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Dr. Natasha Gaber-Damjanovska
Dr. Aneta Jovevska

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The first half of 2012 was characterized by several political developments which ultimately did not bring any change regarding the country's crucial international (in terms of foreign policy) status, especially when the "name issue" is in question. Namely, in spite of the impression that the Government was engaged in heavy international lobbying prior to the Chicago NATO summit (trying to capitalize on the International Court of Justice judgment), there were no developments regarding the "name issue", neither were taken some visible positive steps in terms of fulfillment of reform policies and priorities regarding the EU integration process. In the meantime, there were a couple of serious incidents that aimed in harming interethnic relations in the country. The economic situation remained stagnant, heading in line with the general region-wide trend. Currently, political actors are steadily preparing their strategies for next years' local elections.

1. DEVELOPMENTS ON THE "NAME ISSUE"

As there has not been serious advancement regarding the "name issue", in spite of formal meetings and talks between Macedonia and Greece, once more the unsolved problem remained an obstacle for further integration of the Republic of Macedonia in international organizations. The stagnant situation was reconfirmed at the last NATO Summit in Chicago held this spring. Continuously, atmosphere in both countries is not helping the process, since Greece is repeatedly undergoing parliamentary elections due to the economic problems it's facing, while Macedonia is taking the approach dictated by its domestic estimations of a possible political gain. Officially, both countries political rhetoric and positions have not been changed. Although formally, the government is still holding Euroatlantic integrations in its program, in spite of the Prime Ministers' statement that Macedonia is Europe's unwanted child. In the case of Greece, although economic hardships overwhelmingly occupy the politician's election program agenda, the "name issue" was also exploited during election campaigning.

Opposition leaders in Macedonia think that apparently the name issue is one of the hardest among the ones that Macedonia had from its independence onwards as it surely exceeds the capacities of one man, party or government. Remarks are that Greece has a wide consensus among its political players in formulating its state position, while in Macedonia all who suggest an alternative to the official silence in continuity towards the mediator Nimetz are degraded in the status of national traitors. It is believed that to answer the needs of secret diplomacy persons with heavy diplomatic caliber are needed, who understand Macedonia's long term strategic interests, seen through a historic perspective and that this kind of cadres are not owned by the current government.

Meanwhile, the Republic of Namibia became the 133rd country to establish diplomatic ties with Macedonia at an Ambassadorial level using the Macedonia's

constitutional name. The near future will show after the Chicago failure what course of action in terms of international political position will the Government choose.

1.1. Fresh Round of Talks in New York

United Nations mediator in the Macedonia-Greece name talks Matthew Nimetz held meetings with countries' representatives, Ambassadors Zoran Jolevski and Adamantios Vassilakis respectively, in New York on January 16-17. As the UN press service said, Ambassador Nimetz initially met with both representatives separately and sought to develop a mutually acceptable approach to re-invigorate the talks and to make meaningful progress toward resolving the 'name' issue.

In light of the new round of talks, held almost one year after the last meeting in New York, the Athens and Skopje authorities have not expressed optimism over their outcome. Greek Prime Minister Lucas Papademos, Foreign Minister Stavros Dimas, and New Democracy leader Andonis Samaras, remained on the hard-line name stance.

President Gjorge Ivanov voiced expectation that Athens would abandon its incorrect and extreme positions and start backing Macedonia's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. "We are playing a constructive role in this process and state top officials have given instructions and information to our representative. We remain being consistent in the process demonstrating our constructiveness and the other party is expected to do the same," he said.

In an interview with daily "Dnevnik", Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski said he was not an optimist that the name dispute can be resolved until the NATO Summit in Chicago due to the crisis in Greece, the interim Government, the mounting nationalism and the fact that Andonis Samaras is in the government. "With the same stance, the talks in New York will be spending time in vain, which is what they wish and plan. They have only one goal – to show alleged constructiveness before international community, especially before the US, Germany and other EU states. Then they will activate their diplomacy to knock on all possible doors to claim that they are trying, but you see - our neighbor has firm and unyielding position", PM Gruevski said.

Foreign Minister Nikola Poposki has said it is ungrateful to prejudice, but the initial messages coming from Athens say it is not interested in a productive dialogue with Macedonia. "Initial messages from the incumbent government in Athens herald non-priority, indifference towards a productive dialogue with Macedonia. More energy has been wasted in hindering, obstructing and avoiding constructive talks than in finding a solution. We wish for swift change of this approach," Poposki told MIA.

What could realistically be expected from the January meetings? One should take under consideration that Greece has a temporary government with an

obvious narrowed down mandate focusing on the economic problems, and that both sides are unmovable from their starting positions on the matter accusing each other for the status quo. Diplomatic sources estimate that Greece meets its counterpart only to demonstrate further readiness to negotiate, to serve as an answer to PM Gruevski's claiming that Athens is to be blamed for the stalemate. From its side, Greek media are commenting that it is Macedonia which practically slowed down the process in expectation of the Hague Court decision and that Gruevski's strategy is to present Samaras in a negative light before the international community, in a sense of being a bad collocutor and negotiator regarding the name issue.

Still, official position of NATO is clear: there is no invitation without a solution for the name issue. Although there have been voices for reconsidering such a decision, the sensitiveness of the political moment in which Greece is presently and the upcoming USA elections are maintaining the position taken so far.

If from the previous meetings there were at least rhetorical expectations for an outcome, on this meeting was expected Athens to "neutralize" the Hague judgment which opened space for the Macedonian government to seek revising the decision of the Bucharest Summit and accepting the country under the fyRoM name. Greece, as it has no capacity or will to negotiate right now shall drag the issue in order to pass the NATO Chicago summit, while Macedonia shall use negotiations to convince the international community that alternative solutions for the problem must be sought. It was not expected for Nimetz to come out with a new written suggestion, as it concerns on a first negotiating round after the new Greek government has been established. He previously said that he will not come out with new suggestions unless he has knowledge that they will not be declined by any of the sides.

Macedonian experts indicated requests for a new agreement which will indicate precisely what subject to negotiations is, since the Hague judgment clearly indicates that it concerns only the name of the country. Nimetz idea is to determine a legal framework for negotiating in order not to multiply the conditions towards Macedonia. The Greek side is unofficially considering the idea of abandoning the Interim Agreement, as a last adut if events develop in an unpleasant direction for Athens, but messages of the international community were clear that abandoning the negotiating framework behind which are standing for a decade will be a huge step backwards in the dispute.

The only concrete news after the New York meeting were that Matthew Nimetz shall visit Skopje and Athens. What happened, was not very clear, impression is that both sides were striving to demonstrate that the other side has not been constructive. Officially, Jolevski said to Nimetz that Macedonia remains dedicated to the process under the auspices of UN for finding a mutually acceptable solution by which shall be protected the integrity and identity of the Macedonian people and which shall be in complete compliance with international law. He also tackled the question of the Hague judgment, saying that it should contribute in

strengthening of bilateral relations of the two countries which indirectly is a message that Athens should accept it and not ignore it.

Unofficially however, main message of Phillip Reeker, high appointee of US was that Macedonia should seriously understand the warnings that without solution on the "name issue" there will be no NATO membership, while tactics with the Hague decision is a waste of time. Reeker accused PM Gruevski for non-interest and non-initiativeness as an answer to the last interview in which the PM claims that big countries show no interest in solving the problem. He also reminded that after Bucharest USA offered full support for the process, but Gruevski decided instead of using it, to go on elections.

"It is clear that at this moment Greece doesn't wish a concrete agreement with Macedonia, just stalling the (name) process to buy time, present itself as constructive and us as the hard ones"..., "Greece has been using all mechanisms for its policy to suffer no consequences, including its financial situation and possible default"... "Greece's buying time policy is also reflected in the country's attitude towards UN mediator Matthew Nimetz, as the country has been failing to set date for his visit to Athens for over a year" Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski stated after the meetings.

1.2. Meeting Arifi-Pangalos

The Greek Vice-prime minister Teodoros Pangalos and the Macedonian vice-prime minister for the European agenda Teuta Arifi after a couple of postponements finally met in January. Analysts estimated that this is a positive event which may open a new channel of communication between the two countries. At the meeting collocutors talked about a possible technical and expert help from Greece for Macedonia's eurointegration and use of IPA funds, as well as for improvement of the border cooperation between the two countries. Both vice-premiers pointed out that efforts should be directed to deepening the business cooperation and the relations of both countries. Arifi also handed over a letter send from PM Gruevski to PM Papademos.

Greek newspaper "Ethnos" commented that this meeting, and the announced one between the two Ministers of Defense may signify that DUI as a coalition partner to VMRO-DPMNE realizes that PM Gruevski's policy is leading the country in a pit and because of that they show bigger disposition to communicate with Greece. Generally, comments were that it is shown the necessity for meetings of this kind for both governments, and also is noted that a balance should be found in order not to go to extremes- either zero meetings or too frequent ones, without a substantive outcome.

1.3. Papademos Accepts Gruevski's Proposal for a Meeting

After almost three months, Greek Prime Minister Lucas Papademos has responded to the proposal of his Macedonian counterpart Nikola Gruevski for a

tete-a-tete meeting. He gave his approval for the meeting to take place on sidelines of the following European Council's session, scheduled for early March. According to Greek news agency ANA-MPA, Papademos in his letter notified that Greece attaches great importance to the bilateral relations, as demonstrated by the cooperation in numerous sectors, above all the economic one. Papademos considered that the name dispute should be resolved within the UN-mediated negotiations.

He also saw the forthcoming visit of UN mediator Matthew Nimetz to Skopje and Athens should push for the negotiating process towards reaching a solution, as political will from both parties is needed. Greece, Papademos says, is committed to a long-term policy of peace and stability in the region and an integration of all Western Balkan countries with the Euro-Atlantic organizations, as well as to promoting good-neighborly relations.

Macedonian Government welcomed the consent of Greek Prime Minister Lucas Papademos for a tete-a-tete meeting with Macedonian counterpart Nikola Gruevski. However, those familiar with the name dispute say that Athens arranges the meeting ahead of the forthcoming elections, in a period when the entire international community is aware that any progress is impossible in the present circumstances and with the incumbent technical government, in order to make an impression of its alleged constructiveness.

It may be said that talks between the two Prime Ministers at sidelines of the EU summit in Brussels appeared to be rather formal. As MIA's correspondent reports that talks aimed to bolster the dialogue and good-neighborly relations, addressed the bilateral relations and various aspects of the cooperation between the two countries. In regard to the name issue, the Prime Ministers "expressed commitment to resuming the UN-mediated negotiations for finding a mutually acceptable solution".

Ten days before a possible Gruevski- Papademos meeting UN mediator in Macedonian-Greek name negotiations Matthew Nimetz was expected to visit Skopje and Athens.

1.4. Nimetz Visits Skopje and Athens

UN mediator in Macedonian-Greek name negotiations Matthew Nimetz, as stated, came out of the Skopje meetings with the impression that the representatives of the Macedonian state leadership had voiced their honest desire to find a solution to the name dispute and to have constructive talks with the southern neighbor. Still, he did not comment on the verdict by the International Court of Justice and did not answer the question as to whether he would pass the message to Athens that its insistence on the "erga omnes" solution was not in line with the verdict.

"The Hague court's verdict stands on its own and I will not comment on it. Also, I will not answer the question as to what I am going to say in Athens.

