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The constantly pending “name issue” between Macedonia and Greece in the last six months in spite of all declarative statements, has publicly not showed open signs of progressing. This year, there were several occasions and venues in which officials of the two countries met, although official information outcomes of the meetings have been rather general, formal and scarce in substance, not revealing the real state of things. Impression is that there are some discreet talks between the parties, that may show some development during the summer and autumn months.

Events in the last six months were generally subordinated to the expectation of a positive report by the European Commission as a sign of progress towards EU integration of the country. In this period was expected maximum dedication to the reform process by the Government, but also towards issues connected with the “name issue” which was supposed to give a positive impulse to the process of Euro-Atlantic integration of the Republic of Macedonia. Although it was expected that this context was should have positively influenced as stimulus to the political actors in realizing the defined priorities, still, impression is that the name problem was used by the Government as an excuse for the non-wholehearted dedication to necessary reforms. Thus, in spite of all expectations, one could say that the opposite happened:

- worsening of the political dialogue in relation position-opposition¹
- tensions among the ruling coalition partners
- ethnic tensions², dissatisfaction regarding the Ohrid Agreement implementation, requests for constitutional change, blocking the work of the parliamentary Committee for interethnic relations
- perception of the name issue as an exclusive interest of the ethnic Macedonians, and not of all the Macedonian citizens
- protests and strikes³
- threats directed against journalists and media
- domination of the Government over the Assembly⁴

¹ One example being the organized protests in front of the SDSM headquarters by the workers that have remained long-term unemployed as a result of the factories that have closed down, which took place as a reply of the protests of the same category of workers in front of the Government and Parliament. On the occasion, a reaction from Crvenkovski's cabinet stating that VMRO-DPMNE as the ruling party is behind these protests and that it abuses the problems these people have in order to cover the dissatisfaction and the bad policy results the government is showing.

² Discoveries of hidden weaponry, murders of well-known criminals of ethnic Albanian origin, kidnappings, exchange of information between Kosovo and Macedonia authorities regarding people who are wanted in Macedonia and hiding in Kosovo, etc.

³ In which participated severed workers, dismissed army personnel/professional soldiers, people who took part in defending the country during the 2001 conflict, etc.

⁴ Among other things, it was not accepted a parliamentary debate for the project “Skopje 2014” with which the main Skopje square is completely redefined and changed, as well

- signing a Declaration for integration of the Republic of Macedonia in EU, supported by the opposition and the civic sector
- pressures upon the judiciary⁵
- interpellation of the ministers of justice and euro-integration, etc

Confirmation of this trend are the warnings obtained by the foreign representatives in the country, like Euro-Ambassador Fouere, who highlighted the name issue as a key challenge for Macedonia in 2010 as well. "Last year Macedonia was granted visa liberation and obtained a recommendation from the European Commission to start negotiations for EU membership. I was amongst the many people who felt disappointed due to the fact that the Council of EU failed to determine a date for start of membership talks because of the name issue. I expect the name issue to be solved and this requires vision, courage and firm leadership. I hope a solution is possible for Macedonia to resume its efforts towards EU and NATO accession...it's necessary to underline the importance of political dialogue, because it is sad to see how political parties are quarreling, instead of focusing their energy to reach consensus as the sole opportunity to continue the integration processes", he said, adding that in 2010 the process of reforms must resume and the

as for the audit results concerning Government work and especially expenditures, the budget rebalance, the new employments in the state administration, etc.

⁵ Dismissal of Supreme Court judges, etc

business climate to be strengthened and improved in order more jobs to be opened, which would alleviate the most severe problem in the country - unemployment.

1. DEVELOPMENTS ON THE "NAME ISSUE"

1.1. President Ivanov: Macedonia Achieves Significant Success in 2009, Open Issues to be Settled Through Unity

In his first annual Assembly address in December 2009, President Gjorge Ivanov stated: "Macedonia achieved significant success in 2009. A stable multiethnic coalition and functional democracy operated within the country. Pertaining to international relations, the country achieved some of the objectives in obtaining the visa liberalization and EC recommendation for beginning of European Union accession negotiations, along with enhancement of relations with neighbors and other countries, settlement of the Kosovo border demarcation issue etc. However, open issues and serious problems, which will easily be solved through unity, remain".

As one of the open issues, President Ivanov mentioned the dispute with Greece over Macedonia's constitutional name, which is an impediment to the country's Euro-Atlantic integration: "In the course of 2009, Macedonia achieved significant success in the field of Euro-integration. It managed to

obtain a positive European Commission report and a recommendation for beginning of negotiations. The date was not obtained due to the irrational opposition by the political elite of our southern neighbor to Macedonia's EU and NATO accession", he stated. According to him, this has demonstrated that policy based on power can exist in such circumstances, even through abuse of regulations set to protect those which meet conditions in being part of a community. However, Ivanov added that Macedonia would continue its search for a solution to the problem.

He reiterated Macedonia's 'red lines' in the name dispute: "Is there anyone in this country who does not know the red lines regarding the issues of identity, language, culture, tradition. Those individual red lines are our national red lines. You are all aware of the red lines, as are the Macedonian citizens - no concessions from the Macedonian identity, no changes in the Constitution, a solution that will not violate our national, cultural and language identity", underlined Ivanov.

He added that Macedonia has proven its constructiveness in this absurd and imposed dispute through concrete steps of good will. "Beyond all known standards in constitutional practice, the country has changed its Constitution, stating the commonly known fact that it has no territorial pretensions towards anyone. The Republic of Macedonia took another step by doing the unthinkable and changed its flag", said Ivanov,

adding that Macedonia was ready for a solution of compromise, but only regarding things foreseen in UN resolutions.

1.2. Moratinos: Skopje and Athens are Close to Name Row Settlement, Spain Ready to Help

In January, Spanish Prime Minister and EU chairman Jose Luis Zapatero, in his address before the European Parliament in Strasbourg expressed hope that a swift solution to the Macedonia-Greece name dispute would be reached soon. Pertaining to the Greek initiative for EU integration of Western Balkan countries by 2014, the Spanish PM assessed the idea deserved attention and would be promoted in the course of Spain's Union Presidency.

In February, Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Moratinos announced that he would soon visit Skopje. "Athens and Skopje are close to settling the name row, he said, pointing out that the new Greek Government's position on the matter is rather satisfactory". He said Spain's EU Presidency was ready to do its best to that effect: "Both parties have been working under the UN auspice, and at the moment it is better for them to talk with each other with the support of the world organization. If European intervention is to be needed, the Spanish Presidency is ready for that. For this purpose I have naturally decided to visit Skopje in the near future and reaffirm this position". According to him, integration of the Western Balkans into the EU is important,

even urgent. Similarly, the Spanish Ambassador to Macedonia Maria Garcia de Lara said for Radio Free Europe in regard to the name row settlement that "We believe that there are signs for optimism and a possibility for possible progress in the near future, as we really respect, encourage, support the leadership they have shown in resuming the direct talks"... "this is a bilateral dispute. EU wishes for a mutually acceptable solution to be found soon, but it is not part of the negotiating process. All EU countries and institutions welcome the direct contacts and the entire negotiating process, and we as the Spanish Presidency will be more than happy if a solution is to be found as soon as possible".

Followed the visit in Skopje by the Spanish FM Miguel Angel Moratinos with his Macedonian counterpart Antonio Milososki in which he showed optimism regarding the possibility for Macedonia to get a date for opening negotiations by the end of the Spanish presidency if the Macedonian and Greek governments could finally overcome the "controversial issue". On the occasion, FM Milososki said the EU integration was the driving force for Macedonia and that it felt prepared to kick off negotiations for EU membership as in this context, there is a political will for intensifying the name talks with Greece.

Spain's priorities in the course of the six-month EU Presidency included full implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, economic recovery through job creation and stabilization of financial markets aimed at

sustainable and balanced development, strengthening of EU's foreign policy as a global player, continuation of the enlargement policy, as well as commitment to the protection and enhancement of human rights and liberties.

1.3. Droutsas: Athens is not Afraid of Direct Contact With Skopje

"Athens will not abandon the UN process for resolving the name issue with Macedonia and is not afraid and has no reason to avoid direct contact with Skopje", said in January Greece's Alternate Foreign Minister Dimitris Droutsas, emphasizing that "Greece will not abandon the UN-brokered talks, but it will continue to have direct contact with the neighboring country. We are not afraid of it because we believe that it can help the process further". He admitted that Greece was under considerable pressure from the EU to find a solution through direct bilateral talks, noting that these pressures were likely to continue, but insisted that Greece would not submit to this because its positions were clear. "We have laid down a national red line, which envisages that the definitive solution is a complex name with geographical qualification of the term Macedonia for all purposes (erga omnes) and for all uses", - he underlined.

In an interview with Greek-American newspaper "Ethnikos Kirikas", Alternate FM Dimitris Droutsas said that Greece expects the United States to play a constructive role in the efforts to find a solution to the name dispute, because it is

important that Washington is well-acquainted with the Greek positions, "which are well-known and clear - name with geographic determinant for general use". He assessed Washington's move to recognize Macedonia's constitutional name as wrong: "The decision of the previous US administration to recognize the constitutional name of the neighboring country has made the resolution more complex and we have pointed this out to the Americans".

On the other hand, PM Nikola Gruevski expected bilateral talks with his Greek counterpart George Papandreou to continue in an attempt to find a name row resolution. When asked what could be expected from the upcoming meetings, the PM said that there is no much room for big hopes given the signals sent by Athens. Still, he expected for UN mediator in name negotiations Matthew Nimetz, who was scheduled to visit Skopje on February 23-24 and Athens on February 26, to offer new ideas for settling the dispute with Greece, as the matter has been hindering Macedonia's accession to the European Union and NATO. "The sooner we come to a mutually acceptable solution, the better for Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integration processes and the good-neighborly relations with Greece", the PM said.

He also had stated that "In cooperation with mediator Matthew Nimetz and through direct contacts in the upcoming period, Macedonia will try to reach a solution on the issue raised by Greece. However,

this cannot be any kind of solution, but one that will not violate our state and national interests". According to him, the Spanish EU Presidency cannot do much until processes regarding Greece's denial of Macedonia's name move forward. "We are aware why Macedonia was blocked in Bucharest and Brussels, i.e. NATO and EU. We are focused on this. In cooperation with mediator Matthew Nimetz and through direct contacts in the upcoming period, we will try to reach a solution on the issue, which will in a way, represent an exit from the current situation. However, this cannot be any kind of solution. If this was the case, we would have reached it by now. This solution should not violate our state and national interests", underlined Gruevski.

1.4. US Ambassador Reeker: It's Time for a Name Solution to be Found

At his address at the first supervisory debate in the Parliament, organized by the Foreign Policy Committee in February, US Ambassador in Macedonia Philip Reeker stressed that he believed that the Euro-Atlantic integration of Macedonia was "the only way to ensure that the future of Macedonia will be stable, prosperous, multi-ethnic democracy...". "It is time for Macedonia to overcome the reference FYROM and to find a name solution. My first remark would be - don't make it harder than it is necessary. There's a tendency stuff to be made up, fear to exist and to make this process harder than it really is. How you will do this, it's a decision which has to

be made by you and Greece. This issue must be solved, to be negotiated between Greece and Macedonia. To give up on that will be a threat to your future and the future of the region. In 2009, Macedonia made significant breakthroughs. We are looking forward to 2010 and we are aware that the crucial issue remains unsolved. It is of vital importance progress to be made and the issue to be resolved in coming months. The United States cannot resolve it for you. No one is able to guarantee that NATO and EU membership, which are your goals, are possible without name row settlement", Reeker noted.

Considering Macedonia's membership to NATO and the Strategic Partnership Declaration, signed after Alliance's Bucharest summit, the US Ambassador said there was no substitute for NATO accession. "NATO's goal is to see Macedonia as a full-fledged member. The Strategic Partnership Declaration was a positive effort made by both countries. Partnership is a two-way street", stated Reeker. Macedonian troops serve in NATO as of 2002, reminded Ambassador Reeker, adding that US and European allies could count on constant support from Macedonia.

1.5. Fule Believes Name can be Solved by June

"Good neighborly relations and finding a solution to the name dispute under UN aegis should be Macedonia's priority, for the purpose of unblocking the process of its Euro-integration. EU has no backup

plan in case a solution is not found by June", said EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fule⁶ in February, at the joint press conference with Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski. The meetings were aiming on Macedonia's Euro-integration process and Greece's conditioning with name solution prior to the start of accession negotiations.

"Maintaining good neighborly relations is of essential significance, especially in the context of finding a mutually acceptable solution under UN auspices. Leaders bear enormous responsibility and have a fantastic opportunity to produce a permanent benefit and give their contribution. There is such possibility in the next few months and it would be best to use it", stressed Fule. Pertaining to the opinion of certain MEP's that the Macedonia-Greece dispute is no longer bilateral, but a serious regional problem, whereas the EU should be increasingly engaged in its settlement, Fule said that although it is a bilateral issue, it clearly has regional implications, sincerely hoping that countries' leaders would find a solution.

1.6. Pressure on Skopje and Athens increases - MEP say

"Macedonia must use this short period of a few months to solve the name issue with Greece and start

⁶ Czech commissioner Fule, who succeeded Finn Olli Rehn, comes to Macedonia after the European Parliament adopted a resolution, advocating swift beginning of the country's accession talks and EU's larger involvement in the name row settlement.

EU accession talks. Pressure on both Skopje and Athens regarding the issue's closure will increase. PM Gruevski demonstrated positive commitment for the issue's settlement, and if it proves real, his Greek colleague George Papan-dreou should do the same. The dispute is no longer bilateral, it touches upon regional stability", was said in February by the European Parliament Rapporteur on Macedonia Zoran Thaler, co-chairman of the EU - Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee Jorgo Chatzimarkakis, and committee member Alojz Peterle after the meeting with Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and Vice Premiers Vasko Naumovski and Abdilaqim Ademi.

"I am glad to see a positive commitment by PM Gruevski to really focus on negotiations. Therefore, we expect results in the coming weeks. We do not want to Balkanize Europe, but Europeanize the Balkans. If this opportunity, which will last for 3-4 months, is not utilized, delay will cause large problems", stressed German MEP Chatzimarkakis. "Being aware that such a compromise wasn't often present in the Balkans, because "here things are perceived in black and white, not in grey as it is perhaps the case in Europe", the MEP warned that if a name solution was not found, "Macedonia will not only come to a standstill, it will also cause Macedonians to become tired of Europe, which is dangerous" he added.

Former Slovenian PM and current MEP Peterle stated that Macedonia has done a lot in the process of

approximating towards the EU, not just through reforms, but also by building good neighborly relations. "Macedonia has been a good model in this sense, definitely stabilizing this part of Europe. There is readiness so solve the problem with Greece as neighbor and EU member, and we hope the issue will be settled in the European spirit, meaning mutual respect, i.e. respect of the partners' identity", added Peterle.

MEP Thaler stressed that there should be firm consensus on the issue by all parties, institutions and civic associations in the country. "We urge the decision-makers in Macedonia to speak with one voice. Find a mutual position and determine Macedonia's stance in the name issue. This is very important. It is not easy, but when it comes to issues of national interest, this must be done", said Thaler.

MEPs believe that both countries should be blamed for the failure in solving the name issue, but also the European Union, because it did not put more pressure on them.

1.7. Ivanov Congratulates Papoulias on his re-election as President

In February, President Gjorge Ivanov congratulated his Greek colleague Karolos Papoulias on his election for country's president, expressing preparedness for sincere cooperation and hope for sooner meeting. Previously, in 2009, Ivanov invited Papoulias to visit Macedonia, but he refused the invitation explaining that it was not suitable prior to resolving

the name issue⁷. It is interesting that Papoulias in 1995 as foreign minister signed Interim Agreement between the two countries, which regulated the relations between Athens and Skopje after many embargoes and pressures.

