meetings. In the final document they welcomed "The Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2008-2009" and they acknowledged Macedonia's continuous efforts in this direction. With regards to NATO enlargement, they acknowledged the ongoing ratification of the Accession Protocols for Albania and Croatia, and they also emphasized that Macedonia would join these countries soon. On the fringe of this summit, Minister Milososki met with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldavia, the Republic of Romania, and the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as with the Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic and the Italian Republic, with whom he discussed bilateral relations and EU and Euro-Atlantic integration.

EVENT "YEAR OF MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE" IN LONDON

The Embassy of the Republic of Macedonia in London marked "The year of the Macedonian Language" with a befitting event in the "Bonnington" Congress Center on 12 November.

Marija Efremova, Ambassador of the Republic of Macedonia to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, welcomed the numerous guests from the diplomatic corps, the international and British institutions, and the Macedonian community in London.

Professor Goran Stefanovski, Macedonian Ambassador of Culture to Great Britain, talked about the history and development of the Macedonian language, stressing that precisely the south-Slav dialect is the foundation of the church Slavic language. Zaneta Skerlev, director of the Macedonian editorial board of BBC, Professor Patricia Marsh Stefanovska, Peggy and Graham Reid, former professors at the "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University in Skopje, and Dr. Robin P. Aizlewood, director of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, also addressed the guests.

The participants also watched the documentary "The Macedonian language in the global world".

MACEDONIA AT GATEWAY ISRAEL 2008

The Republic of Macedonia presented itself with a stand of its own at the international business promotion Gateway Israel 2008 in mid November at the initiative of the Macedonian Embassy in Tel Aviv, which organized the presentation in association with the Ministry of Economy and the Agency for Foreign Investments.

The content of the Macedonian stand focused on the country's investment opportunities and tourism potentials.

"Macedonia's participation in Gateway Israel 2008, a prelude to the Prime Ministers' Business Conference, has a special relevance bearing in mind that the Republic of Macedonia took part in the most important business event in Israel only six months of starting the procedure for opening its Embassy," Charge d'Affaires Pajo Avirovik told MDB.

MACEDONIAN TROOPS IN ALTHEA MISSION DECORATED POSTHUMOUSLY

The 11 Macedonian Army troops who were killed in a helicopter crash near Skopje on 12 January year 2008 upon their return from the successfully completed mission within the frames of EU's "ALTHEA" were decorated posthumously with the European Security and Defense Policy Service Medals.

Spanish Major General Ignacio Martin Villalain, EUFOR Commander for Bosnia-Herzegovina, presented the medals to the families of these soldiers on 7 November year 2008. The ceremony was also attended by Zoran Konjanovski, Minister of Defense of the Republic of Macedonia, Lieutenant General Miroslav Stojanovski, Chief of the General Staff of the Macedonian Army, and representatives of the military-diplomatic corps



Days of Macedonian Culture in the USA

The Days of the Macedonian Culture in the USA took place on 12-26 November under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia with a number of concerts, exhibitions and screenings in a few US cities.

The event was opened by the world-famous Macedonia piano virtuoso, Simon Trpceviski, with a concert in Chicago, which was also attended by a government delegation headed by Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski.



The exhibition “Macedonian Contemporary Art” of seven Macedonian artists and the Macedonian film festival at which 10 Macedonian films by renowned Macedonian directors were shown took place in New York.

The event ended with an exhibition by artist Dimce Isajlovski at the Macedonian Embassy in Washington and a concert of the highly acclaimed artists Dragan Dautovski, Boris Trajanov and Aleksandar Stefanovski accompanied on piano by Darko Marinkovski.

Macedonian films at film festival in The Netherlands



The Macedonian cinematography was presented also in Utrecht, The Netherlands, at the first edition of the film festival “Eastern Neighbors”. Six Macedonian films by famous directors were shown with the support of the Macedonian Ministry of Culture and the Film Fund of Macedonia. During the festival the Republic of Macedonia was promoted before the distinguished guests from the film industry as an attractive tourist destination.

70th anniversary of Kemal Atatürk's death commemorated

With a commemoration at the Museum in Bitola, the city where Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the father of modern Turkey, spent his childhood and graduated from the military school in 1886, the 70th anniversary of his death was marked on 10 November.

On this occasion a delegation of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Macedonia headed by Defense Minister Zoran Konjanovski, representatives of the local government and Turkish Ambassador to Macedonia Arslan Hakan Okçal laid flowers at Atatürk's bust in the Museum's memorial room.

Golden Knight for Macedonian Ambassador of Culture

The Ambassador of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia to the Russian Federation, Ivan Popovski, is the winner of this year's Golden Knight Award.

The Macedonian director and Ambassador of Culture was presented the award for his plays “Rhinoceros” by Eugène Ionesco and “Danish King Drops” by Bulat Okudjava.

JOURNAL DU QUÉBEC

Québec. Ville historique dans la province canadienne portant le même nom. Le XIIème Sommet de la Francophonie s'y déroule. Sasko Stefkov, Sasko Nasev et moi-même formons la délégation macédonienne.

En septembre dernier, j'ai été nommé représentant personnel du Président de la République auprès de la Francophonie. C'est un nouvel engagement, un nouveau défi pour moi, qui vise à rapprocher le monde francophone à l'opinion publique macédonienne et inversement.

Forte d'une population de plus de 800 millions d'habitants et de 200 millions locuteurs de français dans le monde, l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) a pour mission de donner corps à une solidarité active entre les 70 Etats et gouvernements qui la composent – soit le tiers des Etats membres des Nations unies. Abdou Diouf, ancien président de Sénégal, en est le Secrétaire Général.

La Francophonie a quatre grandes missions:

- promouvoir la langue française et la diversité culturelle et linguistique;
- promouvoir la paix, la démocratie et les droits de l'Homme;
- appuyer l'éducation, la formation, l'enseignement supérieur et de recherche;
- développer la coopération au service du développement durable.

Le Sommet de Québec avait un rôle spécifique. Sur proposition des hôtes canadiens et québécois, les réflexions des participants se sont concentrées sur la langue française, l'environnement, le développement durable et les changements climatiques.

Notre pays a adhéré à la Francophonie en qualité de membre de plein droit au Sommet de Bucarest en 2006. Je me permets une petite digression. Cette ville roumaine devient une obsession pour les Macédoniens. Nous nous rappelons très bien qu'en 1913, ici avec le Traité de Bucarest, la Macédoine était déchirée, divisée et partagée par trois autres pays balkaniques.

Il y a deux ans toujours, dans cette ville, la Macédoine et la Grèce sont devenues membres de la Francophonie.

Cette année, toujours dans cette ville roumaine, notre pays a été empêché de devenir membre de l'OTAN à cause du veto grecque.

Malheureusement, le nom de notre pays devient une obsession pour les dirigeants et les délégations grecs. Cela a été constaté à deux reprises lors du Sommet de Québec, lorsque nos hôtes nous ont désignés comme représentant la Macédoine. La délégation grecque a alors protesté vivement.

En conclusion, j'aimerais souligner que ces sommets sont non seulement des possibilités d'aborder des sujets liés aux intérêts de la Francophonie, mais représentent également des occasions pour les représentants de se rencontrer et de mieux faire connaître leurs pays. Une meilleure connaissance mutuelle nous mènera ainsi vers plus de tolérance, de respect les uns pour les autres, ce qui à son tour contribuera à la promotion de la paix, objectif majeur de la Francophonie.

*Ambassadeur Blagoj ZASOV
Représentant personnel du Président auprès du CP
de la Francophonie*