However, both sides should carefully consider the ruling,".. "I haven't come to Skopje with new proposals, but an intention for finding a way to accelerate the negotiations for swift settling of this issue, as it is in the interest of the region and global security" Nimetz said at the news conference held following his meetings in Skopje.

Nimetz has reiterated the view that the country's name, rather than the identity, is the subject of the negotiating process, referring to a UN resolution and to Article 5 of the Interim Agreement, which in his view, is still in force and represents a comprehensive agreement between two entities. "Here is how I view the issue. Under the UN resolution, the name of the country used in the United Nations and in other contexts is in question. There does not exist a UN resolution on people's identity. People in this country have their own identity and they define it themselves. This is not about the people's identity, but rather, about the country's name," Nimetz said. In his view, he voices the international community's and the UN's positions regarding the name issue, which concerns regional and global security and is an issue of great interest for the region and the world, before the two sides.

From Skopje, Nimetz traveled to Athens, where he met Foreign Minister Stavros Dimas and Prime Minister Lukas Papademos. After meeting the FM, as quoted by Greek TV network ERT, Nimetz said he was ensured in the Greek Government's sincere wish for the name row settlement. Nimetz said Dimas encouraged him to resume his efforts for finding a mutually acceptable solution within the UN-mediated process. Asked if the economic crisis and forthcoming elections in Greece will influence the process, Nimetz expressed understanding for Athens' hardships, saying that incumbent Greek Government 'is functional and may face (internal) problems, while dealing with resolving the name issue.'

In the meantime, George Karatzaferis, leader of the far-right LAOS party, which is part of the government, sent a letter to Dimas, seeking for citizens of Greece to present their opinion on a possible name solution at a referendum. He also calls for the parliamentary Foreign Policy Committee to convene a session on the latest developments related to the name talks.

1.5. O'Neil: Dispute is Bizarre

"Greece does not suffer any losses both on internal or foreign plan in the past 20 years from the side of Macedonia due to use of its real name, and best solution is Athens to accept the name the Republic of Macedonia in accordance with the international law"... "Governments of Macedonia and Greece with assistance of envoy Matthew Nimetz can find new name for Macedonia acceptable for any of the parties, however my opinion is that the entire dispute created by the Greece's government is bizarre", Robin O'Neil first mediator in Greek-Macedonian name dispute said in the interview for "Porta" programme on MTV in March.

He pointed out that the ruling of the International Court of Justice is the most significant development in the name dispute since 1995 when Interim Accord

was signed. Interim Accord created conditions for progress of ties between Macedonia and Greece during the period when solution to the name issue was sought. In it, the name Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) was declared only as provisional name of the state and Greece accepted until name solution is found, will not oppose Macedonia to join international organisations if it uses the provisional name. Refusal by the Greek authorities later on to obey the conditions of the accord which was signed by their side, made the progress for resolving the name dispute in the past 17 years impossible. International Court now clearly states that Greece must obey of what it obliged and not to oppose Macedonia to join for example the NATO and the EU, as long as it does it under the name of FYROM. Because it is only provisional, Macedonia will not loose anything by use of provisional name if it applies to join in these organisations-he said.

O'Neil suggested the Macedonian Government to immediately apply for membership in NATO and EU under FYROM and to remind all other members that Greece has obliged not to object during these activities if Macedonia uses provisional name. He said that he never believed that concept of compromise can be applied to Greek – Macedonian dispute. According to international law every state has the right to use name by its own choice and not a single country has the right to dictate which name should other country use. He assessed that the interest of the EU members is peaceful and harmonious relations in the Balkans and this means accession of all states that meet membership criteria and shared position of PM Nikola Gruevski that Macedonia's entry talks should begin by end of 2012 and he hopes it will happen then.

1.6. Nimetz Believes in a Possibility for Finding a Name Solution That Meets National Interests of Both Macedonia and Greece

"We should be very persistent this year to create favorable conditions for Skopje and Athens to reach an agreement. It means a real dialogue, as well as public statements and activities that will open a road to possible agreement", the UN mediator in Macedonian-Greek name talks, Matthew Nimetz, says in an interview with the MTV program 'Porta' in March.

Nimetz considers that the governments in Skopje and Athens should set the name issue settlement as their priority. "I am very encouraged that the dialogue between the Prime Ministers has resumed and consider that as a positive sign," Nimetz says. He is not discouraged that the name mediation process has failed to bring result for the last 17 years. "All those years of negotiations have not been in vain, although I am sorry that we have failed to make substantial progress and find a solution to the matter. I know that some people are discouraged, but it is not the case with me in this stage of the (negotiating) process. What we have learned thus far is that if people are neighbors and should find a solution to a rather delicate matter, they can only do that by reaching a compromise. If you wish to be good neighbor, you should understand the way of thinking of the other

side, which requires for the parties involved to make certain adjustments," Nimetz says. He considers the ruling of The Hague-based International Court of Justice as very significant and one that should be taken seriously by everybody.

The UN mediator points out that thus far he presented numerous proposals to both parties, but 'unfortunately none of them was acceptable for the two countries.' "However, there is always a possibility for a new, more successful idea to come up, or some old proposal to be reformulated on the satisfaction of both countries. Although I am aware that one day a solution to this matter will be found, there will always be some people in both countries who will consider it to be incorrect. Maybe we will never have a solution that will be completely accepted by both parties, but I believe in a possibility for finding a final solution that will meet the national interests of the two countries," Nimetz says.

Commenting the inclusion of identity affairs in the process, Nimetz says that under the UN resolutions and the Article 5 of the Interim Accord, a mutual agreement should be reached on the country's name. "The UN resolutions say nothing about the identity of people. I believe that people are the ones that define their identity. It is obvious that during that process they must respect the identity of others, especially of their neighbors, hence this also turns out to be a very important issue. But we have to know what enjoys a status of priority. At the moment it refers to resolving the country's official name that is going to be accepted by everybody and will mark out the route for settling regional matters and the membership in various organizations. If we settle this (the name) matter, I am certain that everything else will come in its place," Nimetz says.

1.7. Name Issue Settlement to Contribute to Region's Security and Development, Papoulias tells Ivanov

Greece remains fully committed to finding a fair and sustainable solution to the name issue through UN-led talks. The final settlement of this issue will enable us to utilize the enormous potential of our bilateral relations and significantly contribute to the consolidation of security, stability, good neighborly relations and development of our region, especially through the European perspective of Western Balkans, says Greek President Karolos Papoulias in a letter to Macedonian counterpart Gjorge Ivanov in April.

1.8. Gruevski: Name Solution Through Compromise, not Dictate

"We want a solution to the name issue, but one reached through compromise, not dictate that would result in changing of the identity or something built, respected and nurtured for centuries. We want a solution that would be acceptable for the majority of Macedonia's citizens at a referendum", said Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski in April at Q&A Parliament session. According to him, with the exception of the meeting with the Greek PM on March 1, the Government cannot establish normal communication with Greece for almost a

year as a result of certain problems they are faced with, which most probably serve as alibi. "How can one talk and reach a solution with someone you have no communication with? A state position is built when there are talks, a specific solution offered by one, which could be debated in the Parliament", said Gruevski.

He added there is an electoral campaign in Greece, whereas interlocutors over the issue cannot be found until its completion. He emphasized the Government is doing everything in its power to reach a solution that would unblock the country and enable its NATO and EU entry. "We want a solution that would bring our relations with the southern neighbor back to normal, but at the same time we are cautious with regards to the name solution, which would not harm our national and state interests", underlined PM Nikola Gruevski.

1.9.FM Poposki meets UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

Foreign Minister Nikola Poposki met in mid-April in New York with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. Poposki requested from Ban Ki-moon to urge for respect of judgment of the International Court of Justice which is the instrument of the UN and which confirmed that blocking of Macedonia's membership in NATO is illegal.

"We have pointed out the importance of the judgment of the International Court of Justice as UN institution. We have jointly urged for affirmation of credibility of the UN institutions and in this view of the judgment of the International Court of Justice. It is of great importance to work on increase of predictability in the international relations for the UN system. In this respect the blockade, which was imposed to us in direction to NATO membership, certainly increases the unpredictability in these relations. All gestures and all activities that will increase the predictability and will strengthen the confidence between the two countries are welcomed and should be greeted", FM Poposki stated for MIA after the meeting with UN Secretary General.

Additional affirmation of legal aspects and international legal aspect, Poposki added, is more important in current conditions which according to the assessments Greece is not in position to pay greater attention and energy in surpassing the bilateral dispute which is imposed to us in regard to the name. These obligations also include commitment Greece not to block efforts for Macedonia's membership in international organizations, he said.

1.10.U.S. Congressmen Submit Resolution Critical of Macedonia

Two U.S. congressmen, members of the Caucus on Hellenic Issues, in April have submitted a resolution where the Republic of Macedonia is accused of acting with hostility towards Athens, thus violating the 1995 Interim Accord. The draft-resolution is submitted by Republican representative Gus Bilirakis and

Democratic representative Carolyn Maloney, co-chairs of the Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues.

"The government in Skopje, through both its policies, activities, and rhetoric over the last few years, has been violating the spirit and the letter of the Interim Agreement of 1995 between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, thus undermining the friendly relations between the two countries", reads the resolution. Bilirakis and Maloney accuse Macedonian authorities of urging their citizens to boycott Greek investments in the country and not to travel to Greece. Moreover, they say Greece has invested over \$1 billion in Macedonia, thereby creating more than 20,000 new jobs and having contributed \$110 million in development aid.

Contrary to this, at the beginning of April, 54 members of the U.S. House of Representatives sent a bipartisan letter to President Barack Obama, strongly urging his administration to make sure that NATO finally offers the Republic of Macedonia its well-deserved formal invitation to join the Alliance during the Chicago Summit on May 20-21. Other U.S. officials, including Senator John McCain and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, have also sent similar calls.

The U.S. Obama Administration is "working very hard behind the scenes" to resolve the standoff between Macedonia and Greece, including the President himself involved in "discussions with key counterparts," Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, Special Assistant to the U.S. President spoke to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington. "We have worked very hard behind the scenes to achieve a resolution to the standoff over the Macedonian name issue. One of the things that the president has mused about is the many things you need to know about as President - and one of those is the Macedonian name issue. He, himself, has been involved in discussions with key counterparts on this issue, and unfortunately it has not been resolved in time for the NATO Summit in Chicago, but we continue to hope that this will be resolved, so that Macedonia can take its place as a NATO member", Sherwood-Randall answered the question asked by the representative of the United Macedonian Diaspora (UMD).

1.11.The "Name Issue" – a Topic for Political Disputes Among Domestic Political Actors

SDSM Leader Branko Crvenkovski at the Channel 5 program "X/0" presented a document dated from 2005 when he was on power, according to which PM Nikola Gruevski in the role of president of the then opposition VMRO-DPMNE rejected a proposal by the mediator Matthew Nimetz, which contained the constitutional name for international use and the adjective "Macedonian" language naming. Crvenkovski explained that Nimitz suggested in the first three years the country in international organizations to be designated as Republika

Makedonija (meaning use of the constitutional name with Latin transcript but without English transcription), and after that period to be replaced with the original name "Republic of Macedonia". What's more, the document that bears the seal "state secret" suggests the language of the Macedonians to be "Macedonian".