1.8. Milososki and Droutsas Discussed Macedonia-Greece Name Row in London

In 2010 there were a number of opportunities for contacts and meetings between top political representatives of Macedonia and Greece, which were a significant breakthrough, compared with the non-existent contacts with the previous Greek government. One of the meetings was in January, between FM Antonio Milososki and Greek Alternate FM Dimitris Droutsas in London. "We have talked about the bilateral dispute over the use of Macedonia's constitutional name, Milososki told reporters after the meeting. Greece expressed reserves towards the initiative for raising the level of liaison offices into embassies in Skopje and Athens, while a possibility for opening a new border crossing was not addressed", Milososki said⁸.

⁷ Greek President Karolos Papoulias was re-elected for a second five-year term in office Wednesday after winning majority support in a parliamentary vote. The 81-year-old former Socialist foreign minister and member of parliament, was re-elected by an unprecedented 266 votes in the 300-seat parliament.

⁸ With Alternative Minister Dimitris Droutsas Milososki was planning to offer new initiatives - raising the level of the diplomatic-representative offices to

Still, in his interview with BBC – Macedonian language program, FM Antonio Milososki on the question why both parties do not focus on resolving of this single problem, he stressed that "We would like to keep investing in this matter - unfortunately neither we nor many of our predecessors succeeded to settle it. I believe that main unknown factor that makes it difficult for this matter to be settled is Greece's attitude to the right of one nation to self-determination. We may be also imperfect in regard to this issue, but I believe that Greece's rigid, dictating attitude is the main obstacle to settling the dispute.".. "We are not able to accept any Greece's proposal at any price or with such a simple approach. We believe that talks are necessary to come to a certain formulation, and as it is a national matter, it (the formulation) should be confirmed by the citizens of Macedonia at a referendum" ... "Macedonia has been paying high price due to the dispute.".. It seems to me that many Greek politicians have been gaining at home on the account of their attitude towards the issue. In regard to the international scene, the price of their attitude is not too high. For the Republic of Macedonia this dispute has a price we have been paying as a result of Greece's blockade by violating the Interim Accord, while at home we have been wasting energy in often futile debates that not contribute to the cohesion of Macedonia's society.

embassies, opening of one border crossing and signing of an agreement on avoiding double taxation, believing that each step that leads to developing of the bilateral relations may help.

Thus, I believe that swift settling of this dispute in line with our national interests is in favor of Macedonia” commented Milososki.

1.9. FM Milososki: Constructive Approach in Favor of Name Row Settlement

President Ivanov, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, Vice Premier Abdilqim Ademi and Milososki discussed on expectations from the planned talks with the UN mediator, who was also to visit Athens on February 26. At the meeting, Macedonian name negotiator Zoran Joleski presented a report on the process and the officials coordinated their positions. Participants said that have agreed on promoting constructive, proactive approach at these meetings in order to be able to contribute to reaching a solution, or at least to a progress in settling the bilateral dispute⁹.

During his visit, UN envoy in Macedonia-Greece name talks Matthew Nimetz stated that this was the right time to try and resolve the name issue, reiterating that he hadn't brought any written document or plan. “As you know over the

⁹ The UN envoy last visited Skopje and Athens in July of last year, after which he froze the talks due to the elections in Greece. Although he announced their continuation right after the Greek government's composition, there were no public activities in the past few months. Nimetz's office has said there were separate communications with the two sides, but he would invite them for a joint meeting "if and when he believes, or when both sides believe it could be useful".

years I've made a number of suggestions. I think a lot of those suggestions are still on the table and worthy of discussion and should be a part of a solution. The pieces of a solution are well known, but there's no complete solution”, he noted. He also characterized the two-day discussions in Skopje as very serious and constructive in a bid to settle the issue of national importance and with implications for the region and for Europe. When asked whether the identity was being negotiated despite the name of the country, Nimetz stressed that according to him the name of the country, which derived from the UN resolutions and the interim agreement, was crucial.

1.10. Skopje Blocks Name Row Resolution - Greek MoFA's Spokesman

“Greece has demonstrated that it wants a solution, but Skopje is blocking efforts made for overcoming the bilateral name dispute”, spokesman of Greece's Foreign Ministry Gregory Delavekouras stated in February ahead of UN envoy Matthew Nimetz visit to Athens. According to Delavekouras, the Macedonian Government "at the moment is very strong and has the opportunity to find a solution if it wants to." - Skopje refuses to negotiate about the essence of the issue, he said, reiterating that Athens pledged to settle the dispute with the establishment of one name for general use, that would include "a geographical determinant." - We want a geographical determinant, because we cannot allow one

part (of the geographical region of Macedonia) to represent the entire region, said Delavekouras.

"Athens and Skopje have different viewpoints of how to solve the name issue, but I believe there is foundation on which we are able to resume our work", stated UN mediator Matthew Nimetz after the meeting in Athens in February. He also stressed that the name of the country was the key issue that was being discussed, while "other issues which have come up are secondary." The spokesman of Greece's FM said the 30-minute meeting - Nimetz's first with members of the Papandreou government - focused on "Greece's fresh approach towards the issue and on efforts made and positive messages conveyed by Athens to the other party for progress and for finding a solution."

1.11. Greece Broadens Process to Language and Passports, Name Process Unpredictable - Analyst

It is difficult to foresee what will happen in the name negotiations due to the broadened range of requirements by Greece, claims Sally McNamara, Senior Policy Analyst in European Affairs at the Washington-based Heritage Foundation. "If it was just about the name issue, maybe we could see the end. However, the Greeks have broadened the problem to the language, passports and all kinds of things. Pressure must be put on Greece, so that they stop acting as if they want to solve the dispute", says McNamara in an interview with Voice

of America in Macedonian Language.

According to her, Greece is currently under EU pressure due to its economic woes, which is another reason why Athens should close the name problem, in the interest of regional security. "I think it is time someone stepped in and told Greece 'now you are in a situation needing European assistance due to the domestic economic situation and the mounting pressure. Greece is currently supported by Europe and should lend a hand to others. Negotiations can resume with Macedonia as part of NATO. The row between the two countries is not unsolvable'..." "You cannot hold the entire world hostage because of a dispute regarding an issue, which can be bilaterally settled, with Macedonia in the Alliance", assesses the analyst.

1.12. Name Issue, One of Topics at Obama-Papandreou Meeting

The name issue was one of the topics at the March meeting of U.S. President Barack Obama with Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou in Washington¹⁰. These topics were also on the agenda of Papandreou's meeting with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. "To Vima", citing U.S. diplomatic sources, reads that Obama and Clinton told Papandreou if Greece responds positively to their request, Washington is ready to inform the UN Security Council that

¹⁰ Obama and Papandreou also focused on Greece's economic crisis, the Cyprus issue and Greece-Turkey relations.

term 'fyRoM' could be replaced with 'Republic of Northern Macedonia', whereas the language spoken in the country to be referred as 'Northern Macedonian'. Earlier, authorities in Republic of Macedonia said the "To Vima" article was a media trick or intrigue. U.S. diplomats say Washington has strong interest in completing the NATO enlargement in Southeast Europe, which is not possible without the Macedonia name settlement.

1.13. Macedonia Will not Withdraw Motion Against Greece - FM Milososki

The Republic of Macedonia doesn't intend to withdraw its motion from the International Court of Justice in The Hague against Greece's breach of the 1995 Interim Accord¹¹, FM Antonio Milososki told members of the Foreign Policy Committee at the end of 2009. "We have filed this motion in line with our legislation, national interests and the status this Interim Accord's has been enjoying in the bilateral relations. We offer serious arguments and I believe that the procedure at the Hague Court will add to the Accord's respect. We are planning for the process to end successfully," Milososki said. Macedonia submitted to the ICJ its arguments and evidence this July.

Macedonia took Greece before the International Court of Justice in

¹¹ Macedonia has filed a motion at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), saying that Athens's veto at the Bucharest NATO summit of the country's invitation to join the alliance was a 'flagrant violation' of a 1995 agreement between the two countries.

November 17, 2008. Skopje argued that Athens violated the United Nations-sponsored 1995 Interim Accord signed by both sides by practically blocking its neighbor from joining NATO in April. According to the accord, Athens obliged not to block Skopje from entering international organizations as long as it is done under Macedonia's UN provisional reference, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, FYROM. Macedonia submitted its evidences backing up the suit on July 20, 2009, after which Greece had 6-month deadline to prepare its defense¹². Greece presented in January 20 of 2010 its counter arguments at ICJ, regarding the lawsuit.

Once the Greek counter-memorial was received, the document via the Macedonian Embassy in the Hague was sent to relevant state institutions in the country. Written pleadings remain confidential until the start of oral proceedings and as a result he says he cannot comment their contents. The next stage of the case i.e. whether there will be another series of written pleadings or the parties will go directly to oral proceedings will be determined by the International Court of Justice taking into account the views of the

¹² FM Antonio Milososki and Ambassador in Netherlands Nikola Dimitrov are Macedonia's representatives, accompanied by Croatian lawyer Budislav Vukas as ad hoc judge. Athens will be represented by the Greek ambassador to the Netherlands Konstantinos Rallis, ambassador Yiorgos Savvaidis and Foreign Ministry advisor Maria Telalian. Athens University professor Emmanuel Rukunas will be Greece's ad hoc judge.

parties. It is said that Greece's written response categorically rejects all of Macedonia's arguments, presenting legal, political and historical counter-arguments and points of reference. Answering a journalist question, Greek FM spokesman Grigoris Delavekouras said the lawsuit was motivated by domestic political reasons accusing that Macedonia, not Greece, was the one violating the Interim Accord through "continuous provocations".

Athens has announced that its defense is based on the fact that there was no veto at the Bucharest Summit, but a consensus between NATO members to postpone the accession of Macedonia until name row settlement is reached. Greece claims it has counter arguments proving that Macedonia was the party that breached the Interim Agreement. Given previous cases at the ICJ¹³, proceedings for such cases may last up to several years. Verdicts reached by the Court are final and legally binding and the UN Security Council is responsible for their implementation and observance.

In June, Ambassador Nikola Dimitrov submitted to ICJ Macedonia's reply to the Greek counter-memorial on the lawsuit filed by Macedonia against Greece for breaching the bilateral 1995 Interim Agreement by blocking its NATO membership invitation at the Bucharest summit. "We appreciate this opportunity in the second stage of written memorials in the

proceedings to file our response to the Court, which we highly respect for being the chief judicial organ of the United Nations. Greece should make the next step, which is to submit its written memorial by October 27 2010 at the latest", Dimitrov stressed while handing over the reply.

Greece is set to file a written memorial regarding Macedonia's arguments to ICJ by Oct. 27. It will complete the written phase, after which the Court should decide when to schedule the oral phase of the process. In line with ICJ rules, the content of the written memorials remains confidential until the start of the oral hearing i.e. an appropriate ruling of the Court.

1.14. Gruevski - Papandreou Meeting in Brussels

The positions of Macedonia and Greece on the name issue in general remain different after the March meeting of Prime Ministers Nikola Gruevski and George Papandreou. Still, "these meetings may significantly contribute to better understanding, atmosphere and possibly to certain progress in bringing the two positions closer", FM Milososki said. Asked if Macedonia may start the EU accession talks without a name row settlement, Milososki said it was up to the Union and the European Council. He however believes that only meeting of the Copenhagen Criteria are relevant for launching of a country's EU entry talks. "Macedonia has already met the political ones, which resulted in the

¹³ Established in 1945, ICJ has settled 25 international disputes thus far.

European Commission (EC) recommendation for opening of the membership negotiations”, he added.

During the same month, Athens daily 'To Vima' said that the Greek Government is determined to take initiatives for settling the name row with Macedonia despite the country's economic crisis. The meeting in Brussels, initiated by Greece, has been a surprise to many both over its timing and venue, the daily reads. “The fact that Papandreou is determined to discuss the Macedonian issue at the sidelines of the European Council meeting, at which the financial assistance to Greece is expected to be a main topic, presents a proof of the significance Athens has been attaching to the problem”, the daily reads. 'To Vima' also reminds that the forthcoming meeting will be the third Papandreou's encounter with Gruevski since he has taken the PM office last October.

1.15. Washington Helps, but Skopje and Athens Must Settle Name Row - Daniel Serwer

“I would like to see Macedonia as a NATO member and I don't have a problem calling it Macedonia. The thing is that Greece uses veto not only for NATO, but also for EU, therefore a solution must be found, said Daniel Serwer”, the President of the Washington-based US Institute of Peace. Serwer fails to make any predictions whether the issue could be solved soon. However, he deems that it shouldn't be delayed.

“This is a relatively simple issue - it doesn't represent a territorial problem and it doesn't refer to the national identity. I believe that Macedonians have a national identity so much as Greeks do. I will call the country Macedonia as long as Macedonians tell me to call it differently. The identity of the people and of the country is not disputable. The sole issue you are having is the one with an important neighbor and somehow a solution must be found. Political will is needed in this case to be demonstrated by both parties in order a compromise to be found. I would like to see this happening this year”, stressed Serwer and added “My impression is that Greece is trying to protect its own identity, which includes the claim that they are ancient Greece ancestors. They see Macedonia as a threat, which is perhaps surprising for Macedonians”.

Asked whether the United States could settle the name row, he said that Washington is not able to do that on behalf of Skopje and Athens. “Macedonia will resume to exist regardless of what will be agreed on the name, but it must be patient and to seek solution through talks”, according to him.

He noted that Greece had definitely breached the interim bilateral agreement binding it to allow Macedonia to join NATO under the reference Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and not to block the membership process unless Skopje required this. Answering a question whether both countries could make an agreement until the envisaged deadline set by the international

community, Serwer said: "There should have been a deadline, but now I'm not sure that a time-frame would help". He fell short of commenting the conclusion that by June nothing could be done, adding that the process of finding name settlement was entering a new phase. - For the US, the next event which is far more important for the country is the NATO summit in Portugal in late October, he said.

1.16. Macedonia's MoFA Declined to Comment on 'Dual use' or 'erga omnes'

According to information from diplomatic sources, UN mediator Matthew Nimetz in his last visit had proposed that the name 'Republic of Macedonia' should remain for internal use, while 'Republic of North Macedonia' would be used in international relations. Similarly, his compromise proposal states that the passports of Macedonian citizens would bear the name 'Republic of Northern Macedonia' when written in English, but only 'Republic of Macedonia' in the Macedonian language. Such 'dual use' would help Skopje to avoid amending its constitution. As for Droutsas, he strongly rejected any hint of 'dual use' and insisted on the 'erga omnes' formula, meaning a name for all international uses that legally describes obligations and rights towards all.

"We are very clear: a name with a geographical qualifier, for use in relation to everyone. A geographical qualifier that makes clear the reality of the situation, and for use in

relation to everyone, so that the hide-and-seek can stop and a definitive solution can be found. 'Northern Macedonia' fits within the framework for the solution that I am describing," Droutsas stated. Asked by a journalist if there would still be a need for changing Macedonia's constitution, the Greek diplomat said: "The solution that we agree upon will have to be implemented fully and universally. If real implementation means a change in the constitution, then that is what will have to happen." If the Macedonian prime minister, Nikola Gruevski rejects the Greek proposal, he will have to explain to his people "why he is depriving them of their European perspective," Droutsas warned.

1.17. EU Ambassador Condemns Racist Chants at Athens Military Parade

European Union Ambassador Erwan Fouere condemned in March the anti-Macedonian, Albanian chants of the Greek army at the celebration of Greece's Independence Day, expressing hope that it was the last incident of its kind. "The fact that the Greek Government has taken urgent measures to punish the perpetrators demonstrates its reprehensible approach to those events"...the Macedonian and Greek Government have been making efforts to create a good atmosphere for settling the open issues and show to the neighbors that they may work and live together, but not with such prejudices, expressed by a small number of people" he said.

