UN SECRETARY GENERAL BAN Ki-MOON ADDRESSES MACEDONIAN PARLIAMENT

Macedonian legislation harmonized with the EU acquis in July and August 2012:
- Law Amending the Law on Identification and Registration of Animals
- Law on Accounting
- Law Amending the Law on Mandatory Capital Funded Pension Insurance

AUSTRIA AND SLOVAKIA STRONGLY SUPPORT EU INTEGRATION PROCESS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Mr. Spindelegger and Mr. Lažčák said that their visit is a strong signal of the support their countries are giving to the European integration process of the country. They added that the name issue should not be an obstacle blocking the integration of the Republic of Macedonia in the European Union. The Macedonian parliamentarians agreed that the parallel process of negotiations regarding the name and for joining the EU would be valuable for the Republic of Macedonia which continues to be committed to implementation of the reforms in the administration, judiciary and to decriminalization of libel and defamation.

During his official visit in the Republic of Macedonia, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon met with the President of the Assembly, Mr. Trajko Veljanoski. At the meeting, Mr. Ban Ki-moon emphasised the country’s contribution in the overall UN system and that the Republic of Macedonia should be proud that the country has gone from being a recipient to today being a contributor in peace keeping missions. President Veljanoski underlined that parliamentary cooperation is well developed with all the countries from the region, except with our southern neighbour and informed the UN Secretary General that after the elections in Greece, he sent an invitation letter to the Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament, so that the two parliaments can contribute to building of trust in the overall negotiation process. The UN Secretary General stated that sending an invitation letter is a very constructive step and that the Special Envoy Mr. Nimetz will present these positive signals in Athens.

In his address before the MPs of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, Mr. Ban Ki-moon recalled the words of a famous daughter of Skopje, Mother Teresa, who said: “If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.” When neighbours become enemies it is because they have forgotten that simple, but profound truth. Macedonia achieved independence at the ballot box, not on the battleground, and set an example by establishing international borders with the neighbours without any disputes and in accordance with international law. As a new country Macedonia helped mediate among its northern neighbours. It is a young democracy, but its achievements have already been well recognized, said Mr. Ban Ki-Moon.

“I have no doubt of your commitment to a peaceful multiethnic society. You have amended your Constitution to enable important developments such as decentralization, the double majority vote and the use of multiple languages. You opened your doors and your hearts to hundreds of thousands of refugees during the Kosovo crisis. And you have brought your embrace of diversity to the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. As Prime Minister Gruevski emphasized at last year’s General Debate in New York, you have shoul- dered your responsibility as a member of the United Nations. I know you have a goal – to join the European Union and NATO. And I know you have an obstacle. It is imperative to resolve the issue of your name. Both sides need to demonstrate commitment by promoting a positive atmosphere through their actions and public statements. My Personal Envoy, Mr. Nimetz, and I are determined to facilitate a mutually agreeable solution soon, said Mr. Ban Ki-Moon. Recalling a painting of a Macedonian surrealist painter, Vasko Taskovski, placed opposite his office, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon ended his speech stating that the painting is a moving and inspirational interpretation of the dove, the world’s most widely recognized symbol of peace. As the dove in the painting encircles the earth, it captures the essence of the aspiration expressed in the United Nations Charter: “to practise tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours”.

BOTH HISTORIC ILINDENS CELEBRATED
The successful finalization of this project for strengthening the institutional capacities of the Assembly is another proof of the preparedness of the institutions to open accession negotiations with the European Union. I sincerely hope that the European Commission and the European Council will consider the preparedness and the reforms of the Republic of Macedonia and will determine the date to open accession negotiations with the EU, since this is the strategic goal of all political parties and the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia,” said President Veljanoski.

The EU-funded 18 months project had the specific objective to improve the capacity of the Parliament, particularly with a view to the challenges presented by the negotiation process for EU membership and the role of Parliament in that process. During the Project’s implementation period, the experts worked both with the Parliament staff, but also with Members of the Parliament. The main activities included various trainings and a comprehensive training manual on the topics covered by the training seminars, and recommendations for improved efficiency and effectiveness of Parliament before and after EU membership. The experts who provided these activities to Parliament included many current or former Parliament staff members, MPs, senior civil servants or diplomats of the newer EU Member States who have themselves participated in the EU accession and accession negotiation processes for their country. The technical assistance provided to the Parliament during this Project will assist the Parliament to play an active role not only during the High Level Accession Dialogue, but also during the subsequent EU accession negotiations.

JOINT SESSION OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL AND THE EU AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The National Euro-Integration Council and the EU Affairs Committee had a joint session on the Government Report for the status of implementation of the priorities adopted in the High Level Accession Dialogue (HLAD). Vice-President of the Government in charge for EU Affairs, Mrs. Teuta Arifi, presented the Report and elaborated the activities of the Government in the past several months in the five priority areas: freedom of expression and professional standards, rule of law, reform of public administration, electoral reform and strengthening of market economy.

Regarding the first priority, Mrs. Arifi informed on the success achieved regarding the decriminalisation of defamation and the maximum level of fines. The Draft-Law on Civil Responsibility for Insult and Defamation has been sent for an opinion to the Council of Europe. Also there are ongoing trainings for application of Article 10 of the ECHR for judges working on defamation cases and series of ECHR judgments have been translated related to ECHR Article 10. Regarding rule of law and fundamental rights, Mrs. Arifi stated that there is a decrease in the bulk of court cases, and inflow of new cases has been fully managed. Capacities of Public Prosecutors Office have been strengthened and candidates from the Academy of Judges and Public Prosecutors Academy have been accepted. A Report has been made on the implementation of Ohrid Framework Agreement with quantitative data regarding ethnic representations, decentralisation process and the use of languages in the Republic of Macedonia. When speaking about the reform of the public administration, Mrs. Arifi said that incoming adoption of a new law on administration will take on board all civil servants and overcome some existing problems and improve the system of administration. Also, a new Law on General Administrative Procedure is planned in the following months. Regarding electoral reform, Mrs. Arifi emphasized that Draft-Electoral Code and Draft-Law on Financing of Political Parties have been prepared, and also revision is underway of the voter’s list, which include recommendations of the last OSCE/ODIHR report for the parliamentary elections 2011. In relations to the strengthening of the market economy, series of activities have been taken to improve labour market and educations, with special focus on young people, also for improvement of business climate and strengthening of creation of economic policies and their implementation.