"So Gruevski is either lying or have been forgetful. Here's the proposal – what in 2005 was offered? Three years Republic of Macedonia to be called Republika Makedonija without English transcription. After three years to call the country "Republic of Macedonia", from that moment until eternity. So the constitutional name to be used in the naming of state at the United Nations and elsewhere. Only three years to be Republika Makedonija, not something else, Republika Makedonija without transcription in English, then the constitutional name to the end. In language - clean solution: Macedonian language. Here is your text, give it to colleagues from other desks. Writes state secret here because Gruevski first begins to speak as the content if he violates state secret, I am in violation too", ... "The same Prime Minister who is lying about the proposal from 2005, in 2008 along with me accepted together before Bucharest the name Republic of Macedonia (Skopje). In was accepted, they are trying to hide. And if this is acceptable the constitutional name for international use was allegedly a bad proposal?" said Crvenkovski.

Crvenkovski also said that in 2008 Nikola Gruevski accepted the name suggestion "Republic of Macedonia (Skopje)" but this was refused by Greece. Otherwise, in 2005 in the Assembly of Macedonia VMRO-DPMNE as an opposition party had only eight members, but as President Crvenkovski and Buckovski as prime minister held a meeting with the Minister informed that the proposal by Nimetz. Such a search for consensus climate is now almost impossible to be achieved.

At that time, Gruevski has expressed disappointment, for in his view, the rush to accept the proposal, which came two months prior to receiving candidate status for EU accession. "My opinion is that you should leave a period in which we will carefully analyze all things. This document has the novelty of what we know so far. Contains new concessions by Macedonia. Walking with a response that this document is a good basis for further talks would mean that we change our position from the so-called double formula of triple formula, because the document has three variants, or three names" said Gruevski in 2005 after meeting with Crvenkovski Buckovski for days, using the same suggestion to Crvenkovski accused of hypocrisy when talking about identity.

It is believed that Crvenkovski made that public statement and handed over the document to journalists, as an answer to PM Nikola Gruevski who accused him that he introduced the identity issues in the talks with Greece by accepting the proposal: "The same Crvenkovski in 2005, when he was given a proposal of Matthew Nimetz was questionable identity, he accepted. I then counter it, publicly stated, it has pictures what he proposed in 2005 only VMRO-DPMNE responded that it is problematic in terms of identity, in terms of the Macedonian language,

but SDSM proclaimed best offer and We had a fierce attack why we do not accept the best proposal that was given up to then"-Gruevski said emphasizing that the suggestion was rather problematic in terms of identity. As a counter-argument, the SDSM leader said the proposal guaranteed identity issues.

At the conclusion of the host that it was a secret document, Crvenkovski added that when Prime started disclosing state secrets, he will follow his example. Crvenkovski, probably judged that only with such a risky and dramatic display, as he claims, original documents may cause certain closing the play with untiring claims of authority attempted treason for entering the identity issues of the SDSM in dispute.

After Crvenkovski's statement, VMRO-DPMNE through its media accused Crvenkovski that he accepted a name with changed national identity, but publicly is visible that Crvenkovski gave the last stroke.

MIA obtained the original document from the proposal by Matthew Nimetz of 7 October 2005. The document, marked confidential, contains the letter of UN mediator Matthew Nimetz to countries' negotiators Nikola Dimitrov and Adamantios Vassilakis, a proposal for a solution of the name, and annex to the proposal, which focuses on identity issues. The proposal states that identity issues would be contained in the annex, where the nationality box reads the term 'Citizens of the Republic of Macedonia'. In the box regarding the language, stands the term "macedc".

Ahead of 2008 Bucharest NATO Summit an approval wasn't given for the proposal 'the Republic of Macedonia - Skopje', but for it to be put on referendum, if it also enjoyed Greece's consent, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski said at a parliamentary Q&A session. "As Greece rejected the proposal, it was not put on a referendum" Gruevski replied to Crvenkovski. "We have only gave approval for the proposal to be brought before citizens, so that they could present their opinion and hence the state to take its stance on the matter," Gruevski said. The current opposition SDSM has made serious, strategic failures in regard to this issue, both as a political party and during its governmental mandates, the PM said. For 20 years we have been suffering the consequences of those mistakes, he added. The party has accepted the name Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, telling to citizens that it would be used only for two months, which was not the case, Gruevski said.

1.12. Ivanov: We Will Never Accept Solution That Harms Identity

"There won't be a change in the country's strategic priorities and we will never accept an ultimatum, blackmail or any type of solution that harms our identity and language, says President Gjorge Ivanov in a May interview for the edition of daily "Dnevnik". "Strategic priorities will not change. There are two ways to achieve our goals. First, Greece must respect international commitments it had undertook, and secondly, it must be constructive in the name talks and abide by the stipulated framework and the subject of negotiations. No new conditions and

requirements should be imposed, along with restraint from going into identity issues, so that we can reach a mutually acceptable solution", stresses Ivanov. The President said the identity and the language represent a reality that can only be respected and acknowledged, whether someone likes it or not.

2. NATO INTEGRATION PROCESS

2.1.Gruevski Strategy: Comprehensive Lobbying Prior to NATO Chicago Summit

"We are doing our best to alter the situation related to the name dispute for Macedonia to succeed in its efforts to join NATO and commence the EU-accession talks", Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski said in January. "Regardless of our constant dissatisfaction with Greece's attitude, which is not ungrounded, as the (country's) authorities keep avoiding meetings and do not wish for a solution to the problem, we are fully active and work as much as possible on all aspects to contribute to changing the situation for the Republic of Macedonia to succeed in the efforts to join NATO and commence the EU accession talks. However this is not a simple matter, as Greece is part of both EU and NATO, thus enjoying all membership rights, including the one for imposing veto," Gruevski told reporters. He called for intense lobbying prior to the NATO summit in Chicago this year: "Everyone should be involved in the lobbying process and creating positive climate, including the military diplomacy". The PM announced that he would visit Brussels in few days for meetings with NATO Ambassadors and Secretary General.

2.2.North Atlantic Council Meeting in January

At the January meeting of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) in Brussels Greece once again reiterated its hardline position considering Macedonia and the name issue. Tryphon Paraskevopoulos - the Greek ambassador to NATO - after Macedonian premier Nikola Gruevski delivered an address said that Greece was still endorsing an "erga omnes" position - a name for overall use.

Turkey's ambassador to NATO, Haydar Berk called for NATO to rethink its positions regarding Macedonia at the upcoming summit in Chicago. All of the ambassadors praised Macedonia's engagement in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan and welcomed the reform process in the country, underlying that Macedonia had been playing a significant role in securing regional stability. The ambassadors also concluded that the judgment of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) should be seen as a motivation in order progress to be made in the process of finding a solution to the name dispute.

In his speech before the North Atlantic Council, PM Nikola Gruevski urged all NATO countries to reconsider the issue of Macedonia's membership to NATO as

soon as possible prior to the summit in Chicago. Commenting about the non-obtainment of NATO membership for the country for the media, he stated: "Greece cannot be excepted, it will have to respect the judgment of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), as its failure to do so would mean a devaluation of NATO, as Macedonia was welcomed at the event as an ally, partner country, one that for many years has been contributing to NATO"...."At the NAC session I used the opportunity to point out some unprincipled actions, which we consider to be unjust, and to reaffirm the new moment related to the ruling of ICJ, which clearly confirms a breach of the international law".

Some of the session's attendants, as Gruevski said, considered it was a legal matter, but it is a political one: "...namely, if an international court comes forward with a certain decision whether it will be respected or not cannot be a subject of a political will, it must be enforced. Because all states, not only non-member NATO countries, must abide to the international law without exception. I said that at the session, as there is a feeling and I don't wish to believe that some country should win a right to join NATO and afterwards fail to respect the international law, do whatever it wishes and bear no consequences, while as non-member it must abide to the international law as all other do," Gruevski said. Such attitude cannot be a NATO principle, as one of the main pillars of the Alliance is to promote security, democracy and rule of law, the PM said.

2.3. FM Poposki U.S. Meetings

In February, at a meeting with Foreign Minister Nikola Poposki in Washington William Burns, the US Deputy Secretary of State confirmed the United States support for Macedonia's membership to NATO together with the firm commitment to continuing the NATO enlargement process. From his side, FM Poposki presented the efforts continuously made by the Macedonian government in accomplishing a full-fledged membership into the European Union and NATO. He pointed out Macedonia's successful engagement in international peacekeeping missions and consequently expressed content with the ongoing cooperation with the United States on the matter and voiced expectation that the US support in relation to Macedonia's integration to NATO would resume in the future.

On the same occasion, FM Poposki together with the Defense Minister Fatmir Besimi and Parliament's vice president Jani Makraduli participated at a strategic session of the members of the US Atlantic Council Board. At the meeting, FM Poposki presented the government's activities involving foreign policy with respect to Euro-Atlantic integration. DM Besimi presented defense reforms aimed at meeting NATO standards and briefed on Macedonia's participation into international peace missions. He noted that these issues enjoyed an overwhelming support by all political parties and the citizens of Macedonia. Parliament's vice president Makraduli accentuated the backing of the legislative body and opposition parties for Euro-Atlantic integration. He said that NATO accession would enable the security zone in Southeast Europe to be extended and the country to experience an economic development.

“Regardless of the outcome of forthcoming NATO summit in Chicago, Macedonia should keep working on realization of its goal - the Euro-Atlantic integration”, Defense Minister Fatmir Besimi says in an interview with the Voice of America - Macedonian language programme. No matter what will happen at the Summit, Macedonia is to remain committed to reforms and meeting of NATO standards - the country's strategic priority in terms of security and stability, Besimi said. Asked if Macedonia will agree to join NATO under the reference FYROM, Besimi said the term is already being used within the UN.

2.4.Besimi-Imami: Bilateral Cooperation Excellent

Cooperation is excellent in the defense field, as is collaboration on regional issues and ones related to Euro-Atlantic integration, agreed in January Macedonian and Albanian Defense Ministers, Fatmir Besimi and Arben Imami respectively. Minister Imami, who paid an official visit to Macedonia, confirmed Albania's support to Macedonia's NATO accession. "The sooner Macedonia and other regional countries join NATO and EU, the better for the peace, security, stability and development of the area. Macedonia's integration in NATO is also in the best interest of Albania", said Imami. However, he expressed hope that the "technical and political problem" between Macedonia and Greece would be solved as soon as possible, resulting in the country's full-fledged NATO and EU membership.

Imami and Besimi agreed there is room for cooperation in other issues, especially in the promotion of projects within NATO's "smart defense" concept over the rational use of defense resources. In this regard, Minister Besimi referred to the joint use of army field Krivolak and the Regional Communications Center. Furthermore, Minister Imami announced the possibility of establishing a joint group within the Adriatic Charter (A5) or other initiatives, which would focus on emergency interventions in cases of natural disasters or terror threats.

2.5.Merkel: Macedonia Should Join NATO, Germany Prepared to Assist

“Germany is a strong supporter of Macedonia at political and economic level and is once again offering its assistance in all spheres. Both countries foster cordial overall relations, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and PM Nikola Gruevski concluded in February at their hour-long meeting in Berlin.