President Gjorge Ivanov believes the replacement of the ones responsible

for the chanting of anti-Macedonian and anti-Albanian slogans at the military parade in Athens is not sufficient, but that Greece needs to change its attitude towards neighbors. "This is worrying, because an EU and NATO member-state still has security forces that produce hate speech", he said. Ivanov spoke with Albanian counterpart Bamir Topi regarding the incident in Athens. "Unfortunately, this is not the first time that members of the security forces use hate speech in front of Greece's top officials. The feelings of both Macedonians and Albanians have been hurt this time. The talk with President Topi focused on the concern regarding these developments, which do not happen for the first time", added Ivanov.

1.18. FM Milososki meets US Secretary of State at Sidelines of NATO Ministerial Meeting

Macedonian MoFA Antonio Milososki at the sidelines of a meeting of NATO members and countries, which are not in the Alliance but participate in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, had a brief meeting Friday in Tallinn with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. The FM said he discussed the bilateral issue with Clinton, which "Greece uses to block Macedonia's membership to NATO", MIA reports. Moreover, Milososki informed Clinton on latest events and certain initiatives launched by Macedonia in a bid to create a better climate to overcome the bilateral name issue. He stated that Clinton's positions "have confirmed the

expectations of Macedonia that the US priority regarding the region is the issue over swift accession not only of Macedonia, but also of other countries that would meet the membership conditions".

1.19. Mallias: 'Northern Macedonia' - Possible Solution to Name Row

Replacement of the reference 'FYROM' with 'Northern Macedonia' may be a solution to name dispute, says former Greek Ambassador to Macedonia Alexandros Mallias. This name, under the UN recommendation, should be used by all countries in the bilateral communication, while the language and nation should be (*makedonski*) in Alphabet transcription (Macedonian) - thus making a difference between the citizens of Macedonia's region in Greece and of the Republic of Macedonia, Mallias told reporters on Thursday at the Greek Ambassador's residence in Skopje. "This the right moment. It is a high time to live and work on better future for the relations between the two countries, not only for mine but also for the generations of our and their children. Prime Minister (George) Papandreou and his government really wish for a solution that leaves no losers but two winners - win-win result. The Greek government is ready; I know that our public opinion wishes to see such a result and I am relaying on the wisdom of your country's leadership", Mallias said, expressing hope that the authorities in Skopje will respond positively to the international community's expectations.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in April that the statements of Alexandros Mallias and Evangelos Kofos of ELIAMEP think-tank organization were hypocritical, since they aimed at presenting Greece's positions over the name issue as a compromise. It is hypocritical Greek stances and red lines to be packed and offered to the public as compromise solutions. This is a resumption of the single-approach policy in this bilateral issue, which needs to be solved with equal contribution from both sides, reads the reaction.

Similar position has expressed the German Member of European Parliament (MEP) and Co-Chairman of the EU-Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee, Jorgo Chatzimarkakis who claims the new UN proposal regarding the naming of Macedonian identity and language would be 'Makedonski'. In a statement for Deutsche Welle, Chatzimarkakis says the information is based on "quite relevant sources from New York". "I fully understand the sensitiveness of the issue of identity, nation and language. I believe that we Europeans should understand this sensitiveness and help wherever we can. There should be a clear declaration regarding the name of the nation and language being 'Makedonski', which is acceptable for me, but also for all, including the southern neighbor", stresses MEP Chatzimarkakis. Asked why he believes 'Makedonski' is the best solution, Chatzimarkakis says, "Makedonski is easier for everyone, this is a well-known term that people recognize, they grew up with and one they will accept, but

also the best one we can include in the international law through a UN Security Council resolution".

1.20. Macedonia is Right, but EU Decisions are Based on Consensus - MEP Thaler

European Parliament rapporteur on Macedonia Zoran Thaler urged in April Macedonian politicians to be pragmatic, proactive in regard to the name row with Greece. He also called for 'smart solutions to the incredible dispute'. "You are and will remain Macedonians even if a new, artificial name is to be invented. You are what you feel that you are. You are right and we in Brussels know that. This is a schizophrenic situation politicians should resolve. Unfortunately the one that is part of the EU is more right", Thaler said. "The name row settlement is necessary for unblocking Macedonia's EU integration process, as Skopje has been paying the price for the stalemate",... "Maybe politicians, who decided to participate in the name row settlement, would be labeled as traitors at the beginning, but taking into consideration Slovenia's experience with a compromise that allowed the country to join EU, such unpleasant reactions had been voiced for six months only", Thaler said. He praised the decision of EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fule to take active part in settling the name dispute.

1.21. Gruevski Expects Proposal in May for Surpassing Name Dispute, Acceptable for Both Parties

Officially, PM Nikola Gruevski in May stated that he expects soon UN mediator Matthew Nimetz to give concrete proposal or set of ideas for surpassing the name dispute between Greece and Macedonia. "We are ready for active participation in all preparations because as far as I know the mediator is listened with two negotiators and exchanges opinions and ideas. I hope that in May he will give proposal which will be acceptable for both parties and mainly for the Republic of Macedonia, the party which is mostly pressured and is in most unfavorable situation with this problem".

Members of ruling VMRO-DPMNE told reporters that PM Gruevski holds to his yesterday's statement that at a possible referendum he would vote against the proposal 'Republic of Northern Macedonia' for general use, and that his stand has nothing to do with early elections - a process that has not been planned for this year. "A referendum is to be called if a mutually acceptable solution emerges", the ruling party members say. It is also possible for the state leadership to call the referendum even if it is against the solution. The government wishes for a solution and why there has been none thus far is not Macedonia's fault, it is said.

1.22. Macedonia to Chair the CoE Committee of Ministers Under the Logo "Macedonian Chairmanship 2010"

"Macedonian Chairmanship 2010" is the name under which the Republic of Macedonia will preside over the Council of Europe (CoE) Committee of Ministers as of May 2010, Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio Milososki informed after meeting with CoE Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland, who is paying a two-day visit to Macedonia in April. It was noted that the Council of Europe will respect the position of Macedonia's Government the term "Macedonian Chairmanship 2010" to be in English translation. According to FM Milososki, reactions from Greece were expected.

"I'm not in charge of permitting someone to use this or that name. I have to stick to the decisions reached by the organization I am heading", said Jagland adding that he is aware of the sensitivity of this issue, and that he hopes that it will not overshadow other very important issues that need to be raised in the Council of Europe¹⁴. He also said that Macedonia would

¹⁴ The rule of law, raising the level of instruments for implementation of decisions related to human rights, social inclusion of all marginalized groups in several European countries, stirring debate on their social, religious, ethnic or political diversities and launching processes for greater inclusion of the younger generation in social and political trends in democratic societies, in all CoE member countries with a focus on the issue of Roma people. These are the priorities of Macedonia in the course of its chairmanship of the CoE Committee of Ministers, due to be taken over from Switzerland.

hold the chairmanship in a key period - the third stage of CoE development, which kicks off with the enforcement of the Lisbon Treaty¹⁵.

Spokesperson of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Grigoris Delavekuras said that in this way, the leadership of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia charged the negotiating process within the United Nations and actively rejects the efforts and initiatives taken by Greece to create a positive climate between the two countries to facilitate the conduct of negotiations under the auspices of the Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary General. The e-daily "Naftemporaki" reports that "statements by the leadership of FYROM effortlessly clear that the intention of the Government of Macedonia is to exercise the role of abusing its presidency to promote its position on the name issue".

As a reply FM Milososki stated that Greece enters the forbidden zone of individual and national rights as it is against the usage of the name "Macedonian chairmanship 2010", as the adjective "Macedonian" is Macedonia's identity code and is part of Macedonia's heritage, culture and tradition.

In May, it was decided that "Macedonian Chairmanship 2010" is the official logo under which the Republic of Macedonia will preside over the Committee of Ministers of

the Council of Europe. At the meeting held behind closed doors in Strasbourg, there were no discussion or decision was passed under which name the Republic of Macedonia will preside, since the Council of Europe can not prevent member state to use the adjective it wants. In other words Committee of Ministers accepted the logo and naming of "Macedonian Chairmanship 2010" as it was proposed in the official document submitted by the Macedonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on priorities of the Macedonian presiding over the Committee of Ministers. The Secretariat of the Committee distributed this document to the rest of 46 member states and in accordance with the established practice in the international organization from the membership of the Republic of Macedonia in the UN until present day, it was followed by cover page at which provisional reference of the country is found in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolution 817 from 1993, without making any changes in the contents of the document, which includes the official logo and naming of this position in the Council of Europe as "Macedonian Chairmanship 2010." "Macedonian Chairmanship," "Macedonian authorities" and "Macedonian government" is also mentioned several times in the document.

¹⁵ The Council of Europe has undergone two important phases of its development - in 1949 when the organization was established and the European Convention on Human Rights was adopted. The second stage started after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

1.23. FM Milososki: There Could be no Compromise if one Party Sets Ultimatums, Red Lines

The meeting of UN mediator Matthew Nimetz with Macedonian and Greek representatives in New York in April, shows that the dialogue between the two countries is underway. Macedonia's side showed willingness for intensive dialogue, towards reaching some kind of a compromise, but, on the other hand, it has been notified that the process could not advance if one side wishes to set ultimatum, imposes red lines or presents its problems or serious crisis at home as argument for the lack of flexibility, as FM Milososki told reporters. For the Macedonian FM, frequent statements of Greek officials are unilateral, while Macedonia's response is a result of a several month attempt of Greece to impose unilateral solution and ideas the country has been trying to sell as a compromise, which at the same time is part of its red lines.

From his side, the UN mediator in Macedonia-Greece name talks, Matthew Nimetz, has not decided on the timing of a new meeting with the both countries' negotiators, Ambassadors Zoran Jolevski and Adamantios Vassilakis. However, a positive development is that Macedonian officials have announced that the month of July shall be the period during which an agreement may be finally reached.

1.24. Reactions of Other Parties Regarding Expectations for a New Proposal From Nimetz

Gordan Georgiev, vice-chairman of the opposition SDSM, told reporters that Gruevski was obliged to offer a solution to the name row, not to present his opinion on proposals he did not approve of. "It is natural to call a referendum when the Government, being constructive in the name negotiations, will produce the best possible solution to the dispute and put it to the citizens' test by running positive not negative campaign", Georgiev said. He also stressed that his party would not take part in a beforehand collapsed referendum, as it would undermine Macedonia's reputation abroad and bury the country's EU-prospect for a longer period.

DUI leader Ali Ahmeti stated that he gave a guarantee to EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fule that his party and the Albanian community in general would be constructive and useful in finding a name row resolution with the southern neighbor. Maybe that is why Ermira Mehmeti, prominent member of DUI, said the statements of both Gruevski and Greek authorities were encouraging, namely show signs of progress.

EU Ambassador to Macedonia Erwan Fouere said that it's too early to have referendum talks, as Macedonia hasn't met the final phase in name talks with Greece. He said PM Gruevski's statement on holding a referendum, points the

urgency of having bilateral talks between Macedonia and Greece and he also said that the issue won't be solved by just giving statements by the two sides, as it requires the two sides to sit down and find a solution.

1.25. MEP Thaler Urges Responsibility in Name Row Settlement

"Responsibility should be undertaken, along with proactive positions in order to move forward in the name row with Greece. On the contrary, Macedonia's chances to obtain a date for beginning of EU accession negotiations at the European Council summit in June are slim", said in May Slovenian Member of European Parliament (MEP) and Rapporteur for Macedonia, Zoran Thaler. "If there is progress, Macedonia's negotiations will be launched, including concrete tasks for the country, which would be good. On the contrary, and unfortunately this is currently the more realistic option, Macedonia could gradually be taken off the agenda. This means you will no longer be in the focus of EC's attention", stressed Thaler.

According to him, politicians who make decisions must take risks and reach an agreement, but at the same time should be capable of explaining to citizens why it should be done. Results would follow and can treat the wounds inflicted to their image. "Papandreou and Gruevski have a problem of passing a decision because they see it through the prism of their position within the country. They are in a difficult

situation and that is why they should allow for increasing assistance from foreign factors and not insist only on bilateral meetings. I am convinced that both players will not be able to finish the game without good assistance from crucial factors", added Thaler. He believes PM Gruevski is an intelligent and capable politician, "but afraid he will stand alone as traitor if he assumes this responsibility".

1.26. Gruevski: We Want Solution Not Harming State and National Interests

"We are interested in a name solution that won't harm national and state interests. Unless a compromise is reached acceptable for the citizens without harming the state and national interests, then we would support it", PMr Nikola Gruevski stated in June. "I'm not against it. On the contrary, I champion solution, but I have said that a solution cannot be accepted with threats, which the citizens do not want and which are estimated to do harm. If a compromise solution is found that is acceptable for the citizens and doesn't damage the state and national interests, we would gladly support it and hopefully the citizens would support it, too. We are interested in achieving success in the process of settling this issue we're facing", said Gruevski when asked to comment opposition reactions that he was not interested in a name settlement following his address at the annual assembly of the VMRO-DPMNE Union of Young Forces over the weekend.

1.27. Gruevski and Papandreou Met Once Again in Brussels

Macedonian Premier Nikola Gruevski met in June in Brussels with his Greek counterpart George Papandreou. The meeting was arranged upon a joint initiative and it is in the spirit of the already-established practice of bilateral contacts at premiers' level, Gruevski's cabinet confirmed to MIA. This was the fifth meeting between Gruevski and Papandreou. Previous talks were assessed as useful in a bid to boost trust and understanding between both sides, but failed to activate any progress in settling the bilateral name dispute. Both parties agreed that Macedonia and Greece remain committed and support the UN process led by mediator Matthew Nimetz. There is will and readiness to find a mutually acceptable solution to the bilateral name dispute, without harming either of the parties.

The prime ministers of Macedonia and Greece expressed mutual support for name negotiating process for solving name dispute under UN auspices and readiness to find an acceptable name solution. Gruevski-Papandreou meeting followed after Macedonia was not on the agenda of the EU foreign ministers meeting and the decision on recommendation for setting a date for start of EU accession talks with Macedonia was put on hold.

1.28. ESI Ideas: The Proposal Will Come Into Effect the Day Macedonia Joins EU

The main point of ESI's proposal for solving name dispute between Macedonia and Greece is that the same would come into effect the day Macedonia joins the European Union. ESI analyst Alexandra Stiglmeier told Makfax news agency that this kind of solution would ease Macedonia to reach an acceptable name solution. At this moment Greece will only allow the road to EU accession (starting with the opening of talks) to be unblocked if Macedonia changes the constitution. However, Macedonia is not certain how well the EU talks will go, so we offer a name solution which will come into effect the day Macedonia joins EU, Stiglmeier told Makfax news agency.

She called this moment crucial, adding that if name solution is solved and Macedonia begins EU accession talks that would send a message to the entire region that bilateral issues can be solved. Asked about the chances of Skopje reviewing this proposal, considering Macedonian government is against change s of Macedonia's constitution, she said that she is not certain how high the chances are but expressed hope that the two sides will find solution.

The two sides are aware that name row may never be solved. That would be hard for Macedonia as she will never become EU member state and it will hard for Greece too as it supports EU enlargement and is concerned with Macedonia's stability,

she said. Asked whether the pressure is on Macedonia and not on Greece she said that this proposal asks for Greece to make a large step because the ESI proposal for overcoming name issue means that the name will be changed only on the day Macedonia becomes EU member state.

ESI said that this problem can be surpassed through a constitutional change in Skopje that changes the name of the country today, allowing Athens to support the start of accession talks later this year, but that also foresees that this change of the name will only enter into force and become effective on the day Macedonia actually joins the EU. The constitutional change could be simple and consist of one paragraph that says something like “all references to the Republic of Macedonia in this constitution will be replaced by a reference to XX (a compromise name such as Republic of Macedonia – Vardar) on the day this country joins the European Union.” If for some reason Skopje never joins the EU, it will never change its name.

