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Republic of Macedonia on the way to the EU

Joint Parliamentary Committee EU-RM

The Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia and the EU

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Culture

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

BOTH HISTORIC ILINDENS CELEBRATED



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 should-

ered 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".

Austria and Slovakia Strongly Support EU Integration Process of the Republic of Macedonia

The members of the Foreign Policy Committee and of the European Affairs Committee of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia held a joint meeting with the Austrian Federal Minister for European and International Affairs Mr. Michael Spindelegger and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic Mr. Miroslav Lajčák. Welcoming the guests, the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Policy Mr. Antonio Milošoski expressed appreciation for the continuous support that Austria and Slovakia are giving to Macedonia on its path towards integration in the EU. He said that the priorities of country remain the same. The Chairman of the European Affairs Committee Mr. Hajrula Minisi emphasized the fact that in the last three years Macedonia has received positive Progress Reports from the European Commission, which is confirmation of the success of the reform processes in the country. He also mentioned the consensus among the citizens in the country, regardless of their ethnic origin, for joining the EU.

Mr. Spindelegger and Mr. Lajčák 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 issues 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 of the administration, judiciary and to decriminalization of libel and defamation.



OFFICIAL CLOSING OF THE IPA PROJECT- "TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO PARLIAMENT"



The IPA funded Project -"Technical Assistance to Parliament" aimed for strengthening the capacities of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia for the EU negotiations process, was officially closed in the EU Delegation in the Republic of Macedonia. President Trajko Veljanoski, Mrs. Deputy Vice-President of the Government in charge of EU affairs, EU Ambassador Aivo Orav, and the Project Team Leader, Mrs. Inese Birzniece, addressed at the event. In his speech, President Veljanoski stated that the project is verification of the achievements of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia noted in the EC Progress Reports. The knowledge and the information gained in this project can be applied in the Pre-accession dialogue between the Government and the European Commission, in which the Assembly will have an important role, as well as in the negotiations process. "Parliaments are losing part of their competences in the negotiations process, and at the same time they need to make efforts to keep their communication with their electorate. During this process, Parliaments should make series of constitutional, legislative, institutional and organizational reforms and to review and adopt thousands of pages of the Acquis, which should be appropriately transferred in the domestic legislation, and the application thereof is not always welcomed by the citizens. Therefore, our Assembly must inform the public in detail of the benefits from the European Integration and, vice versa, to receive information from the society for the essential issues in the everyday work and living. The Assembly financially contributed in this Project, purchasing IT equipment to archive the video history of all plenary sessions since its independence, as a mark of development of the Macedonian democracy in the past 20 years. On the basis of the comparative experience, Parliament opened an EU Info Centre, where the citizens can receive information on the news, policies, institutions, history, values and the legislation of the European Union. 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 participat-



ed 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.



THE GALICNIK WEDDING



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