Merkel speaking at a joint press conference said that Germany was advocating for Macedonia's integration to NATO, underlying that progress needed to be made in the name talks with Greece. Commenting Greece's violation of the Interim Accord, Merkel stated that negotiations aimed at finding solution to the name issue should resume. She urged that justice and international law should be seen as priorities, leaving behind obstruction.

The German Chancellor - who called the country by Macedonia's constitutional name throughout the news conference - said she expected Western Balkan

countries to meet required conditions, following the example of Croatia and Slovenia, before joining Euro-Atlantic institutions. Referring to Macedonia's NATO and EU membership, Gruevski informed Merkel on ongoing reforms in Macedonia focused on meeting necessary standards. Macedonia is a de facto member of NATO, according to him.

2.6.Rasmussen: Name Solution, then NATO Membership

"Macedonia should not expect a membership invitation without a mutually acceptable name solution", said NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at a press conference in February. Asked by Voice of America to elaborate the reasons why it is important that Macedonia first solves the name issue with Greece, instead of joining the Alliance under reference fyRoM and afterwards solve the row with the southern neighbor, taking into account that certain NATO members have had differences in bilateral relations, namely Turkey and Greece, Rasmussen said all NATO decisions are adopted by consensus, and this includes Greece.

"We need Greece's support in order to send an invitation to Skopje. That's it. I understand that Greece is not willing to send such an invitation until a mutually acceptable name solution is found. We reached this decision in Bucharest in 2008 and it is still in force", said the NATO chief. According to him, the consensus rule cannot be easily altered, therefore Macedonia's accession falls under that principle. In light of the NATO summit in Chicago, the Alliance chief urged both Macedonia and Greece to demonstrate flexibility and pragmatism.

2.7.Washington Should put Macedonia Accession on Chicago Summit Agenda: Analysts

The Obama administration should ask for Macedonia's accession and NATO enlargement to be included in the agenda of May's Alliance summit in Chicago. The United States should also put pressure on Greece over settlement of the name row, say Heritage Foundation analysts Morgan Roach and Luke Coffey in March. "Absent from the summit's agenda is the issue of enlargement - a pillar of the alliance. Since taking office, President Obama has done little to support the membership of qualified candidates. This year's NATO summit provides an opportunity to correct this. NATO's 'open door policy' is critical to mobilizing Europe and its allies around a collective transatlantic defense. According to Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty, any European state that fulfills the requirements of the treaty and demonstrates the competency to contribute to the alliance's security is eligible for membership. The U.S. should take steps to make sure that the open door policy is not stifled", say Roach and Coffey.

The same month, Congress took a decisive stance on NATO enlargement with the introduction of the "NATO Enhancement Act of 2012," sponsored by Senator

Richard Lugar. The bill emphasizes America's leadership in expanding the alliance and calls on the State Department to provide a report assessing American commitment to enlargement.

The Heritage Foundation analysts say that despite fulfilling all necessary requirements for membership, Macedonia's accession was unilaterally vetoed by Greece, which broke with the NATO convention that bilateral disputes do not preclude an aspiring country's membership in the alliance. As found by the International Court of Justice last December, Greece's veto was in blatant violation of the 1995 United Nations-brokered Interim Accord, in which Athens agreed not to impair Macedonia's integration into Europe. Despite this, Macedonia's status on membership remains unchanged.

"The United States needs to do more involving Macedonia's issue, its membership to NATO and in resolving open issues on the Balkans", US congressman Michael Turner¹ says in an interview with the Voice of America - Macedonian language programme. Turner - also a chairman of the US delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly - says he joined the congressional group of Macedonia's supporters because in his opinion it was important to emphasize Macedonia's support for NATO.

In connection to the US administration position which is the same one as NATO's that Macedonia will become a member as soon as the name dispute with Greece is solved, Turner thinks that the US must do more efforts. "If you look at the issue with Macedonia and also other areas on the Balkans, most probably the country should take up more substantial role and try to settle these issues. I think that the US is applying an approach 'let's wait and see what's going to happen' by which the parties would find a solution themselves. We must act as a stronger advocate for solutions and for accelerating countries' accession to NATO," the US congressman notes.

Macedonia is ready for NATO membership and the Alliance must remain open for new members, assessed former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at Washington debate "Leadership: America's Critical Foreign Policy Role", organized by the Heritage Foundation in April. "I worked very hard to resolve the Macedonian name issue. I know people are still trying to resolve the Macedonian name issue, and perhaps it will be. But I favor very much the integration of any European state that is ready, and it seems to me that Macedonia is ready", said Rice in response to a question by United Macedonian Diaspora (UMD) President Metodija Koloski regarding Macedonia's NATO perspectives.

She recalled that at the time of the Bucharest Summit, the NATO communiqué actually said that Macedonia, as well as the Ukraine and Georgia, will become members of NATO, which was an affirmative statement of the rightness of their coming in. She expressed hope that NATO keeps remembering not just what it

¹ Congressman Turner is a member of the Republican Party from Ohio and has recently joined an informal congressional group of friends of Macedonia.

has meant to have these states in NATO, but what it has meant to these states to be in NATO.

2.8.VMRO-DPMNE and DUI Present Joint NATO Declaration

Ruling parties VMRO-DPMNE and DUI submitted in April a draft-declaration to the Parliament and to all MPs' groups reaffirming the realization of Macedonia's strategic goal for NATO membership, the coordinator of VMRO-DPMNE's MP group, Silvana Boneva announced. The draft-declaration, amongst other things, says that country's integration to NATO should be the main political determination, intention, objective and merit of all political parties, social stakeholders and citizens who affect the dynamics and quality of the process with their actions and share an obligation to contribute. It urges NATO's 'open doors' principle to be respected. The text underlines that the country has met all of the criteria and conditions for NATO membership. Macedonia remains committed to continuous reforms and support of peacekeeping missions aimed at securing global peace and democracy.

The draft-declaration called on the legitimacy and legality of the United Nations and bodies formed by the world organization to be respected. It also advocated international law and its norms to be respected and asks for the judgment of the International Court of Justice to be taken into consideration as well as its recommendations offering an objective account of the situations that affect the Euro-Atlantic integration of Macedonia and enabling a breakthrough to be made in the process and in establishing cooperation with neighboring countries.

The document emphasized that fostering of neighborly ties is of vital importance in enabling development of the region. "Our goal is to constantly improve our mutual collaboration with the neighbors in the interest of country's citizens," reads the draft-text. It highlights the importance NATO to focus its enlargement on the region. Support is also sought from member countries at the upcoming NATO summit in order a membership invitation to be extended to Macedonia and accession talks to be launched with the EU.

The suggested Declaration was adopted by the Assembly.

2.9.Gruevski Asks NATO Leaders for Inclusion of Macedonia Membership Application on Chicago Summit Agenda

Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski in May sent a letter to leaders of NATO member-states, asking for inclusion of the Macedonia's accession application on the agenda of the upcoming Chicago summit. "Regretfully, the agenda does not foresee a debate over the issue of Alliance enlargement. The NATO enlargement process needs to resume, since it will undoubtedly contribute to the strengthening of stability, prosperity and democracy in Southeast Europe. Over

the years, Republic of Macedonia has met all required criteria for NATO membership. We are a proven equal partner of the Alliance, actively contributing to the realization of NATO-led international peacekeeping missions, especially the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, where we are ranked as one of the largest contributors per capita. Thus, Macedonia has demonstrated its capability to undertake the obligations arising from Alliance membership, by participating in the enhancement of collective security and building of free and democratic societies", says PM Gruevski in the letter.

He stressed that Macedonia has completed 13 NATO Membership Action Plan cycles, with the country meeting all membership criteria. Moreover, Gruevski says the political will in the country has also been confirmed through the recent Declaration for reaffirmation of the country's strategic goal for NATO membership, recently adopted by the Parliament.

PM Gruevski also refers to Greece's opposition to Macedonia's membership. "As you are aware, we did not obtain the membership invitation in Bucharest due to the opposition by our neighbor Greece, which blocked our accession because of a bilateral dispute, which can in no way represent a legal condition for Alliance membership. We received confirmation of the illegal obstruction of our membership, as well as a special satisfaction for the injustice imposed to us at the Bucharest summit, through the ruling by the Hague-based International Court of Justice in 2011, which clearly said that Greece violated Article 11, Paragraph 1 of the Interim Accord by preventing Macedonia's NATO membership. Namely, the Alliance's position over Macedonia's accession after overcoming of the row with Greece was adopted as a result of prior illegal action by Greece. The Court also stressed that Macedonia acted in good will for overcoming of the dispute with Greece during the entire period, adding that the row should not be seen in correlation with the accession of my country in international organizations, such as NATO. The Court ruling also noted that Greece should not continue to prevent Macedonia's membership in the international organization under the UN reference", says Gruevski. He adds that the judgment by the ICJ, an institution established by the United Nations with a task to maintain international law, should be reviewed at the Chicago summit, as well as give Greek representatives an opportunity to refer to it.

"We would like to stress it is rational, right and fair to correct the Bucharest statement referring to our membership by using the legal power of the Hague ruling and the light it sheds on the issue. I would like to emphasize that Your support to this legitimate aspiration of my country and the overwhelming majority of citizens will be of enormous significance to us, but also in the common interest of the Alliance. Guided by principles, I hope that the ICJ ruling will not serve only as a moral satisfaction for the Republic of Macedonia, i.e. it will not be ignored by NATO member-states. I am aware that maintaining these principles is not always easy and can cause unpleasantness among allies and partners. However, principles help us in facing challenges and holding ground in these turbulent times. The insistence of solidarity deprived of principles puts force as the only

factor of action. Therefore, more understanding is required for the situation that the Republic of Macedonia copes with, where one member-state conditions the membership invitation despite the fulfillment of all required standards. It is necessary to reevaluate the existing positions regarding Macedonia's NATO membership, but at the same to give Greece the opportunity to present its stance over the respect of the ICJ judgment", emphasizes Gruevski.

2.10.NATO Won't Reach Decision on Admission of New Members at Chicago Summit, says Philip Gordon

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Philip Gordon speaking before the Senate confirmed that NATO at its upcoming summit in Chicago wouldn't reach a decision to admit new members. At a panel discussion of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations dedicated to NATO and the Chicago summit, Gordon added that the reason for halting the enlargement process was the lack of preparedness by some candidate countries or the lack of consensus on the issue by several NATO member countries. The U.S. Assistant State Secretary stressed that according to Washington, Macedonia had met the criteria and was prepared to join NATO. "It only remains the name issue with Greece to be settled," he said.

"We will send a clear message at the Chicago summit that NATO remains open for all European democratic states ready and capable of taking over the obligations required by NATO membership. In view of Macedonia, the country has met the key membership criteria. The United States remains engaged and supports the negotiations aimed at solving the name row, led by UN envoy Matthew Nimetz. Once an agreement is reached by Greece and Macedonia, it will be enabled a NATO membership invitation to be extended to Macedonia," Gordon stated.

State Secretary (Hillary) Clinton, he added, will take part at a meeting of NATO foreign ministers, which is also expected to be attended by the foreign ministers of the four candidate countries. Her goal will be to tell them that NATO's door is still open and that the countries (Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Georgia) will be admitted to NATO.