If future Greek(or other neighbor's) governments find new reasons to block the country later (there are no less than 70 veto points where unanimity in the EU is required before a candidate joins the club) the name will not have changed already. On the other hand, the constitutional change will guarantee that once Macedonia is a member it will become effective immediately and automatically. It can also be written

into the accession treaty of the country.

1.29. Kathimerini: Solution in Sight for Name Issue

Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) appear to be close to a solution to their name dispute that would involve the neighboring country using the name of the longest river that runs through it as a geographical determinant, sources have told Kathimerini in June. It appears that the two countries are set to agree on the name of the Vardar River being used to differentiate the Republic of Macedonia from the region in northern Greece by the same name. The Greek newspaper said that Republic of Macedonia (Vardar) would be a suitable compromise and would not involve Skopje having to rewrite the country's constitution. Western diplomatic sources told Sunday's Kathimerini that there has been a discernible progress in negotiations since Greek Prime Minister George Papandreu decided to hold face-to-face discussions with his FYROM counterpart Nikola Gruevski, rather than let the talks continue at a lower diplomatic level.

As the port parole stated, the United Nations' special mediator Matthew Nimetz has not had one-on-one talks with either side since February but his office insists that he is still committed to finding a solution. “Ambassador Nimetz is in very frequent contact with both parties but he will not be responding to specific questions on substantive discussions” was added.

2. EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESSES

Although Spain's EU Presidency made attempts to settle the name dispute between Macedonia and Greece, without trying to interfere in the UN-sponsored name, agreement has not been reached between the two parties by mid-June. It was and is still clear that EU entry talks shall not start without the name row settlement with Greece.

2.1. Minister Milososki Says Opening of EU Accession Talks - Priority of Macedonia's Foreign Policy

Opening of EU accession talks will be a top priority of Macedonia's foreign policy in 2010, FM Antonio Milososki told members of the Foreign Policy Committee by the end of year 2009. "To this effect the Government will keep working on reforms and playing proactive role in efforts for ironing the differences with Greece over the constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia, ...Macedonia is completely prepared for starting the EU entry talks, namely the country has already set up expert teams, working on wrapping up the structure of the negotiating ones that will successfully conduct the accession talks", the FM said.

Referring to the results in 2009, Milososki said Macedonia had in generally fulfilled the agenda it set to itself for this year -- it got positive European Commission (EC)'s report on completed reforms and

recommendation for opening of the EU accession talks, free visa regime and accreditation of domestic institutions for management of the EU IPA (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance) funds. "We believe that the EU will find a mode to put its general interest above everything else, thus enabling the countries that deserve to go forward to resume their processes towards the membership. The EU and other partners have invested substantial political capital, financial means to bring (Macedonia's) process to this desired level and we believe that the Spanish Presidency will soon put Macedonia's issue on its agenda", Milososki said.

In regard to Macedonia's NATO membership, Milososki said that in spite of the unbearable situation following the Summit in Bucharest the country was working on agreed activities of the 11 cycle of the Membership Action Plan - presented this October. Macedonia as future NATO member is committed to take over its part of the responsibilities in EU, NATO, UN-led peacekeeping missions, adding that next year Macedonia would increase the number of its troops in Afghanistan from 190 to 250, becoming the fifth contributor to ISAF.

2.2. Fouere: 2009 - Good Year for Macedonia's Development

"2009 was a rather positive year for Macedonia's development", EU Ambassador in Skopje Erwan Fouere said in January in his address at the European Parliament debate, dedicated to the report on

the country's progress. In this respect, Fouere mentioned the introduction of EU free visa regime, demarcation of Macedonia-Kosovo border and more frequent contacts of Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski with his Greek counterpart George Papandreou. Fouere expressed hope for Macedonia and Greece to soon settle the name dispute. The Ambassador called on Macedonia to invest more efforts in the interethnic relations, addressing them with 'grater sensibility'.

Later during the year Mr.Fouéré stated that as well as the name issue a number of other problems are still outstanding. He listed strengthening political dialogue between political parties, full implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, consistence in judiciary reforms, education, decentralization, equitable representation, effective implementation of adopted laws, fighting corruption, reforms in the public administration and fostering a vibrant civil society among these. He also stressed the necessity of ensuring the independence of the media sector, which "continues to be subject to significant political interference". "It is the responsibility of the government to listen to and even accept criticism, whether it comes from civil society or from the media. This should be seen as a sign of strength rather than of weakness. Rather than dismiss such criticism as being, for example, against the interests of the state, the government, by embracing it, emerges enriched by independent thinking" he added.

Asked if adopting the Anti-Discrimination Law could represent a second veto for Macedonia, Fouere voiced regret that the Government did not consider the advice on laws that are important for the country's future, both regarding respect of human rights, but also the accession process. "The law is not in accordance with the EU legislation, but unfortunately it is not the only one. The last few laws that have been passed put distance between the country and the EU. If this trend continues, the entire progress achieved in 2009 would be undermined", said Fouere, urging the Government and all political parties to listen to advice coming from the EU, but also their citizens.

2.3. Thaler Asks Date for Macedonia by March

Date for start of EU accession talks to be defined by March at the next Council of Ministers, the Slovenian MEP and Rapporteur for Macedonia Zoran Thaler asked with new amendments of the report submitted to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament. Thaler submitted several amendments, but none referred to name issue, rather the focus is put on European progress of Macedonia. In his amendments Thaler did not omit to welcome initiative of the official Athens for integration of the region in the EU by 2014 and called authorities to make efforts in achieving this goal. He expressed concern for Macedonia due to postponement for start of accession talks by the Council of Ministers in December, saying that this could

bring deterioration of inter-ethnic tensions in the country and could have negative consequences on country's stability.

Greek parliamentarians also submitted changes to Thaler's report. Several times they insisted no dates to be mentioned in the resolution nor Council to be called for faster opening of talks with Macedonia. Greek parliamentarians demanded the resolution of the parliament to include election irregularities in 2006, 2008 and 2009 and to see sentence, which will point out that still there is no judgment passed regarding the incidents at the parliamentary elections in 2006, which leaves room for concern that perpetrators remain unpunished in Macedonia.

Both Bulgarian and Greek parliamentarians requested stronger formulation on maintenance of good-neighborly relations and call to Macedonian authorities to restrain from provocations towards the neighbors. Several amendments have been submitted in the sphere of interethnic relations, all in all amounting a total of 80 amendments have been proposed by MEPs for the resolution.

The European Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee backed Thaler's amendments to the Macedonia Report, which require a date for beginning of EU accession talks in March. Fifty-six MEPs voted in favor of the amendments, five were against, with five abstaining. "I see this as a positive development for Macedonia. This is an important political signal by the Parliament to the Commission and the Council of

Ministers, and primarily to the governments in Skopje, Athens and Sofia", said Thaler on the occasion.

2.4. Heated EP Debate on Macedonia-Greece Name Dispute

Meeting of the European Parliament delegation, which acted as preparation for the EU-Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee in January, concluded with a heated debate between German and Greek MEPs on the Macedonia name dispute. Instead of debating on Macedonia's progress, as proposed by Committee chairman Jorgo Chatzimarkakis, the focus was put on the name issue, reports Deutsche Welle in Macedonian Language.

Immediately after the introductory address of Macedonia's ambassador to the EU, Blerim Reka, the debate got out of control, mainly due to opposing name stances. Ambassador Reka stressed the country has met all conditions for beginning of European Union accession negotiations, but is faced with the name issue, which has turned into an "unwritten" criterion that could hamper the process of Macedonia's Euro-integration.

On the other hand, Greek MEPs Georgios Koumoutsakos and Anni Podimata, supported by Bulgarian deputy Evgeni Kirilov, insisted on several occasions for good neighborly relations, asking the Macedonian authorities to refrain from provoking their neighbors. According to them, the name issue is not only bilateral, with Kirilov asking for reevaluation which of the two

sides demonstrates constructiveness and readiness for compromise. German MEPs Michael Cramer and Martin Kastler, along with Romanian Monica Macovei claimed this is a bilateral problem, an issue that others cannot understand, but one that blocks Macedonia's NATO and EU accession. They asked that the name issue does not prevent Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integration. "We cannot understand, this is a big problem because we cannot perceive Greece's veto to Macedonia's NATO accession. This is a topic for large debate between the two countries, which is necessary, but we want to solve other problems", stressed Cramer.

2.5. Government Adopts 31 Laws of National Program for EU Acquis Harmonization

The Government has adopted 31 of 103 laws within the national program for adoption of the EU Acquis for 2010, was said in January this year. Vice Premier for European Affairs Vasko Naumovski said that majority of the adopted laws have been transferred from the 2009 program, and refer to the areas of finance, agriculture, food safety, transport and communications, environment protection etc, which demonstrated the Government's commitment in the process of the legislation harmonization within the general process of the country's EU approximation. According to the Vice Premier, the law quality is high, since they are adopted through a thorough government procedure upon harmonization with all relevant institution, whereas their implementation is appropriate.

2.6. Enlargement Commissioner Calls for Name Row Settlement, for Opening of Macedonia's EU Entry Talks

European Enlargement Commissioner - designate Stefan Fule in January called on Skopje and Athens to use the opportunity for settling the name dispute, thus enabling for Macedonia's EU accession talks to kick off. "Complicated negotiations have been led under UN aegis. The European Union fully supports the UN and (its mediator Matthew) Nimetz. I hope for the both parties to take advantage of this open opportunity. You know that the European Commission recommended opening of negotiations with FYR Macedonia and I hope that it will happen soon, Fule told to British MEP Charles Tannock, who wanted to know how the future enlargement commissioner would help to settling 'the comic FYROM-Macedonia issue.'" Fule offered assistance to the name row settlement if required, saying he would discuss the matter with new EU foreign and security policy chief Catherine Ashton.

Later in May, EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fule, assessing the situation on the Balkans and the progress made by former Yugoslav countries to join the EU, said the momentum of reforms depended mainly on local politicians. Taking into consideration the situation between Balkan countries, blocked relations between Serbia and Kosovo and the situation in Bosnia, Fule stated that due to this,

NATO and EU were present and investing in the Western Balkans.

As a result, the members of these two organizations are strongly convinced that prosperity and stability of ex-Yugoslav countries could be ensured with NATO and EU membership. "That is why we are engaged so much, not only in the contacts with Balkan politicians, to prevent any scenarios. I'm an optimist, a huge breakthrough has been made. Croatia is finalizing its membership talks. With FYROM, we are only waiting for a green light from a EU member to launch negotiations", stated EU Commissioner Fule. EU ambassador Erwan Fouere also addressed the Committee, urging Macedonia to resume with reforms and meet membership criteria. Among the remaining priorities, he mentioned the need for adoption of the Law against Discrimination and changes to the Parliament's Rules of Procedures.

2.7. RFE interview with EU Ambassador Erwan Fouere

"There is no doubt that there is a climate of mistrust amongst ethnic communities and there have been several issues in the past months where this mistrust was evident. There is a climate of uncertainty where this country is going for a while", EU Ambassador to Macedonia Erwan Fouere said in a May interview with Radio Free Europe (RFE).

"Of course this has a negative effect over inter-ethnic relations. Therefore our message still aims to encourage

the government to focus more on priorities in terms of reforms, reinforcement of political dialogue. This is the best way to tackle the mistrust and to demonstrate that one of the biggest advantages of Macedonia is its multi-ethnic character. However, there's lot to be done in order to be sure that it is provided and projected for the future as well, said Fouere.

In relation to recent seizures of arms, the EU Ambassador welcomed the police action to tackle them and stated that it was obviously a group of criminals going against the interest of the country. "At the same time, we are constantly underlying that the government must make more efforts in the multi-ethnic dialogue, in creating a much more positive climate and investing in every area. There are many marginalized municipalities in the sensitive border areas with Kosovo and Albania. Bigger efforts must be made in the economic infrastructure. You remember the hundreds of people who travelled to Brussels to seek economic asylum. They left because they see no economic perspective. More must be done in order to improve economic conditions in these areas and to eliminate the sense of alienation of the population in these areas", Erwan Fouere stressed.

According to Fouere, there was a setback in relation to last year, when the positive momentum led to a positive recommendation from the European Commission. "But now, since the beginning of the year we're seeing unfortunately a moment of standstill. Because, if laws are

passed but fail to reflect the best interests of the country and the standards established at EU level, then it will have a negative effect on the progress report in the fall. If these current developments continue, then it will undermine all the achievements from last year", stated Ambassador Fouere.

2.8. MEPs urge EU to Give Macedonia Accession Talks Date

Ten members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from eight member-states and four political groups, including EP Macedonia Rapporteur Zoran Thaler, sent in June a letter to the European Council, EU Foreign Ministers and EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton regarding the European Council decision on giving Macedonia a date for beginning of Union accession negotiations. The letter aims at attracting the attention of EU FMs over the necessity not to delay the beginning of the country's accession talks.

The MEPs remind that the European Commission assessed in its 2009 Progress Report the country had achieved convincing process in the implementation of crucial reforms, whereas the accession talks date is deserving. They say a fresh delay of the Council decision could be a negative signal and a threat to the Balkan stability, also undermining the credibility of Europe's foreign policy towards the Western Balkan.

MEPs claim Macedonia's accession process should continue, since it would contribute to increase of

international commercial exchange, but also stimulate confidence of investors and bring prosperity, not only to the candidate-country, but also to its neighbors. Furthermore, this would guarantee the peace and stability of the Western Balkan with positive effects to the whole of the EU.

2.9. PM Gruevski: Macedonia Not Giving up Strategic Goal - EU Accession

Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski at a June meeting with EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fule presented all of the reform activities and efforts made in a bid to modernize the society and improve the living standard in Macedonia. Both interlocutors also covered the EU enlargement process. Macedonia's arguments on the need of resuming the process were conveyed. Moreover, views were exchanged regarding the dispute between Macedonia and Greece over the name. Diplomats in Brussels estimate that the start of entry talks with Iceland can positively benefit Macedonia as well. It is considered that if the country resolved the dispute with Greece in the meantime or some kind of solution was to be found, Macedonia would be able to join Iceland on the road to EU membership.

"Republic of Macedonia will not give up its strategic determination to join EU and NATO after the Union summit in Luxembourg", PM Gruevski told journalists in June. He stressed that regardless of the name problem and Greece's obstacles, Macedonia would continue to work

zealously on meeting reforms, but also prepare the country for EU accession. According to him, it is encouraging that a fresh European Commission report notes progress in the fields of IT, fight against corruption and crime, social protection and economy. Pertaining to judiciary reforms, he said there was certain progress, which was also noted by EC expects, which demonstrates invested efforts have yielded results, whereas focus would be given to eliminating registered shortcomings.

Speaking to reporters after addressing the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna, FM Milososki said that most of the countries really championed Macedonia to get what it deserved and that Greece should not use its bilateral issues, which were related to its internal developments, as an obstacle Macedonia to receive a political verification of EC's recommendation. He emphasized that he believes that EU members at Union's summit in Luxembourg will be able to adopt the best decision in relation to setting a date for membership talks between Macedonia and EU and expects Greece to make additional efforts to comprehend the real interests of EU and to be convinced that the launch of talks will be also beneficial for Greece and the entire Balkan region. According to him, the likely blockade would harm the name talks, stressing that bilaterally the support for EU-Macedonia membership talks would create much better conditions for overcoming the name dispute.

2.10. EU to Return to Macedonia's Issue in July, European Diplomats Claim

According to European diplomats who took part at the CEI ministerial event in Budva in June, Greece at June meeting in Luxembourg asked for an additional time of another several months before reaching a final decision on setting a date for start of EU membership talks for Macedonia. The diplomats, who also attended yesterday's meeting of EU foreign ministers in Luxembourg, said that the debate on Macedonia upon a request by Greece was ended with a conclusion that more time was needed. Greece had stressed that name talks were in a serious stage and that reaching any kind of decision was not the most sensible step. Still, Sweden, Austria, Italy, Slovenia and Hungary have pledged the Macedonian issue to be put on the agenda and a decision to be reached, estimating that to determine a date for launch of accession talks would positively influence Macedonia, the bilateral dispute with Greece and the entire region.

Greek Alternate FM Dimitris Droutsas urged the pressure exerted over Greece to be lessened taking into consideration not only its efforts made, but also the circumstances in the country in terms of the economic crisis, which had resulted in social upheaval. In some of the comments it was underlined that six months had passed since December - when EU was chaired by Sweden - and that Macedonia had been a candidate

country for five months due to which a decision should be adopted. At the meeting it was accepted Macedonia's issue involving a date for entry talks to be discussed at a ministerial meeting in late July - the first month of Belgium's EU presidency.

2.11. Former Eurointegration Minister Bocevski Revealed the New Requests from EU

Ivica Bocevski, the former EU integration minister of the VMRO-DPMNE government, currently member of LDP, presented publicly the revision for partnership accession, a document that contains indicators "which shall be crucial in estimating the reform's progress of the Government in 2010", as he stated. He said that due to the lack of accomplishing the European agenda and dedication towards the EU integration of the country, the European Commission made an effort Macedonia to have clear and measurable indicators for her progress in 2010, adding that "it will be sad if these indicators turn into benchmarks". The actual document was on 14 pages in which are enumerated the political criteria as well, in which are mentioned: the need of constructive and all-encompassing political dialogue; implementation of the Assembly Book of Rules and the Law on the Assembly; the preferably undisturbed functioning of the National Council for Eurointegration, etc. In the short-term priorities were mentioned the Ohrid Agreement implementation, with complete

implementation of the strategy for equal representation of the communities not in majority in the country, of the strategy on education according the recommendations by the OSCE High Commissioner on National minorities, and of the Law for use of Languages. In the part of police reforms demand is that every appointing, replacement or dismissal of police commanders to be performed in accordance with the Law, while recruiting of new cadres to be made according to new regulations, so the implementation of the Law for Interiors should be a guarantee for depolitization of police forces. Regarding the judicial reforms one of the key priorities is following their implementation, securing a sustainable budget framework, and good functioning of the newly established judicial structures. Key priority in the struggle against corruption and organized crime is the Law on conflict of interests and following the final court decisions regarding high level corruption. Of special interest is the issue of political parties financing, as well as public expenditures in general, above all transparency of public expenditures for state advertizing. Regarding responsibilities of public offices, priority is the improvement of transparency of public procurement and improving the quality of public expenditures, with request to be followed the recommendations given in the State Audit Office reports.

The Government, from its side called upon Bocevski to reveal the source of the document and to inform the

public prosecutor about its authenticity.

3. NATO INTEGRATION PROCESS

3.1. Rasmussen - Gruevski: NATO Doors Open for Macedonia, Name Row Must be Solved

"I urge you to resume the reforms and I really want you to succeed. In the meantime NATO will be here to assist. Macedonia's accession to NATO depends on a name row settlement as well. The sooner it is solved, the sooner Macedonia will be part of the Alliance", stressed NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen in January, after meeting Macedonian Premier Nikola Gruevski on Friday in Brussels. Rasmussen urged the intensity of name talks with Greece to be boosted. He praised the efforts made by UN mediator Matthew Nimetz to settle the issue, expressing assurance to see Macedonia in NATO in due time.

The first meeting between PM Gruevski and the NATO chief, after his predecessor Jaap de Hoop Scheffer stepped down, focused on Macedonia's achievements and perspectives for NATO membership as well as on country's present and future reforms in relation to Euro-Atlantic integration, MIA's correspondent reported from Brussels. "NATO doors are open for us, but we have a problem involving

the name which must be solved. The process dates back to country's independence and we are focused on the matter. We're trying to find a solution which will be acceptable for both sides. Macedonia will resume its reforms in order to make progress, to improve the living standards and to join NATO. We will also resume our contribution to the stability in the region", stated PM Gruevski after the meeting.

NATO chief Rasmussen noted that Macedonia was a country exporting security. I want to emphasis the significance of the good relations between Macedonia and NATO, he said after the meeting thanking the Macedonian Premier for country's presence in the Afghan ISAF mission. When asked whether he was able to be personally more involved in finding a name settlement, Rasmussen said that NATO as an organization wasn't and wouldn't interfere in bilateral issues such as the Skopje-Athens dispute.

3.2. Admiral Di Paola and Admiral Fitzgerald in Support for Macedonia in NATO, Name Issue the Only Problem

"Macedonia's NATO membership invitation is open, and the country will become Alliance member as soon as the name issue is resolved", said chairman of the NATO Military Committee, Admiral Giampaolo Di Paola in his address at the Washington-based Heritage Foundation in February. "The NATO invitation is still on the table and as soon as the name dispute is settled, Skopje will become Alliance

members. This is a strong political signal that we have reconfirmed", he said.

In response to a question by Voice of America regarding NATO's plan to solve the situation where Macedonia is the fourth contributor to the ISAF mission according to the number of troops, but is still in front of the Alliance doors, Admiral Di Paola said, "We see Skopje not only as a strong partner, but more than this, since the country is almost part of the Alliance, because the only thing that delays membership is basically the name"

Declared Macedonian Army (ARM) troops are well-trained and ready to participate in any mission, said Admiral Mark Fitzgerald, Commander of NATO Joint Force Command Naples in March, and predicted 'bright future to Macedonia with NATO'. "The work and operations of ARM soldiers in Iraq was outstanding. I believe that lessons learned in Iraq, their training in army field polygon 'Krivolak' along with Vermont National Guard and the gear they are to be deployed with will make them successful in the Afghan mission, which is of vital importance...the ARM professionalism doesn't remain unnoticed by NATO", Fitzgerald told reporters after his meeting with DM Zoran Konjanovski and Chief of General Staff of ARM Lieutenant General Miroslav Stojanovski.

3.3. 240 Macedonian Troops to be Deployed in International Peace Missions in 2010

In 2010, the Republic of Macedonia partaked in NATO, EU and UN-led peace operations with approximately 240 peacekeepers i.e. 4% of Macedonian Army (ARM) forces will be deployed in peace missions worldwide. It is planned the deployment of Macedonian troops to rise to 8% by 2018 through gradual increase. With about three percent of ground forces i.e. a total of 178 peacekeepers, the soldiers, with their professionalism, discipline and determination in ISAF, Althea and UNIFIL demonstrate that Macedonia deserves the desired full-fledged membership to NATO, but also an acknowledgement for defense reforms and its firm strategic objectives for NATO and EU membership. ARM in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan has deployed 163 soldiers. One company guards the ISAF Command in Kabul, staff officers in ISAF commands and in operational communications teams and together with the Kingdom of Norway it contributes to the common medical team within the Norwegian provincial reconstruction team in Maymana. As of February 2010, Macedonia boosts its troops in Afghanistan with additional 79 soldiers, who together with the US Vermont National Guard will train the Afghan security forces.

Macedonia as of May 2007 contributes to the UN-led mission to Lebanon, UNIFIL, with one staff officer and currently the third rotation

is under way. Macedonian troops resume their mission as well in EU-led peace operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Althea, with a 12-member medical team in Butmir camp. So far, 142 Macedonian soldiers have taken part in Althea, thus giving country's contribution to the European security policy and regional peace and stability. Although Macedonia is one and only member of the international coalition that is still a candidate country for NATO membership, it is the fourth best contributor to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

3.4. DM Konjanovski: Macedonia Expects Invitation for NATO Membership at Lisbon Summit

Defense Minister Zoran Konjanovski met in May in Brussels with NATO Assistant Secretary General Martin Howard and ambassadors of five Alliance's member states, including Portugal. "Portugal is very important for Macedonia as Lisbon is the host of next NATO Summit at which Macedonia expects for the error of the former gathering - when it was not invited to join NATO -to be corrected and the country to get what it deserves", Konjanovski told reporters after the meetings. All of his interlocutors commended Macedonia's progress, reforms in the defense sector and in building the multiethnic society.

3.5. Albright: NATO to influence security through gradual enlargement

Former U.S. ambassador to NATO Kurt Volker believes Macedonia's path to the Alliance is possible if both parties in the name dispute put the citizens' interest in the forefront. "It is really tragic, because we want to see human progress, democracy, market economy, rule of law, stability, security, but there is much unfinished business at the Balkans. The region has every right to develop in the same way as Western or Central Europe. The name problem remains an obstacle on that path. Both parties should reach a compromise, not just one of them. Parties involved should put citizens' interest and their welfare in the forefront, finding ways to cope with issues such as identity, name, language etc, without preventing this long-term development of the population, which is currently the case", added Volker at the Voice of America program in Macedonian Language. "Igniting politics about the identity or a claim regarding identity - a government should not deal with this - it needs to first take care of the people's well-being", he added Volker.

4. ECONOMY

4.1. PM Gruevski: Next Year Economy to Recover Slowly But Surely

At the beginning of the year, PM Nikola Gruevski stated that 2010 would be marked by a slow, gradual but sure recovery of the economy. According to him, the first signs of recovery were emerging and could be confirmed with statistical data of November industrial production growth by 4,3% in comparison with the same month in 2008. "The industrial production growth indicates that things are beginning to slowly improve. It keeps pace with similar developments worldwide. The world is still gripped by the crisis, however there are signs of recovery. This year was marked by the global economic crisis and I hope 2010 will be a year of slow, gradual but sure recovery", said Gruevski.

In March, the Government presented the fourth anti-crisis package, including 24 measures targeting the areas of tax policy, crediting, agriculture, property issues, construction, social policy and regulatory guillotine. "Most of the Government's anti-crisis measures are important and will affect in tackling the consequences of the global economic crisis together with the previous measures", stated PM Gruevski. "It is difficult to set aside the most productive measures, because different measures affect different sectors and groups. If you are a farmer, the most important for you are those related to agriculture, if you are a businessman, it is

important to note that they now have the chance to take credits from the credit line with low interest rate. Most of the measures are important and will have an effect as a package with previous anti-crisis measures, the three packages and several other measures that have been taken to help amid the global economic crisis" he said.

PM Gruevski stressed the package went in parallel with the third stage of regulatory guillotine and measures for improvement of the business climate. "VAT law will be amended, thus giving the possibility for companies to pay VAT liabilities up to the 25th day in the month. Fee for privatization of land of legal entities will be reduced by 30 percent, along with improvement of conditions regarding the use of the EIB credit line, introduction of a new credit line for support of SMEs", stated Gruevski.

He added that import of products not meeting certain international standards would be prevented, in order to protect domestic producers and consumers from unfair competition. "Fund for agriculture land will be established, intended for unemployed individuals living in rural environments, whereas procedures in the construction sector will be shortened and accelerated", said Gruevski. PM Gruevski underlined the measures would yield not only short-term positive effects, but raise the competitiveness of Macedonia's economy.

4.2. Macedonia Moves up 22 places in Economic Freedom - Study Shows

Macedonia is among the countries that has made greatest progress in economic freedom, moving up 22 places in the world rankings to finish in position 56, says the latest report of the Heritage Foundation and The Wall Street Journal. Macedonia's overall score has increased 4.5 points from last year, reflecting a major improvement in labor freedom and smaller improvements in six other economic freedoms. Macedonia is ranked 26th out of 43 countries in the Europe region, and its overall score is above the world average.

Reforms in labor market flexibility and regulation of investment enabled Macedonia's economy to achieve one of the highest score improvements in the 2010 Index. Macedonia also enjoys high levels of trade freedom, fiscal freedom, and monetary freedom. Personal and corporate income tax rates are very competitive, and tax administration has been strengthened. Monetary stability is relatively well maintained. Macedonia is generally open to global trade, and the financial sector has weathered the global financial crisis relatively well.

Macedonia still lacks sufficient institutional support for property rights and the fight against corruption. The court system is prone to corruption, political interference, and inefficiency, and human trafficking and smuggling of drugs and weapons remain serious

problems, the report says. In the Balkans, Albania holds the 53rd position followed by Slovenia - 61; Turkey - 67, Montenegro - 68; Greece - 73; Bulgaria - 75; Croatia - 92 and Bosnia/Herzegovina - 110.

4.3. Macedonia and Russia Sign Clearing Debt Agreement

Macedonian Deputy PM and Finance Minister Zoran Stavreski and Deputy Russian Finance Minister Dmitry Pankin in June in Moscow signed US\$60 million clearing debt agreement. "By signing of the agreement one decade-long issue is closed which burdened the relations in economic sphere and I believe that now the economic and energy cooperation between the two countries will improve...we gain opportunity for increased cooperation with Russia and with important partner, company "Gazprom" which will help us to realize the gas transport project. I believe that in near future Macedonia will be included in international energy map", Stavreski said after signing agreement ceremony.

The realization of the project would cost about EUR 300 million, part of which covered by the clearing debt funds in the amount of US\$ 60 million, along with US\$ 15 million provided by the Macedonian Government. The cooperation with Russian energy company "Gazprom" would also include development of gas network in Macedonia, as well as construction of gas power plants and possible transformation of power plant "Negotino" into a gas plant.

4.4. World Bank supports Cadastre and Land Policy reforms in Macedonia

In May, the World Bank today approved US\$12.1 million of Additional Financing for the Macedonian Real Estate Cadastre and Registration Project (RECRP). The Additional Financing will help the government continue its reforms in real estate cadastre and build on the excellent results achieved. "Everyone agrees that an efficient cadastre system and developed land markets are key factors in attracting foreign and domestic investments," said Victoria Stanley, head of the World Bank team designing the project. "The project has helped complete the real estate cadastre and built the institutional capacity of the national cadastre and registration agency. We now have an opportunity to build on these results and take the next step." The Additional Financing will help finance digitizing the existing cadastre maps and plans and provide this graphical information to citizens, the private sector, and the public sector over the internet. It will improve the accuracy and efficiency of surveying by completing and upgrading the national geodetic reference network, and will support the government to prepare a strategy and begin implementation of a National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI), a key underpinning for e-government services. The Additional Financing would also finance the modernization of the work process in the Authority for Legal and Property Affairs, which will enable it to provide its services to the citizens in a more efficient way.

4.5. Last Year's Unemployed Were 32,2%

Last year, in Macedonia the active population was 928.775 persons, out of which employed were 629.901 persons or 67,8%, while the level of unemployment was 32,% or unemployed were 298.873 persons. Compared to last year, the number of employed increased for 3,4%.

5. HEADLINES / POLICIES

5.1. Lustration of Judges, Attorneys and Prosecutors Kicks off

Judges, attorneys and prosecutors were obliged to submit written statements certified by a notary that they did not collaborate with secret services, in accordance with the law on determining additional condition for executing public function, to the Commission for Verification of Facts between January 25 and February 25, 2010. Judges working in the Supreme Court, appellate courts, Administrative Court and basic courts, members of the Judicial Council, public prosecutors and members of the Council of Public Prosecutors, as well as the Ombudsman, his deputies and civil servants engaged in this institution, as well as the Public Prosecutor, his deputies and officials submitted written statements to the Lustration Commission.

The Commission for Verification of Facts told a recent press conference that a total of 60 high-ranking officials, including the President, Parliament Speaker, Premier and Government ministers, as well as Constitutional Court judges have passed the lustration process. Statements of the holders of public posts were probed as of October of last year, when members of the Commission completed their self-lustration.