Allies will not take decisions on further enlargement of NATO in Chicago, but they will nonetheless send a clear, positive message to aspirant countries in support of their membership goals, the US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Tina Kaidanow, said at hearing of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Europe and Eurasia."Macedonia has fulfilled key criteria required of NATO members and has contributed to regional and global security. The United States fully supports the UN process, led by Ambassador (Matthew) Nimitz, and regularly engages with both Greece and Macedonia in order to find a mutually acceptable solution to the name dispute in order to fulfill the decision taken at the NATO Summit in Bucharest and extend a membership

offer to Macedonia," Kaidanow said. The US has been clear that NATO's door remains open to new members that meet the Alliance's standards, Kaidanow said. "Bosnia/Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Georgia are all working closely with Allies to meet NATO criteria so they may enter the Alliance," she added.

2.11. Greek President, Party Leaders Agree Veto for Macedonia at NATO Summit in Chicago

Greece's party leaders and President Karolos Papoulias, at one of their meetings on setting up new government, agreed that Athens must impose veto on Macedonia's accession to NATO at Chicago Summit. According to transcripts of the meeting, published by Papoulias' Cabinet, Greek party leaders pointed out that Macedonia's accession to NATO was not on the Summit's agenda. However, if there were attempts for raising the issue Greek representatives at the summit should impose a veto. The discussion on Macedonia at the meeting was raised by the leader of right-wing Independent Greeks party, Panos Kammenos, who was concerned that at the Chicago Summit his country would be represented by an interim government with limited mandate. "We wish for even the veto right to be applied for the possibility the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to join NATO under the name 'Macedonia'," Kammenos said.

PASOK (Greek Socialist) leader Evangelos Venizelos said if the issue came up at the Chicago Summit, Greece should act in line with its national strategy and arguments it had prepared as response to the ruling of The Hague-based International Court of Justice. "Our arguments should be smarter than those presented in 2008. We should make them stronger in a wiser, more intelligent manner," Venizelos said.

Alexandra Papariga, leader of the Communist Party, considers that Greece should veto a possible discussion on the matter, as 'there is no official Greek government.' A discussion on Macedonia in Chicago should and could be prevented in any case, Democratic Left party leader Fotis Kouvelis said. Alexis Tsipras, leader of the coalition of the radical left (SYRIZA), which came out as second best at the recent elections, said a name with geographic determination was a condition for settling the name dispute.

Conservative Nea Demokratia leader Antonis Samaras said veto would be inevitable if the issue on Macedonia's NATO accession was to be raised at Chicago Summit. The talks for constituting new Greek political or technical government failed, which resulted in setting up a caretaker cabinet, under the helm of Council of State president Panagiotis Pikrammenos, the head of Greece's top administrative court. Petros Molyviatis, who served as a Foreign Minister in Kostas Karamanlis' cabinet, is to take the same office in the caretaker government, whose main objective is organize new early elections.

2.12.NATO: ICJ Judgement With no Effect Over our Decision on Macedonia - Membership as Soon as Name row is Solved

NATO representatives refuse to answer the question whether Greece undermines one of the EU and NATO pillars - solidarity - by using a veto for Macedonia's accession in one of these organisations, MIA reports from Brussels. Asked to comment why Greek political leaders cannot form a government and extend the IMF austerity agreement to save the country from default, but are unanimous to obstruct Macedonia in its Euro-Atlantic integration bid, NATO spokeswoman Simone De Manso responded: "I'll refer to what the heads of state and government have announced in their declaration at the summit in Chicago - 'We reiterate the agreement at our 2008 Bucharest Summit, as we did at subsequent Summits, to extend an invitation to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to join the Alliance as soon as a mutually acceptable solution to the name issue has been reached within the framework of the UN, and strongly urge intensified efforts towards that end. An early solution, and subsequent membership, will contribute to security and stability in the region. We encourage the negotiations to be pursued without any delay and expect them to be concluded as soon as possible. We welcome, and continue to support, the ongoing reform efforts in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and encourage continued implementation. We also encourage its efforts to further build a multi-ethnic society," De Manso said. NATO appreciated Macedonia's contribution to its missions as well as country's active role in activities aimed at regional cooperation, according to the spokeswoman. "We appreciate the long-running commitment of Macedonia to the NATO accession process," she noted.

2.13.Survey: Greece to be Kicked out of NATO for its Behavior Towards Macedonia

Greece is the NATO member-state most likely to be kicked out of the Alliance because of its behaviour towards Macedonia and Turkey, shows a survey of the Atlantic Council and Foreign Policy magazine published in May. The two renowned institutions polled about 60 renowned heads of state, ministers of defense and foreign affairs, intelligence officers, and current and former members of Congress.

When asked which country they would kick out of NATO, Greece won comfortably with 18 votes, followed by Hungary (5), Turkey (4), Iceland (3), whereas 22 respondents said all member-states should remain in the Alliance. Respondents said the reasons for Greece's NATO expelling were the its behavior towards Macedonia and Greece, as well as "its boundlessly selfish egotism and disruptive tactics". On the other hand, when asked which country should join NATO, Macedonia was second with six votes, behind Sweden (13), but ahead of Australia, Georgia and the Ukraine with five each.

In the survey, respondents said the economic crisis is the biggest challenge for the transatlantic alliance, followed by nationalism and internal divisions. All respondents said NATO should continue to exist and the United States should remain in the Alliance. Only ten supported the idea of Russia joining NATO, whereas 19 left this option open for the future.

2.14.Gruevski, Ivanov: Macedonia Deserves Membership Invitation

Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski in a May interview with MIA, little prior to the NATO Summit in Chicago, stated he does not expect Macedonia to get the deserved membership invitation due to the Greece's blockade, the unprincipled position and double standards policy of the Alliance, as well as the selective application of international law. For that he justified his non-participation at the Summit. What's more he thought that Macedonia's high-level representation in Chicago was "even higher than normal, taking into account the circumstances, when a country is subjected to injustice, lack of principles and double-standard policy, and on top of it, the country is told it should feel guilty for this and show understanding for the one who is doing the injustice and acts as if responsible. This is not only a problem for Macedonia, it is obviously a problem for the Alliance, much bigger than only formal. This is an essential problem from a political, moral and legal point of view, in the sense of rule of law, and NATO has no response to this. Therefore, this is not an issue only of Macedonia and Greece, but an issue of NATO too" he said.

He also added: "....I don't know how certain representatives of leading NATO countries address us or slander us of missing a chance with Papandreou, but also use similar diplomatic terms that, to be frank, make me sick when hearing them. I have not witnessed for a long time such hypocrisy, such policy of double standards, such lack of principles and distancing from the values they publicly promote, as in the case with Macedonia. On the top of that, we have the International Court of Justice ruling that is beneficial for us. I know that some politicians believe they are strong enough to do this and no one can do anything, but there is a rule which says that when someone lacks principles in continuity, all allies, friends and associates will lose confidence in time"...."When saying this I do not refer to everyone, since there are a lot of countries, politicians and diplomats in NATO who openly, sincerely and publicly support us. They criticize when we deserve it, but they always stick by principles rather than the grand interest. I would like to thank our sincere friends, who support us and fight for us in spite of all challenges. I know my thesis can be taken out of context and someone can manipulate with it, but I say this sincerely and with my head held high, because I am talking about my country, my people, their perspective, and I do not intend to be silent in this regard."

On the question whether he believes that international law is implemented selectively, he answered: "Absolutely. There are many specific examples of this, but ours is one of the most obvious. I deeply believe and am certain that Barack Obama himself is aware of Greece's injustice towards Macedonia, but probably

has other reasons why he cannot say this. He is a man of flesh and blood, he also has consciousness, emotions and reason. Many people behave differently in everyday life from what they think within due to certain reasons or interests at the given time.”

In the issue of erecting certain monuments, putting names on highways and airports by which irritates the Greeks, he says: “Having in mind the injustice and damage Greece is doing to us, I don't know why even the word irritation is used. If we irritate them, what word can be used for the thing they are doing to us. This is complete distortion of theses. There is no greater irritation than 20 years of blocking, denial, underestimation, financial damage to the people and the country, even tensions. This is not irritation, but a crime on a nation and a state. They should not expect us to think whether something will irritate them until this crime is imposed to us. What we ask is justice in order to get what we deserve. We have no pretensions or want something bad to happen to anyone, we only want stability, progress and membership in EU and NATO.”

Contrary to the emotional burst of the Prime Minister, President Ivanov at a meeting of Heads of State and Government of participants in NATO-led Afghan mission stated: “Macedonia despite the contribution it provides and despite the fully met requirements ever since 2008, is being blocked on its path to full-fledged NATO membership by a precondition set forth by a member of the Alliance, a precondition that is not correlated with membership criteria”...“The International Court of Justice, deciding upon the lawsuit filed by my country, found in a judgment that the conduct of our southern neighbor was illegal. I will be frank to say that our citizens, the leadership of the Republic of Macedonia are fully disappointed with the delays. This time it was necessary the mistake and injustice done to us in Bucharest to be corrected”.

“We regret”, he added, “that Greece did not find strength to act responsibly in respect of the obligations undertaken with the Interim Accord. Such a behavior is completely opposite to the expectation of the Court that Greece would not repeat the illegal act from Bucharest. Apparently, there is a second violation of the Interim Accord by Greece....However, Macedonia will continue, with the same dedication and interest, to act as a de facto member-state of the Alliance. It will continue to constructively carry out its share of the responsibilities, just as any NATO member-state is expected to do”, he said.

2.15.PM Gruevski: Macedonia Remains Committed to NATO Membership

After the NATO Summit in Chicago at which, as expected, the issue of Macedonian membership was not tackled, in his response to the request of opposition SDSM party for the state leadership to present its stance on the country's Euro-Atlantic integration processes PM Gruevski stated: “We have a capacity to work and advance, as we have the right to be dissatisfied with the injustice that is happening to us, which is not an issue related to any political

leader or individual. Hence, the reactions to my interview with MIA, namely that it has been emotional, are illogical, aimless criticism from people incapable to make difference between the truth and emotion, Gruevski says. "We shall remain committed to the realization of the strategic goal - NATO membership, and work to that effect," pointing out that Macedonia will continue to support the NATO-led peace missions.

"The Summit in Chicago once again pointed out that our country had met all NATO membership criteria, thus denying all of yours (opposition) claims that 'we haven't been working on the (country's) Euro-Atlantic integration.' NATO did the same at the Bucharest Summit in 2008"...."I would like to point out once again that this outcome is unwanted, unfair, but not unexpected or a surprising one, as your reaction hasn't been for me. All of us are aware that the only reason that stands on the road to the realization of our legitimate aspirations is the objection of our southern neighbor, which 21 years ago created a problem and raised an issue over the constitutional name of our country, denying and imposing on us to give in our Macedonian identity. It has not ceasing to do that, expressing neither will nor desire to take constructive approach to overcoming this challenge that stands between our two countries, burdening them and wasting their energy,"..."What is hindering us to become NATO member, has never been, and will not be valid for any other aspirant country, and none of us, including the Government, bears no responsibility for this imposed issue, which is sensitive and one I deeply believe cannot be resolved by force, as someone is trying to persuade us," the PM says.