5.2. Macedonia, Greece and Albania Sign Agreement on Prespa Park Protection and Sustainable Development

Wise management with quality and quantity of Prespa Lake water level, prevention, control and decrease of water pollution, protection of endangered species of flora and fauna are some of the basic obligations stemming from the trilateral agreement on protection and sustainable development in the region of Prespa park, which was signed in February by the environment ministers of Macedonia, Greece and Albania - Nexhat Jakupi, Tina Birbili and Fatmir Mediu respectively. The document was also signed by EU Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas in Pyli, the Greek part of Prespa. The signing also marked 10th anniversary of the Transboundary Prespa Park, which coincides with the World Wetlands Day. The agreement lays the foundation for effective protection of the Prespa ecosystem aimed at sustainable development of the region. The Prespa park is the first protected

transboundary region in Southeast Europe.

5.3. Joint statement by Heads of Mission of EU, NATO, OSCE and US on Instruction in Macedonian Language

The Government informs that in mid-August 2009 at a working meeting in Gruevski's office focused on analyzing the implementation process of the Ohrid Accord, OSCE officials suggested all first-graders to start learning Macedonian language, elaborating that it was illogical for first-graders from smaller ethnic communities to learn English starting from first grade and to study Macedonian in fourth grade, given the fact that it is the country's official language. Participants at the meeting noted that young people from smaller ethnic communities by not knowing Macedonian would face a problem while communicating with the majority community, "a fact which doesn't lead us to integration into society".

Six months later and two days prior to implementing this measure, the Government, facing severe reactions from the ethnic Albanian community and parties for this, said that "we find out that a "terrain" should have been prepared i.e. that the project was "premature", even though it had been suggested in August 2009 the project to be launched. We regret that the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Knut Vollebaek is not informed that Albanian language has been introduced as an elective course as of 2007/08 school year, not only in municipalities with predominant

Albanian population, but also throughout the country. We guess that local OSCE representatives knew this fact and didn't raise the issue at August's working meeting", the press release reads in January. The Government added that cooperation with OSCE will be extended in the future as a result of numerous previous positive experiences. "However, following this event we will analyze OSCE recommendations with greater vigilance", it says.

The Skopje Missions of the EU, NATO, OSCE and the United States issued in January a joint statement saying that non-majority communities should start early to instruct Macedonian - the state language - and recommending through discussions on the matter decisions to be reached on precisely when and how the state language is to be introduced. The missions urged the Government to prepare the gradual implementation carefully by working together with all communities and stakeholders pointing out that it is an opportune moment for the authorities to encourage wider optional instruction of Albanian and other non-majority languages.

"We believe that instruction in the state language in non-majority community areas should start early, with the goal that all citizens speak the state language fluently upon completion of their studies, taking into consideration the recommendations of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. Proficiency in the state language, among other measures,

will help to promote integration of the different communities, and is indispensable to all citizens, as they seek better educational and employment opportunities later in life. We feel that this is also an opportune moment for the authorities to encourage wider optional instruction of Albanian and other non-majority languages", reads their statement sent to media.

"It is critical that the government prepares the gradual implementation carefully by working together with all communities and stakeholders at national and local level – especially teachers and parents – in order to ensure that changes in the curriculum are carried out in a spirit of mutual understanding and consensus. Decisions on precisely when and how the state language is to be introduced should be a subject for such a discussion. Such planning and care are particularly important to ensure the key provision in the Ohrid Framework Agreement that educational standards be uniform for all students. Necessary resources must be made available before the policy can be properly put into effect. We would hope discussion on this matter would proceed in a rational, tolerant manner", the joint Heads of Mission of the EU, NATO, OSCE and US statement says.

"To study languages is invaluable, education should not be politicized and you must focus on the future of young people", urged US Ambassador Philip Reeker after meeting Gostivar mayor Rifi Osmani in February. "I think that my embassy staffers, as well as international representatives to the country and the citizens of this country should

speak the Macedonian language. It would be favorable if they mastered other languages, stated Reeker when asked about current developments involving Macedonian language instruction as of first grade in Albanian classes. Amongst other things he stressed that he learnt the Macedonian language himself. The mayor of Gostivar reiterated his stance that the decision on Macedonian language instruction as of first grade had no legal foundation. He requested the Government to put the decision on hold in order both sides to reach an acceptable agreement.

The whole turmoil on this issue has gradually calmed down, however it still remains pending the actual solution of the problem on when (at what age) and how should Macedonian language be introduced in the curricula of the ethnic communities not in a majority in the country. What's more, the decision of the Ministry of Education was abrogated by the Constitutional Court, with the reasoning that policy elements that should be incorporated in a law cannot be overridden/regulated by mere decisions of the executive, in this case the Minister of Education.

5.4. The Long-Standing Problem With Severed Workers Remain Unsolved

In spite of the protests organized by the workers that have remained jobless as big production capacities have been closing down during the economic transition period, the Government has confirmed that has

no intention to meet their demands. To this situation added the non-successful effort for introducing a new law in the Macedonian Assembly that would cover some of their demands. The Government claims non-responsible for persons that have remained jobless from the private factories that have been closing down, as well as that there has been already introduced the Law for material support of the unemployed who have over 25 years of working experience. As a reply, severed workers have been organizing protests many times in the last couple of months, announcing that they shall continue during the first half of July.

5.5. Economic Promoters Have Spent Millions of Euros

The State Audit Office found out that the Director of the Agency for Foreign Investments Viktor Mizo has unreasonably spent almost three million Euros of state money in 2008. Economic promoters' travels around the world in a chase for foreign investors have costed 600.000 Euros, while the promotion video clip in which the country was shown as investor's paradise costed 900.000 Euros. The audit estimated that the clip was inefficient, obtaining information that some competing firms for the clip preparation were put in an unfavorable position as opposed to the tender winner. At present, there are 18 economic promoters active around the world, six are presently undergoing training, while eight more have been under the process of selection. There have not been a public procurement

procedure for spending almost 7,3 million denars (615.000 Euros).

It was also discovered that the Agency has given subventions to the investor "Johnson Controls" in the amount of 1,2 million Euros. This sum was spent on grants, subsidies for the employed personnel in the factory and tax reliefs, but all these items were not in a correlation with the state Budget. In total, the level of foreign investments in the country in 2008 was 399 millions of Euros, while in 2009 were worse – 160 millions Euros direct investment.

5.6. Health System Deterioration

In the first three months of this year, Health Fund income have been 8 million Euros less than expected. Experts say that if the financial gap is not going to be urgently filled, the health system is going to collapse. Although the government has bounded itself that will contribute to filling the gap of the weaker payments by the economy of health subsidies, there is still lack of funds which is reflected on the lack of medicaments in pharmacies, while hospitals and clinics hardly make it through the month.

In the polls, 34% of the citizens complain that today's bad conditions in the health system are due to the corruption existing in this sector, 21% believe that the situation is a result of the bad work of the health authorities, 12% believe that the political influence in the health sector is too big, 9% blame the bad reforms, while 8% blame the over-

employment and the inadequate and non-competent cadres working in the health system¹⁶.

5.7. Increased Travel Interest for Greece and Bulgaria Following Visa Liberalization

Number of passengers at the Macedonia-Greece border since the start of the EU visa liberalization at the end-December 2009 has increased by 25 percent compared to last week. More passengers have also been registered at the border crossings with Bulgaria. In the past three days, nearly 25,000 passengers, 9,000 of whom Macedonian nationals, were registered at border crossing "Bogorodica" near Gevgelija. However, the first day of visa liberalization registered the biggest turnover, when 3,628 Macedonian citizens went to Greece.

Increased number of passengers has also been registered at border crossing "Medzitlija" near Bitola, where 1,296 Macedonian citizens went to Greece in the three days since introduction of the visa-free regime. The situation was identical with border crossing "Deve Bair" towards Bulgaria, where 1,395 Macedonian nationals went to Bulgaria in the three-day period.

¹⁶ Research conducted by "Rating" agency, for the needs of "Utrinski vesnik".

5.8. Opposition Attacks on Alleged Creation of “Police State” are Repetition From Past System, Jankuloska Says

Full implementation of the new Law on Internal Affairs will be in focus of interest of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2010. Special attention will be paid to new concept, which is introduced with this law for the first time, and it is the career system, Interior Minister Gordana Jankuloska said in the interview with the Macedonian Information Agency – MIA.

In relation to accusation which occurred for militarization of the country, Jankuloska said that modernization of the police is providing conditions for more efficient putting the laws into effect. “Opposition attacks for alleged creation of “police state” I understand only as repetition from past system and unrecognizing the modern ways in fight against crime”, Jankuloska said in the interview with MIA. She guarantees zero tolerance and more severe and uncompromising unselective fight against organized crime in this year.

On journalist question whether Interior Ministry is enough transparent in its working and how she sees on more frequent attacks on journalists, Jankuloska said that she condemns any pressure on independent journalism. “No one is faultless, neither we nor media. Still when mistake will be discovered an apology and correction should follow. Only in this way partnership and trust

can be built”, Minister Gordana Jankuloska said.

5.9. PACE Standing Committee Calls Greece to Recognize Macedonian Minority

The Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted in March in Paris a Resolution on Protection of Minority Rights, which calls on Greece to sign the Convention for Protection of the National Minorities and recognize the Macedonian minority. The document, which uses the term 'Macedonian', also urges the country to open its borders for political expatriates and respect their property rights, as well as to give rights to its citizens of non-Greek origin. Furthermore, the Resolution once again calls on Athens to respect and act in line with decisions of the Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights that refer to the Macedonian and Turkish minorities in Greece.

5.10. US State Department: Macedonia Meets Electoral Standards, has Problems With Treatment of Prisoners

According to the annual US State Department summary of the human rights practices in Macedonia published in March, it is stated that the presidential and municipal elections in Macedonia have meet most of international standards. However, the country has problems with the treatment of prisoners, overcrowded penitentiary institutions, delayed judicial reforms, government

interference in religious matters and interethnic tensions. It says that on March 22 and April 5, the country held presidential and municipal elections and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) assessed them as meeting most international standards for democratic elections. Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces, the report reads. "There were reports that law enforcement officers and prison officials beat detainees and prisoners and that authorities did not adequately investigate or prosecute allegations of abuse, the report says. Prisons were overcrowded and conditions were reported to be inhuman and degrading; observers reported widespread corruption among prison staff. Implementation of judicial reforms continued to be delayed, and political pressure and intimidation hindered the effectiveness of the judiciary.

The US State Department considers that the dispute over the government support for a construction of an Orthodox church in the main Skopje square contributed to interethnic tensions and raised questions about the government involvement in religious affairs, while the lack of effective police protection for protesters raised concerns about freedom of assembly. There were reports of discrimination against persons with disabilities and Roma. Tensions between the ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian populations continued to impact areas including education, employment, and political

participation, reads the US State Department 2009 Human Rights Report on Macedonia.

5.11. Freedom House: Macedonia "Partly Free" Country Regarding Political Rights and Civil Liberties

Macedonia belongs to the group of "Partly Free" countries according to the level of democracy. Trend of improvement regarding the state of political rights and civil liberties has been noted in 2009, largely due to the correct implementation of presidential and local elections, which were assessed as fair and democratic, reads the latest report of international organization for human rights' protection "Freedom House".

As in 2008, Macedonia received rating 3 in two categories (political rights and civil liberties) on a scale from 1 to 7, one being the best. Free countries are considered those having rating 1-2.5, Partly Free (3-5) and Not Free (5.5-7). "Freedom House" notes improvements of situation in Western Balkan states. Montenegro and Kosovo progressed the most, with the former going into the group of Free countries (2.5), while the latter in the Partly Free group (4.5). Pertaining to regional countries, Greece received rating 1 for political rights and 2 for civil liberties, the same as Croatia, Bulgaria and Serbia obtained average ratings 2, Albania-3, Bosnia&Herzegovina-4¹⁷.

¹⁷ The number of countries designated by Freedom in the World as Free in 2009 stands at 89, representing 46 percent of the

5.12. PM Gruevski: No Climate for Constitutional Changes at the Moment

In March, the Government has decided to embark on an effort to achieve constitutional changes, - as it was at first announced the attempt was in order to meet the remarks given by the international community that the Judicial Council as a body that selects and appoints the judges in the country and decides on their responsibility, should not have in its composition the Minister of Justice as member (the change would achieve his lesser influence in the judiciary system). Also, the ruling party suggested increase of the number of persons sitting in the Judiciary Council, to 17 or 19, by increasing the number of judges elected in the body and decrease the number of years in mandate.

However, under the veil of these suggestions for constitutional change, there have been forwarded options for changing the position of another court - the Constitutional court - including the status and length of term of the judges. The public and the opposition believed that the moment has been badly chosen, and that the motive was

daily-political in order to achieve intervention in systemic bodies where the government influence was the weakest- the Constitutional Court. At the same time, it was obvious that this initiative for constitutional change was to open the Pandora's box of various demands with ethnic connotation, as it is known that any constitutional change in order to be passed needs to obtain 2/3 majority votes in the Assembly. In this respect, ethnic Albanian political parties have demanded to be introduced a Badenter voting principle in the Constitutional Court for cases that refer to laws that have been introduced the same way in the Assembly. This idea has been rejected by the ethnic Macedonian parties, due to the position that courts are professional and not political decision-making bodies, which implies that this kind of voting principle cannot be incorporated in the decision-making process of this body. Same stance regarding this issue was taken by the Venetian Committee as well. From its side, SDSM have demanded to be introduced a constitutional provision that disables crimes that have been committed in the period of transformation of the state capital (privatization) to be out of date.

world's 194 countries and 46 percent of the world population. The number of Partly Free countries declined to 58, or 30 percent of all countries assessed by the survey, comprising 20 percent of the world's total population. The number of countries deemed to be Not Free increased to 47, or 24 percent of the total number of countries. Over 2.3 billion people live in societies where fundamental political rights and civil liberties are not respected. China accounts for half of this number.

“At this moment, there is no climate for realization of the constitutional changes and as a result the procedure came to a halt”, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski concludes in a letter sent later, in April, to the leaders of SDSM, DUI and New Democracy - Branko Crvenkovski, Ali Ahmeti and Imer Selmani

respectively. He says this was caused, amongst other things, by the lack of preparedness on the part of party leaders to accept the initiated proposals for constitutional changes in the judiciary, their unrealistic demands in an attempt to accomplish partial political interest and to open issues in connection to inter-ethnic relations, putting the interest of the state aside. Gruevski in the letter notes that over a month ago VMRO-DPMNE put forward an idea on changing and supplementing the Constitution in a bid to allow reform in the judicial system i.e. its advancement.

“The basis of the proposed changes, which have been amongst other things gathered from relevant international organizations, suggested a change of the current structure and manner of election of Judicial Council members in an effort to further boost its independence. We have been, and still are, deeply convinced that our proposals will enable the body to increase its autonomy and to strengthen its professionalism and expert approach. We have launched a noble and thought-out idea, which was backed by the international community, to improve the performances of judicial authorities in Macedonia”, says the PM and VMRO-DPMNE leader. Sadly, he concludes, while initiating the procedure on changing the Constitution, I got the impression that the political parties summoned at a leaders' meeting, where the idea was supposed to be presented and agreement to be reached on the matter, show no interest at the

moment to execute the proposed change.

“The reasons for rejecting our proposals are still unknown to me and they may only be assumed, however I can't understand how the parties that always call for a reform of the judicial system now refuse to realize it in practice. My impression for the non-readiness of the political party leaders to accept our proposals for changes and supplements to the Constitution and an improvement of the judicial system has been confirmed in the period (following the announcement of the initiative for amendments). The serious, state approach to constitutional amendments was turned into a simulation of platform for promotion of political positions, aiming at brief improvement of the parties' ratings, by, inter alia, raising issues that enter the sphere of interethnic relations, and put the state interest aside. I am sorry that the process was completely disavowed. There was an attempt for crucial devaluation of the process, intended to improve the system of one of the state powers”, Gruevski said.

He considers as unacceptable one strategic and well-intended initiative for improving the performance of the state's judicial system to be overshadowed by unrealistic proposals, which are either a result of partial daily-political interest or great sensitivity, but have no legal ground in regard to the interethnic relations, namely proposals without foundation for lasting improvement of the society. The initiative for constitutional amendments is to be

reviewed when appropriate conditions to that effect will be created. In the meantime, Gruevski said, the government will resume with reforming the judiciary, bringing new quality to the system by amending the existing laws that are regulating this sphere.

During the leadership meetings for the constitutional changes, there have been ideas for further change of the Assembly Book of rules, as well as suggestions for looking and discussing for the separate Audit Office reports at the Assembly sessions. PM Gruevski did not opt for this idea, stating that only the yearly report of the State Audit Office should be looked at, since separate reports may serve as means for “abusing the Assembly”. In addition, in May, it was concluded that the Assembly shall not look and discuss not only the separate Audit reports, but the final budget account report. The state Audit office shall, continue to send its reports to the MPs but there will be no debate for them whatsoever. This means that whatever there was concluded by the Audit Office, shall be pushed under the carpet. Or as the opposition had said during the second reading of the Law on Audit, these materials shall collect dust in the Assembly archives. For that, the SDSM MP Chingoski commented: “By this you admit that you are afraid not to be discovered that you have spent in a criminal way people’s money for museums, and for monuments. You do not want to work in a transparent manner, you rather work under the principle 50-50%.”

5.13. Ministerial Interpellations in the Assembly

Opposition parties SDSM and the Liberal Democratic Party submitted interpellation against the vice-Prime Minister and Finance Minister Zoran Stavreski with the following arguments: complete omission of last year’s budget rebalance, non-realized capital expenditures, forced and squandered spending of state money due to which there is going to be a total budget collapse, unreasonable creation of debts of the country abroad, aggressive indebt of the state domestically, catastrophic realization of the donations obtained, continuous pressure and undermining of the independence of the National Bank of Macedonia, as well as disregard of the Assembly and its bodies, as Stavreski out of the total of 23 sessions of the Committee for Budget and Financing was present in only two.

“Nobody knows how much the state owns to the national economy. Fact is that these debts are cumulative and in that way you maintain the budget liquidity, by not paying the debts. The deficit of 2,8% is fake, because you didn’t pay off huge dues from November and December 2009. This is most probably moving between the figures of 4 and 5% of GDP” said LDP leader Jovan Manasijevski.

The second interpellation was against the Minister of Justice Mihajlo Manevski. This time, opposition was not spearing the

personal “compliments” against him, like: “chameleon”, “executor”, “undertaker of the Macedonian judiciary”, “criminal-political mujahidin”, “bloody hands from political executions” etc. SDSM MPs demanded Manevski to resign because Macedonian judiciary during his mandate “hit rock bottom and became the most problematic segment in the state”. He was accused for political pressures over the judges, nepotism, problems in the financial operation of the Ministry, scandals regarding usurped state property land, the affair of him receiving both salary and pension, non-legal spending of 600.000 Euros etc. Manevski rejected the attacks, persuaded that they are of personal nature, and that are linked to the opposition nervousness because of his determination to deal with organized crime and corruption in the country.

The third interpellation which was submitted by LDP and New Democracy was against the vice-Prime Minister in charge for the Eurointegration process Vasko Naumovski, because these parties believe that he excluded the euro-atlantic agenda from the political life of the country. Public discontent was stirred up when he, paralelly to his governmental function applied to and got employed at the Faculty of Law at the Skopje “St. Cyril and Methodius” state University. In spite of the heavy opposition on the Faculty’s council he managed to be employed, partly due to pressure from the authorities that if that was not accomplished, the Faculty for Political Science shall secede from

the Faculty of Law, while the faculty shall experience financial blockade and difficulties. Although the case was looked at by the Anticorruption Committee and no breach of law was found, still, this event hurt significantly the vice-PM’s public image.

Media were commenting that although Naumovski got in office eight months ago, he looked promising at the beginning due to his youth enthusiasm, the academic degree background and his previous communication with the media. Although he looked promising at the beginning, only one month after his appointment he showed bureaucratic dullness, monotonous repetition of the same phrases, lack of interest for further dynamic work and vague activities. He was selectively present at the Assembly coordination meetings regarding the EU integration process, at the meetings of the National Council for Euro-integration but also to the events organized by the embassies of the EU member-states. In the meantime, the state Secretariat for European Affairs employed 30 party cadres personnel, and fired 10 others including the then chief of cabinet. All in all, it is said that SEA is not working the way it was and it should, on the contrary, work has been stopped. Employees in the Secretariat were strictly forbidden to communicate with the EU Delegation without his previous approval or knowledge. However, this attitude brings great damage to the country, as SEA coordinates all technical help from EU to Macedonia, there is located the whole managing of the

euro-integration process, are coordinated all the IPA funds regarding coordination of foreign assistance, etc. LDP MP Andrej Zernovski complained that the Assembly is ignored by the Secretariat by non-issuing reports, which is a serious problem. The Chair of the National Council for Eurointegrations MP Radmila Sekerinska, after the cancelled meeting for which issuing of relevant materials by SEA was not accomplished, announced that responsibility should be sought from Naumovski, not only because of his traditional delays, but also because reports show disastrous results, which are: out of 374 by-laws planned for this year the government didn't manage to pass more than 21 (or 5%) in the first three months.

5.14. Judge's Dismissals

The Skopje appellate judge Violeta Duma has been at first temporarily removed from her judicial function after the Judicial Council has decided to open a procedure for her dismissal, due to non-starting a procedure of determining of the identity of a Turkish citizen who has been accused for human trafficking. Although one person from the Judicial Council objected that she is the only one called on responsibility out of the total of five persons of the Criminal Council for the same deed, his suggestion was not accepted by the other Judicial Council members. In the judicial circles this event was estimated as an act of revenge towards the judge by the Minister of Justice as submitter of the request for dismissal, due to the adjudicated

cases against Vlado Buckovski and the case "Snake Eye". On the occasion, Judge Duma stated: "In the case for which I am accused I am only one of the five persons who confirmed the first degree verdict. Who am I upon complaint to change the identity of the accused, when that was not done previously by my colleagues during investigation and during the first trial? In addition, there is a confirmation by the Ministry of Interiors that the accused by the name Haki Horkams owns an original passport. In the case's documents, is exactly determined what kind of activities have been taken and is clearly put the opinion of the judge-referee Dzivildziev". Later, together with Judge Duma, was dismissed only judge Dzivildziev from the other four judges from the Criminal Council.

After finishing the four-year mandates of ten court presidents, only one of them got another mandate. In the race for a new mandate were out even court presidents that have proven to be very efficient and good managers. Comments were that the Judicial Council does not care about the offered candidate programs, instead it punishes the best only because have been elected in the previous political party term.

5.15. Laws Adopted or in Preparation That Attracted Public Attention

Another burning issue has been the draft law on public servants, for which there were many remarks: no mention of salaries, chaotic

provisions, against international conventions and acts, limiting of the right for organizing in trade-unions in the institution itself, collective agreements are nowhere to be found in the text, there is a possibility for the employee to be fired if twice in 4 months he gets a mark "non-satisfactory", etc. "In the administration are employed party soldiers" was said in the discussion by an SDSM MP, who said that after local elections, employees were fired and were employed party cadres. The MP Buckovski said that it is a pity that a compromise solution is not done for the Law on Public Administration, similarly as the Law on State employees (servants) which was praised by the European Commission. According to him, Macedonia has no need for big public administration, as at this moment the economy cannot sustain an army of 150.000 administrators and 250.000 pensioners. He also accused for complete partization of the public administration.

There were many critics on the Law for protection from discrimination as well, for which experts say that it has serious anomalies, including the non-mentioned sexual orientation which may occur as a basis for discrimination. Problematic was the process of proving the existence of discrimination, as well as the issue of the independence of the Commission for protection from discrimination. Regardless the objections of various factors, the draft-law was adopted as it was suggested in the first place. The mere voting of this law - only by the position, showed the non-democratic

aspect of the process of its introducing¹⁸.

Literally overnight, without announcements, the Government introduced the ethnical Codex and published it in the Official Journal of the country. The rules aimed for officials of the highest rank are founded only on morality and ethics, of respect and attention, in other words, no one is responsible for anything. The largest absurd is that it is not anticipated any kind of political punishment for the prime minister, the minister, and the high functioneers, and there is no organ in charge which may apply sanctions. The actual authors of the Codex text were puzzled when they saw that it was shortened, voided of substance and looked like a political pamphlet, without rules, responsibilities and political regulations. From the text evaporated the relations of the government members with the Assembly and the administration, ministers' official trips, when and by whom they may be escorted, the gifts obtained which should remain in the state institutions, the conflict of interest.

The Assembly Committee for surveillance over the measures for communications following has rejected the suggested amendments for the Law on Electronic communications for which the opposition believes that shall be the basis for future abuse. In the

¹⁸ All countries from the region already include the sexual orientation provision in their laws, which is not the case with Macedonia.

Committee's conclusions it is said that the Committee protests because it was not included in the process of preparation of these provisions and that the suggested changes are not in harmony with the Law for Communication Surveillance which is brought by a 2/3 majority in the Assembly which means that its content cannot be alternated by provisions introduced by a simple majority. Opposition MPs have previously stated that suggested corrections are a strike against democracy, because by them is given right to the Ministry of Interiors as the only authorized organ, to tab and by doing that may have continuous and direct access and conditions for independently taking over the communications by all operators.

5.16. President Ivanov Organizes Informal Leaders' Meeting

May's informal meeting of the leaders of VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM and DUI, organized by President Gjorge Ivanov, focused on reviewing political processes in Macedonia and its surrounding, exchanging information on essential issues and current developments. "Informal meetings are an opportunity to demonstrate that there is communication and that every issue can be solved through dialogue. It is unnecessary nowadays to resort to violence or to other means when institutions are functioning trying to settle issues", stated President Ivanov after meeting with Nikola Gruevski, Branko Crvenkovski and Ali Ahmeti.

According to him, name mediator Matthew Nimetz was seriously preparing the next meeting between negotiators most likely because he aimed at presenting a fresh set of ideas. Ivanov underlined that an acceptable name solution was the one which would be in the interest of Macedonian citizens, failing to speculate whether Northern Macedonia was an acceptable solution.

Premier and VMRO-DPMNE leader Nikola Gruevski commented "We are doing everything we can the name issue to be closed. We want to come to a solution which will be acceptable for the citizens and which will be passed at a referendum. The name settlement process is in the interest of Macedonia and hopefully of Greece as well", said Gruevski expressing gratitude to the United States for their attempt to mitigate and to find a solution to the long-standing problem.

Asked whether a deadline was set for a name settlement until the next NATO summit in November in Portugal, he said that there had always been pressures from the international community aimed at prompt settlement. - The solution should be acceptable for both sides, including the citizens of Macedonia, the PM stressed.

SDSM's Branko Crvenkovski welcomed the leaders' meeting, noting that it should have been less protocol and more aimed at debates. "Macedonia is facing serious issues, the economy is wasted, democracy is threatened, while interethnic relations are deteriorated. Lately, the

security situation is also no good, which means that there are many topics to be discussed”, said Crvenkovski.

For the DUI leader, Macedonia had no other alternative than Euro-Atlantic perspectives. - For DUI, the name issue becomes a serious obstacle in the integration process of Macedonia. “Here all political parties should assume responsibility in order the name row to be resolved with an acceptable solution. Given the engagement of all political factors, I expect an acceptable solution to be reached”, stated Ali Ahmeti. He noted that all political factors should do their best to boost the inter-ethnic relations and Macedonia's position at an international level. - DUI has said that it doesn't support violence as a means to resolve issues in the country. I call on all political factors to seriously begin resolving the issues, Ahmeti said.

DPA leader Menduh Taci and New Democracy's Imer Selmani failed to attend the informal meeting organized by the President. Selmani told a press conference that he would not attend leaders' meetings until their demands on the Hague cases, "Sopot" and "Brodec", the use of the Albanian language, etc, were met.

5.17. Crvenkovski: It's Irresponsible to Hold Snap Polls Before November

“The idea of conducting early elections before November is irresponsible given the commitment

by Washington and Brussels to facilitate the resolution of the name dispute”, the opposition SDSM leader said. Branko Crvenkovski underscored that such a move would show that the country is not interested in the integration into the Euro-Atlantic community.

“It would be quite irresponsible both by the government and the opposition to respond with inaction and hold snap polls instead. It would mean that our country won't join NATO or the European Union, and it is bad for the country,” Crvenkovski said on Thursday. He added that if the name row is not resolved by NATO summit in late October or early November, Macedonia could hold snap polls. Crvenkovski underscored that Macedonia's future could be at stake if it fails to meet the November deadline for a negotiated settlement of the name issue.

6. PARTY DEVELOPMENTS

6.1. Boskoski Urges for Early Parliamentary Elections

The President of United for Macedonia (UM), Ljube Boskoski urged for early parliamentary elections, as according to him, the manner in which PM Gruevski is leading the government is wrong. Boskoski said that Gruevski creates a fake image for the growth of the living standard and the democracy in Macedonia: “We must stop this. This situation should not continue. Something should be changed, for

example the present government. The living conditions are only getting worse. Thanks to VMRO-DPMNE, we have no democracy and the promised investments cannot be found”.

The organization United for Macedonia said that citizens of Macedonia are being pressured constantly to say how much they support Gruevski's government. Boskoski said that authorities pressure citizens to support the present government. He blamed Gruevski to have already negotiated name settlement with Greece but he is trying to find a way to present the settlement among the citizens. Ljube Boskoski said that if there are to hold early parliamentary elections he would receive over 300.000 votes.

6.2. Georgievski: October or November Real Time for Holding Early Elections

“The period October to November seems like the real time for holding early elections”, president of VMRO-NP party Ljubco Georgievski said. Former Prime Minister of Macedonia and former leader of VMRO-DPMNE said that the early elections will be held in the period after the NATO summit in Portugal, which is imposed as informal deadline for name solution. “I believe the period October to November is the real period for holding early parliamentary elections in Republic of Macedonia, because the two deadlines for solving name issue, imposed by EU and NATO will expire. In my opinion there should be a logical ending to that story. This

matter can't be dragged forever”, Georgievski said.

He said that holding early parliamentary elections depends on the will of DUI party, adding that VMRO-DPMNE party is not interested in holding early elections. DUI party holds the key for holding early elections in Macedonia, Georgievski said. He believes name settlement is not to happen very soon.

6.3. Ruling VMRO-DPMNE Celebrates 20th Anniversary

Ruling party VMRO-DPMNE celebrated on June 20th the party establishment anniversary, with the central event held in downtown Skopje. Celebrations were preceded by series of events, including promotions and debates related to topics from the party's history and current developments. VMRO-DPMNE was established in Skopje on June 17, 1990 as successor of the historic VMRO, which worked for independent Macedonia. From the very beginning, the party urged for Macedonia's sovereignty from the Yugoslav federation, country's statehood and international recognition. Ljubco Georgievski was elected first party leader, whereas the party obtained its ideological mark - rightist Demo-Christian party in 1995. Current leader and Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski was elected party president in 2003. VMRO-DPMNE leader Gruevski and some of the party's founders addressed the event.

“VMRO-DPMNE party never wanted somebody else's country or identity.

We send a message that we won't allow anybody to take something that belongs to us", the party leader Nikola Gruevski said at the celebration. "Our party remains focused on finding a name settlement. VMRO-DPMNE has no intention to trade their citizens and country's interests for anybody, no matter what. Playing the blackmail game is a waste of time. It's been three years of pressures, threats. In the past five months we've pressured to accept something that we don't want",... "if we come to any name solution, VMRO-DPMNE will put the question on referendum and only then it will be conducted". Also, Gruevski stated that the government is not giving up the reforms needed for EU and NATO membership. However, he pointed out that the country won't give up its identity: "We will continue implementing reforms in order to create efficient country, economy and better life standards and not to satisfy Brussels".