2.16.Failure to Extend to Macedonia's Membership Invitation a Disgrace: Former NATO chief

It is disgraceful that Macedonia has not received a membership invitation at the Chicago summit. The permanent blockade of Macedonia's NATO accession is unjustified, says former Alliance Secretary-General George Robertson. "Macedonia has met all membership criteria and plays a non-proportional role in NATO peacekeeping operations. This fact means membership. In 2001, Macedonia was faced with a real challenge for Europe, but also for the world. It managed to overcome a conflict through an agreement that is a model for many generations", Robertson told Macedonian Television programme "Porta". He criticized NATO member-states for not finding a way to include Macedonia in the Alliance, since the country cannot solve the dispute with Greece by its own. "More efforts should be put into overcoming all obstacles of the Macedonian membership. If not, the founding principles of the Alliance will be abandoned", Robertson underlines.

2.17.US Ambassador: The Question is not Whether but When Macedonia Will Join NATO

"We are working together here today, as we have done in Afghanistan and Iraq. So in the long run the question is not whether but when Macedonia will join NATO. I would be the happiest man to see it happening. As the Secretary of State (Hillary) Clinton has said Macedonia will be admitted to NATO once the name issue is settled," Wohlers told reporters during his visit of the exercise "Cooperative Longbow/Lancer 2012".

"The outcome of Chicago is not a disaster, negative result for Macedonia, as NATO enlargement was not on the summit's agenda", US Ambassador Paul Wohlers told reporters at another open media event. "In some areas, such as NATO, EU integration processes, Macedonia has had frustrations. These frustrations are expected when you want but cannot become NATO member. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton sent a clear message that NATO doors remained open for all candidate countries, especially for Macedonia. There is no need to wait the next NATO summit for Macedonia's accession to the Alliance," Wohlers said, pointing out that 90 percent of the Chicago meeting on the top was focused on the transition of NATO-led mission in Afghanistan.

"A decision on NATO enlargement requires an agreement of all member states", Wohlers said. For him, the ruling of The Hague-based International Court of Justice (ICJ) that Greece has breached the Interim Accord by vetoing Macedonia's accession to NATO in 2008, doesn't oblige the Alliance to alter its conclusion from the Bucharest Summit. Such approach of the US administration to the ICJ ruling doesn't mean that Washington takes favorable stance for Greece, but reflects the principle of making decisions on enlargement within the Alliance,"..."The decision on NATO expansion is a major one and requires a consensual approval of all members", the US Ambassador said.

3. EU INTEGRATION PROCESS

3.1. EP Calls for Opening of Macedonia's EU Accession Talks

The European Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee adopted in January the final version of a draft resolution on Macedonia's 2011 progress report. The draft incorporates a call to the European Council to promptly set a date for commencing of Macedonia's EU accession talks. It also gives emphasis to the importance of supporting the country's efforts on the road to the EU membership. To this effect, the MEPs suggest for Macedonia to enter a new stage of the EU integration process, namely opening of the process for harmonizing the national with the European legislation and implementing the second phase of the

Stabilization and Association process. The draft resolution notified that the European Council's decision to not act in line with the recommendations of the EP and its Foreign Affairs Committee for starting Macedonia's EU accession talks 'has caused legitimate frustration and public discontent in the country.'

The document also underlined that the forthcoming EU and NATO summits provide excellent opportunities for further progress to be made in terms of Macedonia's integration process. On the demand of Greek MEPs, the draft also reminded of the statement of NATO Secretary-General, namely that Macedonia will be invited to join NATO after the name row settlement. The MEPs consider that the judgment of the International Court of Justice should give new impetus to the UN mediated process for settling the dispute with Greece over Macedonia's constitutional name. They urge both parties to respect the ruling and bolster their dialogue. "A mutually acceptable solution to the name issue is necessary", the draft reads. It also expresses regret that the name row keeps hampering the country's progress on the road to EU, as well as the enlargement process itself. The document reaffirms the significance of good-neighborly relations, calling the respected governments to avoid controversial moves and declarations that could lead to unfavorable consequences. "Constant postponing of the accession negotiations undermines the credibility of the EU enlargement process, MEPs say.

"The European Parliament supports sooner accession of Macedonia in the EU", said British MEP and Rapporteur for Macedonia Richard Howitt in January, who requested concrete date for start of accession negotiations in the 2011 Progress Report. "Today's status quo is unsatisfying. Country's accession is in the interest of the Great Britain, the entire European Union and Greece", Howitt stated for Deutsche Welle. He said that the compromise regarding name dispute is important, but now the time has come for progress in EU accession negotiations, not predicting whether name dispute will be surpassed. "The UN initiated negotiations are continuing and solution to the name dispute is not in EU competence, but Europe has responsibility to request from both parties to reach a compromise", Howitt said. The European Parliament was expected to debate Howitt's report on Macedonia's progress by mid of March.

"A launch of Macedonia's EU accession talks may not be postponed for ever over the name issue"... "Several MEPs, including myself, have been working in favor of obtaining an efficient discussion and real solution, as we cannot indefinitely delay the (EU accession) negotiations... This (name) matter must be settled at once," says Joseph Daul, Chairman of the European People's Party Group at the EP to Deutsche Welle. German MEP Jorgo Chatzimarkakis also believes that Skopje and Athens are the one to settle the matter, which on numerous occasions has been a subject of discussion of the EP Foreign Policy Committee. Macedonia must not be discouraged, says Slovene MEP Milan Zver. Macedonia's enthusiasm, hope must not fade away, as the ongoing reforms are favorable not only for joining the Union, but also for the country itself, Zver says.

He believes that Macedonia should get a date for commencing the EU accession talks, regardless of the name issue.

Howitt on March 6 in the EP organized a panel discussion entitled "Let's Make 2012 a Year of Success". According to him, "Macedonia for some time now has been prepared to start accession talks with the European Union"...and that "The judgment of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the respect of international law - the main argument with which Macedonia is attempting to pave the way toward the EU integration process - is a fact that should be respected by the Council of EU, each EU member and other international institutions", however a solution will be found solely during name talks.

Regarding the restoring of the adjective Macedonia by using the terms Macedonian language, Macedonian identity and Macedonian culture, he says: "I believe it is in compliance with the United Nations". In general, his report is a message to the European Commission regarding the use of the adjective Macedonian and the damage done to the country and even to the region by omitting it.

Macedonia's status quo situation is unacceptable, the MEP deems and welcomes the high-level dialogue, which is due to be held between Commissioner Fule and PM Nikola Gruevski. According to him, the EC is sending a clear signal that it wants to help the country, but also mentioned Fule's warning that "the recommendation is not carved into stone." This message, Howitt says, is directed both to the Macedonian government and to the EU. The MEP voiced understanding for the frustration from the seemingly unsuccessful efforts to implement reforms in public administration, fight against corruption, to improve freedom of the press, but stresses that the reaction is wrong. "If you prove that reforms are under way and that you are closer to meeting EU standards, I'm sure that a way will be found to accelerate the process and Macedonia to finally join EU," he urges.

The European Parliament with an overwhelming majority of votes adopted in March the resolution on Macedonia's progress in 2011 in which MEPs once again urged the Council of EU to set a date for start of membership talks with the EU as soon as possible. The document was passed although the original draft-text of the British MP did undergo sixty changes. Non-following the suggestions of the European Committee and the Parliament and the non-obtainment of a date according to the new text "incites legitimate frustration and dissatisfaction in the countrys' public opinion". Here was also included the Greek position in the text that Macedonia shall get a membership invitation after she finds a mutually acceptable solution for the name dispute. Regarding the ICJ ruling EU parliamentarians had a balanced attitude, stating that the decision should give new energy in the efforts to solve the despite under the UN auspices, and called both sides to respect it and to intensify the dialogue. Europarlamentarians believe that bilateral issues should not be an obstacle for EU membership, but they should be looked at constructively, taking under consideration the mutual EU values. They called on Katherine Eshton and Stefan Fule to facilitate the

dialogue and to explain to the public in Macedonia the advantage of finding a solution and obtaining EU membership.

In the resolution was also included the regret for letting out of the adjective “Macedonian” in the EU progress reports for Macedonia from 2009 until present time, and also passed a couple of amendments that used the adjective “Macedonian”. But it did not pass the amendment suggested by the Greens and the European Free Alliance that asked to greet the Greek government suggestion for a composed name as basis for the problem solution.

Euroaplamentarians expressed special concern for separating the children of different ethnic groups in the educational system and sharpened its rhetoric for media freedom, asking the country to immediately show absolute determination for pluralism and the rule of law. It was also supported the request of the Bulgarian representatives to celebrate together with the neighboring countries common historical events and personalities, as well as creating mixed expert committees for studying history with Bulgaria and Greece, in order to “objectively interpret history based upon historical facts”.

In the role of European Parliament's rapporteur for Macedonia, British Labour MEP Richard Howitt reiterated that Macedonia's status quo is unsustainable. “We are committed to the Balkan countries to allow them to become EU members. The country for which I am responsible, I emphasize, its membership in the EU is very important. Not only for this country but also for other Balkan countries and that's why it must not be allowed to be put aside”, Howitt said. Moreover, Howitt pointed out that pressure is exerted on Skopje and Athens to find solution to name dispute. “We in the EU and the European Parliament are making pressure on both parties to find solution. We are the ones to make the things possible. We cannot stand aside and to criticize but we should create conditions for this to be successful which allow the talks to begin”, Howitt said.

3.2. Poposki and Arifi Meetings With EU Commissioners Fule, Malmström and Director General Sanino

Foreign Affairs Minister Nikola Poposki in January met in Brussels with EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fule and with EU Commissioner for Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström, MoFA. Voicing respect for the European Commission's recommendations on start of accession talks with Macedonia, Minister Poposki urged the European Council to reach an appropriate decision as soon as possible. “It is necessary the credibility of the enlargement process to be preserved and in Macedonia's case i.e. the merit principle of each candidate country to be a foundation for making progress in the accession process”, FM Poposki said.

At a meeting with EU Commissioner Fule, where Vice PM Teuta Arifi was also in attendance, views were shared on the forthcoming high-ranking accession dialogue between the Government of Macedonia and the European Commission, stated the press release. Interlocutors pledged the dialogue to focus on

monitoring the implementation of reforms in key areas, such as judiciary, public administration, media, combat against corruption as well as application of economic criteria for EU membership.

Poposki and EU Commissioner Malmström discussed Macedonia's headway made in the field of justice, freedom and security amid preparations for the accession negotiations as the chapter on justice, freedom and security (Chapter 24) together with the chapter on judiciary and fundamental rights (Chapter 23) are the first chapters to be opened in the screening process and accession talks in line with the new enlargement approach of the European Commission. Also were presented ongoing activities related to migration, asylum, border management, fight against organized crime and police reforms. Talks also focused on the measures taken by Macedonia in tackling cases of illegal asylum seekers. At the moment, the number of asylum seekers is dropping and the issue will be further addressed by awareness raising campaigns, measures for advancing living standards of vulnerable groups of the population in Macedonia, heightened border controls and close cooperation with EU countries. Commissioner Malmström welcomed Macedonia's efforts in the accession process and the advanced level of harmonization with EU laws in connection to justice, freedom and security. She praised the activities aimed at reducing the number of asylum seekers, urging measures to be continued with increased intensity," MoFA said.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikola Poposki also met with the European Commission's Director General for Enlargement, Stefano Sannino, who was paying a two-day visit to Macedonia. Poposki at the meeting underlined the need of maintaining the credibility of the enlargement process considering the fact that Macedonia was not given a date for start of accession talks despite the European Commission (EC) recommendation for three consecutive years. Moreover, the omission of the adjective "Macedonian" in the EC report has also contributed Macedonia's confidence into European institutions to plummet (according to a recent research by Eurobarometer), MoFA said in a press release.