"VMRO-DPMNE remains strongly focused on the process of finding a solution to the name issue, because Macedonia needs this for the purpose of faster progress, but at the same time VMRO-DPMNE does not intend to trade the interests of its people and state for anyone or anything. The ones playing the card of blackmail, pressure and threat should know they waste their time", said Nikola Gruevski.

"They have put all kinds of pressure in the past three years, with the biggest pressure coming in the last 4-5 months, but this has not only yielded results, but has also been a

waste of time", said Gruevski. "If there is readiness for the row's settlement, which would not harm anyone, including Republic of Macedonia, and if such concrete proposal is acceptable to the other side, VMRO-DPMNE will schedule a referendum, at which two million citizens will pass the decision that the party will accept, regardless of the outcome. This is an issue that cannot be resolved with force, but with reason. At the same time, we clearly say that we will not allow to be deprived of something that is rightfully ours", he stressed.

Gruevski stated VMRO-DPMNE did not give up on Macedonia's strategic goal of becoming EU and NATO member. "We will not stop with the reforms, because we implement them for the better future of our people", he added. Pertaining to the global economic crisis, the VMRO-DPMNE leader said he expected Macedonia to finish 2010 with a two-percent GDP growth, largest among regional countries. Gruevski emphasized that despite the crisis and the strong pressure over the name issue, VMRO-DPMNE is supported by more people compared to 2006, when it came to power. On occasion of the party's 20th anniversary, Gruevski thanked all ideologists, founders and activists, as well as those who supported and worked on the idea for independent and sovereign Macedonia. According to him, VMRO-DPMNE is a party of the people, not of elites.

6.4. SDSM Activities

Whole SDSM leadership is »on the field« as the party leader Branko

Crvenkovski started the effort to regain voters and supporters especially among the politically undecided population of severed workers, farmers, agricultural producers, craftsmen etc. Members of the party Executive Committee and of the MP party group, got a task to visit one municipality each during one month and to visit as many target groups possible. The party in fact enters in a new phase after finishing the new party program promotion named »Solutions for Macedonia«. By that, finished the phase of arranging the situation within the party as well, ending up by creating a big opposition front. From now on, activities shall be focused towards the dissatisfied citizens. As stated, the opposition plans to awaken the citizens from political apathy and release them from their fear, to elaborate their intended policies, to make the aware of the unfulfilled promises of the government in all spheres. The goal is to stir up oppositionary and anti-government disposition which will shake the parties in Government.

6.5. Movements in the Right-Wing Political Spectrum

It is said that the current high government rating is supported by over 30.000 party soldiers in the administration, employed temporarily through the Cadres Committee of VMRO-DPMNE. By multiplying this figure by three, counting the family members of these employees one obtains at least 100.000 government supporters.

At the same time, the two right-wing parties lead by Ljubco Georgievski (former VMRO-DPMNE leader) and Ljube Boskovski (see previous Barmeters) opposed to VMRO-DPMNE, challenged PM Gruevski on elections, to measure their strength. Although rumors were suggesting reapproachment of Gorgievski to Gruevski and later cooperation of Boskovski with SDSM so far none of that happened. It remains to be seen whether these two political forces are going to seriously challenge the position VMRO-DPMNE holds in the political right wing spectrum.

Regarding the other side of the political spectrum, for a longer period of time it is said that the government coalition »marriage« of VMRO-DPMNE and DUI, pulls the ethnic Albanian party downwards in terms of support of their party. Fact is that according to polls, high percent of polled ethnic Albanians do not agree with PM Gruevski's policy regarding interethnic relations, nor with the claim that all ethnic communities are completely equal. Serious threat to DUI's rating (6,2%) is now DPA (3,9%) which is returning steadily. Comments are that after Gruevski has been »spending« DPA, now the same thing happens to DUI, which trend offers a return infusion to DPA. There have also been differences of opinion regarding the compromise that should be taken on the name issue with Greece, although DUI has been trying to be constructive. Another problem is the still pending question of the former NLA fighters (reparations for them and their families) for which the coalition partners were trying to create a

solution, however, out of the public sight. The idea is not to submit a special law for this problem, but to use the current legislation¹⁹ and meet the pending needs. It is expected that the Government shall have difficulties on this with the organization of the army forces that defended Macedonia in 2001 named »Dignity«, which asked for a special law for them and who will definitely protest against this agreed coalition solution. The idea is to solve the whole issue, but however both groups not to be encompassed and ranked on the same level.

Another pending problem is the new version of the Law on Denationalization, as DUI has doubts that by this law there will be a possibility for the Islamic Religious Community to be deprived from its rights of regaining a couple of historical monuments/buildings in the old Skopje Bazaar that are now under the state auspices. Instead of taking the buildings back, the idea is to obtain adequate compensation, a solution that creates discontent among the ranks of the Islamic Religious Community.

6.6. SDSM June Meeting

On June 27th, the opposition block lead by SDSM and its partners organized a massive protest meeting in front of the Government building. Intention was discontent to be shown due to the blockade of the

euroatlantic integration process (the repeated non-receiving date for opening of negotiations) and the bad economic situation in the country. In the four years of VMRO-DPMNE rule, this was the first opposition meeting organized by SDSM.

Before some 30 thousand supporters gathered under the slogan "We Are For Winning Macedonia", the party called for the parliament to be dissolved directly following the NATO summit scheduled for November. Elections before that date could harm the country's chances to join the alliance and make progress in its EU bid if there is a breakthrough in the name talks with Greece, party representatives said. "Regardless of the outcome of the NATO Summit, whether the negotiations with Greece are successful or not, our goal in November will be for the Assembly to disband so that we can get out and meet the citizens on elections," SDSM leader Branko Crvenkovski, said at the rally, accusing the ruling centre-right VMRO DPMNE party of ruining the country's prospects.

"The country's EU and NATO bids are blocked, the economy is shattered, citizens' rights have been set back and interethnic relations are deteriorating", Crvenkovski claimed. The opposition leader sent a message to Macedonian Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski that he will be held accountable for allowing crime and robbery to infiltrate the state during his term. He also blamed the government for not doing enough to solve the name row. He said that a more pragmatic approach

¹⁹ Remuneration of the fighters and the disabled from the conflict is intended to be applied through the existing Law on special rights for the security forces, which is to be amended.

rather than Gruevski's "false patriotism" would do more to help untie the long standing problem.

"Faced with defeat and failure on all fronts, unable to achieve any results, Gruevski decided to play on a single card of dividing patriots from traitors," the opposition leader said. "Gruevski and the VMRO-DPMNE persistently paint a false picture of themselves- that they are the only ones who defend the constitutional name. This is an absolute lie. No Macedonian wants to change the country's constitutional name" Crvenkovski added. He condemned Greece for abusing its veto rights as a member of NATO and the EU to block Macedonia's bids to join the same structures. He said this was an "unfair, undemocratic and non-European policy" towards Macedonia.

The opposition rally comes after many announcements that the party would increase its activity and was seen as a barometer of the party's current strength.

7. PUBLIC OPINION POLLS

7.1. EU Membership a Good Thing for 66% of Macedonians - Standard Eurobarometer Survey

Some 66% of the respondents in Macedonia see EU membership of the country as a good thing, show results of the Standard Eurobarometer public opinion survey in

January²⁰. The survey reconfirmed the prevailing positive attitude among the public towards EU membership. The 72nd survey of the Standard Eurobarometer also unveils a boost of the proportion of citizens who expect benefits from EU membership (it increased from 75% to 76%), which remains much higher than in the other two candidate countries, Croatia and Turkey.

Increased support was recorded by the number of citizens who have positive feelings towards the EU (from 59% to 65%). Freedom to travel, study and work all over Europe remains the beneficial aspect that the respondents in the country most frequently associate with the EU. The vast majority of the respondents in both the country and the EU single out solidarity and security as the most important social values of the Union.

The majority of citizens continue to perceive unemployment as the main problem in the country, although their number recorded a decrease from 68% to 64%. There is a growing number of respondents (from 25% to 46%) who believe that the impact of the global economic downturn on the

²⁰ The Standard Eurobarometer public opinion survey is conducted twice a year. The 72nd survey of the Standard Eurobarometer (EB72) was carried out in the 27 member states of the European Union and in the three candidate countries – Macedonia, Croatia and Turkey, between 23 October and 18 November 2009. The interviewers conducted the face-to-face poll and the sample of citizens participating in this research is representative of the opinion of the citizens aged 15 years and over, including representation of all social, professional and age groups of the urban and rural population.

labor market has reached its maximum, but almost the same percentage (47%) still assess that the worst is yet to come.

In line with the tendency in all the countries included in the survey, the confidence of the public in the national institutions further decreased, except for the trust in local and regional authorities, which recorded an increase (from 28% to 36%). A similarity between the national public and that of the EU is the opinion that globalization brings profit only to big companies, but not to citizens (it is shared by 62% of citizens in the country and 63% in the Union).

7.2. IRI Poll: VMRO-DPMNE With Highest Support, SDSM Follows

If elections were held in January this year, largest portion of citizens would vote for VMRO-DPMNE 30%, followed by SDSM with 12%, DUI-8% and DPA-6%, show results of the poll done by the International Republican Institute (IRI). Three percent of respondents would vote for New Democracy, one percent for the Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP), while less than one percent for United for Macedonia. Three percent of respondents would vote for other parties, whereas 21 percent were undecided. According to the IRI poll, EU accession enjoys the support of 94 percent of respondents, while NATO entry – 91%.

7.3. “Pavel Satev” Poll: VMRO-DPMNE and Gruevski Enjoy Highest Rating

If the parliamentary elections were to be held tomorrow 24.5% of the citizens in February 2010 would vote for VMRO-DPMNE, 9.3% for SDSM, 6.1% for DUI, 3.9% for DPA, 1.5% for New Democracy, 0.3% for LDP and 0.1% for United for Macedonia, show results from public opinion poll conducted by Institute for Democracy upon a request of the "Pavel Satev" Institute. Around of 30% of respondents do not know for whom to vote or do not answer the question and 24.1% of those included in the poll said that they would not vote at all.

According to the poll, citizens trust Nikola Gruevski the most - 26%, followed by Branko Crvenkovski with 8.4%, Ali Ahmeti 6.1% and Menduh Taci 3.6%. President Gjorge Ivanov has gained the trust of 0.7%, and under 1 percent rating are Ljube Boskovski, Ljubco Georgievski and Tito Petkovski. Thirty-two percent of the citizens said that they have no trust in a single politician.

7.4. Gruevski Enjoys Highest Approval Rating - Poll

Leader of ruling VMRO-DPMNE Nikola Gruevski enjoys the approval of 25,1 percent of 1,080 respondents to a poll of 'Pavel Satev' Institute, conducted on May 17-18. The party's rating is about two percent lower than the one of its leader. The rating of opposition SDSM has been at 10,5 percent for almost more than a year since the re-election of Branko Crvenkovski for the party leader. His rating is at 8,9%, followed by DUI leader Ali Ahmeti - 5,6. The ratings of DPA, ND leaders - Menduh Tachi

and Imer Selmani is at 2,1 and 2 percent respectively. Vast majority of citizens remain committed to Macedonia's EU, NATO membership, i.e. 82,4 and 81,8 percent are in favor of the country's integration with these organizations. The support of the Framework Agreement is also steady, being favored by 52,6 percent.

7.5. April and May Polls Regarding the Name Issue

Sixty-five percent of the Macedonian citizens consider that Macedonia should not change the name to join NATO, show results of public opinion poll conducted by "Societas Civilis" Institute for Democracy at Ministry of Defense's request in April this year. Out of respondents who negatively answered on change of name in exchange for NATO admission, 84% are Macedonians, 7.1% are Albanians and 8.9% are other communities.

Regarding question how would you vote if referendum on Macedonia's admission to NATO were held next week, 80.2% of the respondents answered positively and 10.8 answered negatively. The largest number of respondents positively assessed the work of the Ministry of Defense and role of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia in peacekeeping missions.

The survey conducted by daily "Dnevnik" in May, showed that majority of Macedonian citizens believe name talks should be interrupted, with the country joining EU and NATO without changing its name. However, there is a significant

difference in the opinion of ethnic Albanians regarding these issues. Asked if Macedonia should continue in searching for name compromise with Greece, 51% of respondents said they should be interrupted, with 48% favoring their resumption. According to the ethnic distribution, 79% of ethnic Albanians support the talks' continuation, whereas the percentage among ethnic Macedonians is quite lower (36%). Interesting is that there is larger flexibility regarding the issue among youth. A majority of 53% of respondents at the age of 18-29 urge for compromise, unlike the ones above the age of 65, where hardline positions dominate.

Asked would they accept a geographic determinant to be added to the name the Republic of Macedonia if the identity and the country's EU, NATO membership were guaranteed, 52% of respondents say 'no' in comparison to 44% in favor. The proposal 'Northern' enjoys the highest support – 27%, followed by 'Vardar' – 9% and 'Upper' - 2%. Vast majority of Macedonians - about 80% believe that in addition to changing the name Greece demands for the citizens to give up their national identity (44% of ethnic Albanians share the same opinion). Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski's politics enjoys the approval of 48 percent in comparison to 45 percent who are against. The politics on the name issue of opposition parties is supported by 32% against 54% of respondents.

As data from the daily "Dnevnik" show from a separately conducted

poll, majorpart (54% in sum mainly do not support or entirely do not support) of the polled Macedonian citizens do not support the project "Skopje 2014" that regulates the new look of the Skopje city center, including many new buildings, monuments etc. The same trend exists among the citizens of Skopje as well. Contrary to this, 46% mainly support or entirely support the project.

7.6. June IRI Poll

Latest IRI poll showed some decline in support for the ruling VMRO-DPMNE party. The support of VMRO-DPMNE was 29%, as opposed to SDSM 12%, DPA 4%, DUI 8%, New Democracy 1% and undecided are 21% of the polled citizens. At present 45% of the polled believe that the country is moving in the wrong direction (previously, this figure was 32%), while 23% believe that the country is moving in the right direction. About 38% stated that their quality of life has worsened while 54% believe that this government has no exit plan from the economic crisis. On the question whether this prime minister deserves another term, 42 were "for" (the lowest so far) and 48% were "against" (the highest so far). Citizens mark the Prime Minister's work negatively in 49% of the cases as opposed to 47% who have given a positive mark. About 66% of the polled are against the project "Skopje 2014" while only 26% support it.

8. FUTURE POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS

Although in the first half of 2010 were expected some more significant developments regarding the "name issue" with Greece, they did not happen, thus resulting in avoiding Macedonia to be mentioned in June for possible setting a date for start of negotiations with EU. At this point is clear that Macedonia is chronologically pushed back further in the euro-integration process, lacking more brave steps from the side of the Macedonian Government. Fear is that the same may happen in November this year regarding Macedonia's NATO membership, if the problem with Greece does not close in one form or another. However, there are some hints that things are moving in the positive direction, without revealing what kind of arrangement may be finally set by the two parties. Therefore, it is expected that in the following six months' period there will be some serious and long-influencing events that will heavily mark Macedonia's future.

Linked with the potential "name issue" events are the probable organization of referendum (as promised and repeated by the ruling party) and later organizing of early elections, which potentially may take place in March 2011. Even if the "name issue" remains unresolved, after November are expected tensions within the ruling coalitions, as well as opposition mobilization for a new pressure upon the government for early elections. In that case, it is expected that DUI will

leave the government, thus producing an actual fall and government re-composition, and most probably elections. There is a possibility that interethnic tensions may arouse regarding the unsolved Hague cases, the right to pension for the former NLA fighters, etc.

Unfavourable economic trends shall continue to produce dissatisfaction and strikes in order some social rights and demands to be addressed. These are definitely topics for which political parties shall discuss, but also trade-unions are expected to demonstrate improved activity and better involvement in the problem-solving process.