Poposki also stressed the need of launching the second stage of implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement. Considering the EC progress report for 2012, Macedonia expects the status of "functional market economy" to be recognized as well as the use of the adjective "Macedonian" in line with UN practices. In relation to the judgment of the International Court of Justice, he vowed that principles of international law would be respected and reiterated Macedonia's commitment to settle the name dispute with Greece by being actively involved in the UN-brokered negotiations taking place in New York with mediator Matthew Nimetz.

Director General Sannino pledged that the EC would advocate Macedonia to start the second stage at the Stabilization and Association Council. He said he had great expectations with the high-level accession dialogue between Macedonia and EU, and urged the country to strengthen its efforts in the rule of law - judiciary, freedom of the press, fight against corruption - and reforms in the

public administration. Sannino stated that Macedonia had met the basic conditions for obtaining a status of "functional market economy", adding that the EC would once again review this issue with the Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs (DG ECFIN), MoFA said.

Macedonia is put under the Brussels hat, as is sought for a pre-screening phase in order not to waste time until the Greek blockade lasts, but Stefan Fule announced a high level dialogue in the sense of stronger supervision and control of the most criticized policies in the country instead. The first surveillance topic shall be the freedom of expression, which appeared as a problem last year, and already mounted in the highest step of country's problems from Brussels' aspect. Other topics will be the "rule of law", public administration reform, election process and struggle against corruption, spheres which interfere with the political and other criteria and show the direction in which the country is heading. In the Brussels conclusions strongest worry has been expressed for media freedom, hailing at the same time the talks between the Journalists' Association and the Government in decriminalization of slander, improving the legal framework, putting order in the government advertising, settling the situation in the public service and having professional standards among journalists. For corruption not only persecution but results are also sought, in the sense of a list of completed cases, as well as to finally put control over political party financing. It is sought that remarks given by OSCE to be addressed, while employment and promotion in public administration to be under the principles of transparency, professionalism and independence. This monitoring phase was given by Fule in order to keep the EU integration pace and even to be given a new dynamics, since after the recommendations Macedonia did not obtain the date for start of negotiations.

3.3.Schulz: Macedonia in the EU, but on Long Term

"Macedonia can hope for EU membership on the long term", assessed Martin Schulz, the new President of the European Parliament in February. "So long ago I was pushing the countries of former Yugoslavia to open perspectives for possible EU membership. I think that soon there will be no new admissions in the EU. And this must be said openly. It will be a long process. But, despite this I believe that Macedonia and Serbia must have a chance in the long term to become EU members", Schulz stated for Deutsche Welle. Schulz had no comment regarding question whether there should be hope for Macedonia in the EU after three-year blockade by Greece and the decision of the International Court of Justice.

During the same month, Foreign Minister Nikola Poposki presented Macedonia's expectations at the European Parliament in Strasbourg to be given a date for start of accession talks - MEPs showed support on the matter, however the name row remained an issue according to them. Joseph Daul - French MEP and European People's Party (EPP) Chairman - who met with FM Poposki, said that their talks focused on the name issue and recent developments in Greece, Deutsche Welle reports.

While the Macedonian FM was meeting with several MEPs, Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fule met with other MEPs at a behind-closed-door meeting. German MEPs Doris Pack and Bernd Posselt asked the commissioner to explain whether the judgment of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) would change something with respect to Macedonia's EU bid. Fule had said that it wouldn't change a thing at the moment, considering the fact that Macedonia and Greece in particular were in a "difficult situation" and that the UN was in charge of solving the name dispute.

Slovak MEP and EP's shadow rapporteur for Macedonia, Eduard Kukan commented: "In my opinion, unfortunately, it would be difficult a decision to be reached allowing EU entry talks to be launched without finding a solution to the name issue," Kukan stated. He noted that the ICJ decision should be taken into consideration more often. "It clearly stated that Greece has violated the Interim Agreement. This fact hasn't been sufficiently taken into consideration by EU members. It is necessary the judgment to be used as an argument," the MEP said.

3.4.Fule: High-level Dialogue to Create Fresh Dynamics

The high-level accession dialogue will create fresh dynamics, thus strengthening the ties between Macedonia and the European Union, which is equally important for your country, the region and the Union as well, EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fule told MIA in March, as he was set to visit Skopje for talks with Macedonian PM Nikola Gruevski.

Fule underlined the five key areas that will be included in the dialogue referring to reforms in public administration, rule of law, freedom of the press, improvement of the election process and development of market economy. The dialogue is crucial since it is expected to result in concrete reform steps aiming at improving the lives of citizens, strengthening the legal framework and enabling its complete implementation. The technical part of the dialogue will be continued throughout the year and will be taken into consideration in the upcoming report on Macedonia's progress in October 2012.

Speaking about Macedonia's European perspectives, Fule reiterated the well-known phrase that "EU members reach decisions based on unanimity," urging the country "to maintain the momentum of its reform process in a bid to be approximated to Europe." Asked whether Macedonia should expect the European Commission to renew its recommendation, the EU Commissioner failed to give a precise answer, noting that it is one of the reasons for initiating a high-level accession dialogue. He responded in a diplomatic fashion to the question on the impact i.e. lack of impact of the ICJ judgment and also when asked why international law was respected on a selective basis.

Practically Macedonia on March 15 launched an informal substantial high-level accession dialogue with the European Union. Macedonia and Union's teams were led by PM Nikola Gruevski and EU Commissioner Stefan Fule. The

outcome of the first March meeting was a list of six conclusions and an annex of concrete targets defining a roadmap involving their fulfillment in the five key areas - rule of law, public administration reform, freedom of the media, electoral reform and strengthening the market economy.

At a joint press conference following the talks, both Fule and Gruevski concurred that the high level accession dialogue marked a new phase of Macedonia's efforts for EU integration, "a bridge that inevitably leads to membership talks with the EU." PM Gruevski said the high level accession dialogue was a new platform for cooperation with the European Commission (EC). "It is important for us and has a limited duration. The Government's primary goal remains the start of membership negotiations with the Union and it will resume its efforts in order negotiations to be launched as soon as possible in 2012."

Answering a journalist question, the EU Commissioner commended Macedonia's high preparedness for the dialogue, which was discussed last year with the EC president Jose Manuel Barroso. "In addition to the list of targets, we've also discussed another thorough document - a timeframe which represents an operational roadmap to meet these goals. The Government has vowed to adopt the operational roadmap by mid-April. I expect to see the results in May, when future priorities will be also discussed. The high level accession dialogue has to be used for what it was conceived - starting a high level political dialogue on the country's development, reforms and enlargement," Fule stated.

He emphasized that the high level dialogue was an absolute confirmation of Macedonia's progress in the EU integration process. "What is important for the enlargement is to set three important angles of a triangle. The first one is internal political debate, the second is reforms and neighbors is the third angle. The stronger you work on one or two angles, the better conditions will be created for the remaining angles," Commission Fule urged.

In late March within the accession dialogue, technical talks should kick off on chapters 23 and 24 covering the areas of judiciary and fundamental rights i.e. justice, freedom and security that will be tackled throughout the entire accession process. Meetings of experts will be organized for other issues of the accession dialogue in the frameworks of the sub-committees formed in line with the Stabilization and Association Agreement.

"The dialogue was launched less than two months ago and in the meantime, we are doing everything we can to make headway in several areas. The roadmap, which was drafted by several teams, includes nearly 150 targets. We have been implementing them before, because we are constantly dedicated to reforms. However, the roadmap instills fresh dynamics in the implementation of reforms that are crucial for Macedonia's accession to EU," Gruevski stated, although according to him the high-level accession dialogue was not a substitute for membership talks.

On the other hand, experts² who follow the accession process criticize the insufficient and inadequate use of IPA funds, enumerating a couple of significant problems: lack of institutional capacity (as so far have been absorbed only 1,8% of the national IPA 2009 and 1,5% of the National IPA 2010); lack of administrative capacity in terms of programming (putting into strategic framework) and making projects that correspond to the set program; change of cadres in key institutions, due to politization of public administration (as entrance to the public administration is allowed only by obtaining a party membership card); the country does not use any technical help, has no national development plan and twinning program is not adequately used.

3.5. Bilateral Issues Shouldn't Hinder Enlargement - EU's New Strategy

The European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee on April 24 discussed the report and resolution by Greek MEP Maria Eleni Koppa on the EU enlargement strategy for 2012-2025, MIA reports from Paris. In the document it is highlighted that "the process of enlargement must remain credible making it crucial for the EU to fulfill its promises and to create conditions to ensure that future enlargements will be successful." EU member countries are urged to maintain the momentum of the enlargement process by upholding the European perspective of every candidate country or potential aspirants.

The resolution envisages countries to be assessed according to fulfilled criteria, noting that there are "tendencies for exaggeration." It recommends candidate countries and potential candidates not to be asked to achieve higher standards than those already applied within the EU. "Bilateral issues should not be used as an obstacle in the EU accession process," the document says, adding that "accession negotiations shouldn't be used to gain advantage in final agreements on such matters."

The resolution welcomes the initiative by the European Commission to launch high-level accession dialogue with Macedonia. MEPs have praised the new approach in negotiations that gives priority to issues related to judiciary and fundamental rights, such as justice and home affairs. The EP document, which is expected to be adopted in July at a plenary session, says that "a moment has come after 20 years since the Copenhagen summit to reconsider the accession criteria, enlargement procedures and policies as a whole." In the resolution, the enlargement process is inspected in its entirety, since the processes of candidate countries are addressed in separate individual reports.

3.6. May High-Level Dialogue

Commissioner Füle made his second visit to Skopje as a continuation of the established high-level dialogue. Although promises and binding by the

² Lidija Dimova Macedonian Center for European Education

Government at the preceding meeting were very high, it was more than obvious that this second round brought no visible results: there was no dialogue with the journalists nor any hints for decriminalization of slander; there were no positive changes in the rule of law area or public administration reforms as it is widely known that it is filled by party cadres; election reforms have not begun, although the body that would deal with these issues has been formed; market economy principles are functioning with difficulties etc. Due to this state of things, the public was surprised when Commissioner Fule expressed satisfaction of the so far dialogue and the results of the six points determined in the previous meeting. Still, he warned that the whole process should be all-encompassing and transparent. First tests should be done by the teams arriving soon and giving their first results in June. Unofficially, media report that Fule at the meetings criticized on the media freedom which is closely linked to democracy, but also for the conditions in the judiciary and the struggle against corruption. All in all, this stance was interpreted as the “carrot” offered to the Macedonian Government, which may take a different turn if not seriously considered. The next round of this dialogue is planned for September.

4. ECONOMY

4.1. Standard of Living Further Going Down

After the New Year, citizens faced new prices' increase: the central heating (increase was from August last year until today 21%), electricity (increase was from April last year until today 12%) and the fuels. Many Macedonian citizens say that they shall have to spend less on food in order to be able to cover these raised prices, but there is fear that the raised process of energy shall pull an avalanche of other raised prices.

Striking were media information related with the list published by the London weekly “Economist”, which was published a list ranked by misery (bad economic position), as Macedonia came first. Ranking was done for 92 countries in which were also calculated the unemployment rate and the inflation percent. The Government expressly reacted by stating that they do not wish to comment such newspaper rankings, and they are interested in rankings made by relevant international institutions instead. However, experts say that this ranking is not far from the truth, if one takes under consideration the poverty and unemployment rate, coupled with the high prices, which indicate that Macedonian citizens really live in misery and poverty. Opposition also used the opportunity to criticize the government, pointing out that it must stop immediately the unproductive expenditures and should start dealing with the growing poverty, as it brought Macedonia in such a disgraceful position due to its' damaging economic policy.

The economic analyst Den Donchev stated that when such a serious journal as the "Economist" ranks the country at the first place according to the misery index, it sounds very sad. He considers it a fact that this country has 32% of unemployment and over 30% poverty rate and that the weak Macedonian economy depends on transfers from the diaspora. According to some estimations, prices have increased for 70% for the last couple of years, but that was not accompanied with adequate salaries increase: "on the other hand, we witness the luxurious government expenditures, which are financed by new loans. In Macedonia the basic lesson was not learned: that better standard cannot be created through expenditures and new loans. The only way to improve the economy and the standard of living is by production increase, which opens new working places. Only by creating new values can poverty be decreased" Donchev says.

The President of the Assembly Committee for Financing and Budget Marjancho Nikolov (an opposition MP), stated that Macedonia in this disgraceful list makes company to countries like Iran and Venezuela, although the VMRO-DPMNE Government for promotion of Macedonia advertizes in the same journal and has already spent hundreds of thousands of Euros. "We hope that this estimation won't be characterized by the Government as tendentious and malicious"-he said, adding that the Government for five years in office spent 15 billion Euros of citizens' money, or every year were spent at least one billion more than all the previous governments while the results in the domain of economic development and struggle against poverty are more than catastrophic.

Media comment that the Ministry of Finance should make a this years' second rebalance of the budget instead of maintaining the projection for higher growth in order to spend more. It is believed however that the Ministry of Finance does not listen nor comment, and does not even listen to the recommendations given by Governor Dimitar Bogov, who he came out with projections for economic growth (2,4%) a double lower than the Governmental ones (4,5%). Growth estimation analysts think that the lower estimation is closer to reality and closer to the projections international financial institutions have anticipated for Macedonia, and that trends may be even gloomier.

4.2. Economic Trends

Data show that Macedonia's growth is advancing insufficiently quick, as the average GDP growth in the period 1990-2010 is 0.8%, while Macedonia reached the GDP level of 1990 even in 2006.

On the other hand, the overall debt of the Government by the end of last year already exceeded the limit of 2 billion Euros, which is 28,2% of the country's GDP. Only three months before, at the end of the third quarter, public debt was 26,2 of GDP.

Unemployment rate by the end of the third quarter of 2011 was 31,2% and this figure remained the same until today. The yearly inflation rate in February 2012 slowed down and is 2,9% which trend is in accordance with the projected one.

“Economist Intelligence Unit” anticipates a growth of 1,5% for Macedonia. In their analysis are included all potential risks for Macedonia: for the sovereign risk the country is estimated for grade B³; same grade is given for the currency risk and the banking sector risk; much worse grade Macedonia got for the political risk (CCC) as well as the economic structure risk (CCC). Overall country risk is graded with B.

4.3. Major Telecom Affair

At the beginning of the year, media reported about the mega scandal concerning Major Telecom- one of the main investors of the dominating domestic Telekom company. This corruption affair was of international dimensions, as it was discovered by the US Ministry of Justice and the Macedonian Commission for Securities, and concerned “Deutsche Telecom” and “Major Telecom” which it is believed that by bribing in 2005 and 2006 high ranking officials from Macedonia secured a firm position for their company on the market. It is estimated that this affair gives a serious blow to the declarative will of Macedonia on the struggle against crime and corruption in the country. Experts find it very unclear why the public prosecutor did not promptly open an investigation with the proof published by American authorities, as Macedonia has signed all the international agreements and conventions against organized crime and corruption. This implies that the Public Prosecutor, the Committee against Corruption and the tax administration must do their job, as it concerns domestic officials.

One month after the scandal was officialized, SDSM officially asked to be clarified the mega corruption scandal with “Deutsche Telecom and “Major Telecom” regardless if it concerns officials from SDSM, DUI or VMRO-DPMNE. The party considered that the position of the Public Prosecution is scandalous, and the silence of the government is an effort to shirk the case, as in the same period of time the party firm “Analitiko” for which the American institutions lead an investigation and brought a decision involve the highest present officials of the ruling party.

After a certain period of time the public prosecutor replied, stating that authorities analyzed the mail communication in which all the time is operated with the formulation “money should be given” but there was no proof that they were actually given and that protocols and non-papers which have been published in the media do not exist in any form in the General Secretariat of the Government and in “Telecom”. For that period there was an audit report as well, which was prepared for the needs of Deutsche Telecom as mother-firm of Mayar Telecom and consequently of “Macedonian Telecom”. It was said that by the information

³ As grading is from AAA to the lowest D

so far obtained, it cannot be located facts and circumstances which would lead to corruption. He also stated that the persecution system in Macedonia differs from the one in the US (concerning securities which are used as evidence), and that proof should be valid under our legal system as well. He mentioned that during the investigation there are accounts which are discovered, but there is no evidence that these money ended in private accounts.

Experts believed that further development of this case is not stuck for legal reasons, but because of lack of political will to pursue the case. This conclusion reconfirms that whenever there is a corruption case involving politicians, largest political parties both from the Macedonian and Albanian political block are silent.

5.HEADLINES/POLICIES

5.1.“Skopje 2014” Project Going on in Full Speed

As planned by the Government the lavish and extravagant project “Skopje 2014” which aims to completely change the outlook of the Skopje city center, was going on in full speed, regardless the many critique voices that complained on enormous resources and money squandering, as well as complete absence of good taste and style.

In his interview, the famous theatre director Slobodan Unkovski, commenting the current condition in which Macedonian society said: “After letting out the spirit of hatred towards a different opinion (articulated also in the procedures regarding the project “Skopje 2014”) and beating up students on the main square, everything became allowed and possible. That was indicated by all the events that followed – pressure, persecution, arrest, murder, protesters on duty, closing up media, illegal decisions for building monuments, humiliating the Assembly and ruining the weak democratic capacities of the country, calls for lynching, non-transparent spending of our money, developing a sense of personal insecurity....the history of Skopje (and why not of Macedonia, as this cancer is spread over the whole country) one day will be divided in: Turkish period, Serbian rule, Bulgarian occupation during the Second World war, Macedonian state in socialist times, independent Macedonia and Macedonia under the occupation of the aggressive, let me say, baroque-“burek” nationalism...”we have surrendered Skopje to a baroque dragon”.

In January, Athens sent a note of protest to Macedonia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs over the erection of Arch 'Macedonia' (part of the project “Skopje 2014”- see previous Barometers), on which, inter alia, "the Vergina Sun and irredentists illustrations are presented." In the note, Head of Greek Liaison Office in Skopje Alexandra Papadopoulou says she is protesting over "the fact that by various acts (the country) has been constantly contributing to political distortion of the historic reality, which is turning against Greece and other neighboring countries."

Official Athens warns Skopje that such moves are dangerous and present a treat to the stability of Balkan region, which already paid the price of nationalism in the past. MoFA confirmed to have received the letter, saying that it would be reviewed with utmost attention.

The last corrections of the Detailed Urbanistic Plan in the city center are threatening to close the view towards Alexander the Great's monument and the Arch. In the line of the two most gossiped monuments is planned to be built a ten storeys high state institution. It is going to be built on the place where was previously planned a church which raised a big discontent and protests. Instead that location, a church is going to be built at a plateau near the city center in front of the Army Hall. That way shall be destroyed one of the rare parks at the very city center.

In May, the almost as ten storeys high, statue of "The Warrior" (which in fact is Philip II, father of Alexander the Great, although under a different name) was erected in the Skopje city center area. It is said that this statue costed 4,5 million Euros, an information that raged the public anew for the sums that are poured in for "unproductive expenditures". Commenting the latest positioning of the monument of the warrior on the square in Skopje (who in fact is Philippe the II, father of Alexander the Great), SDSM leader Branko Crvenkovski said: "at least is controversial on the day of the Slavic educators⁴ to erect a monument dedicated to a person of the antique period"...in the Skopje center on every square kilometer in the period of the largest economic crisis are poured thousands of millions of Euros".

As some foreign journalists explicitly out it: "The rise of populism has put players in the Balkan societies in a corner. It seems that persons or groups striving for relevance find it difficult to react to a movement that is determined by revolutionary hysteria and by the almost pathological need to show that it is right. By its exclusivist arrogance, such a movement strives to put anyone who is not part of it in the stocks. The aim is a closed, controlled and steered society, in which "the people's will" is defined by those pulling the strings.

In the logic of action and reaction, so far the answer to hysteria is rage. The articulation of this rage though is part of the problem. In the post-YU universe, this articulates within a simple logical system: if the populist discourse is national(ist)-religious, then the counter-discourse is leftist-post-communist, feeding on the vocabulary, symbolic heritage and, most important, gestures of the disappeared Yugoslavia. Hence, the system remains hermetically closed, steaming away in its same, old sauce, recycling particles of discourse and conflict, but not producing anything new. What happens in such a hermetically closed situation is decadence, decay, the loss of coordinates, the loss of a reference system – in other words: eternal transition, a prolongation of the agony of the 1990s and 2000s ad infinitum."

⁴ Meaning the day of Sts.Cyril and Methodius

Another of the lavish expenditures for the project Skopje 2014 was placing in the river Vardar three willows which amounted the sum of 250.000. This sum raged the public opinion and provoked an ironic opposition reaction, as the SDSM youth president Darko Davitkovski with a group of supporters placed three willows for which are spent 250 denars (about 4 Euros) in front of the VMRO-DPMNE headquarters, as a reply of the other expensive three. He said that those three willows will testify the squandering of the state budget, while in the budget rebalance are cut expenditures on education and health, while the state borrows anew 250 million euros. In addition, SDSM commented the cuts the Health Fund is making for about 10 million Euros concerning the sickness leave, the maternity leave, salaries for the medical personnel etc. The party suggested that the sum lacking can be easily located in the expenditures for building facades, monuments and advertisements.

In the meantime, the government practice to intensively advertise its activities continues. The campaign for encouraging innovative spirit and creative thought among the citizens costed 500.000 Euros and was made by the agency "Republika" together with five other agencies. Also, the Ministry of Finance spent 305.000 Euros on the advertisements for the Government project "Buy a House, buy a Flat", while most of the campaigns are given again to the advertizing agency "Republika", due to the as said "the best tender offer".

5.2. Failed Census Still Under Discussion

After the unsuccessful census that took place last year (see previous Barometer) at the beginning of the year the opposition submitted a draft law on census which was fiercely discussed at a parliament session in January. The suggestion was to be introduced the same law as before, only containing a new date of realizing the statistical operation: from 1-15 of April this year. As the suggestion was not supported, SDSM MPs asked for responsibility on the failed census for which the Assembly was not notified, 14 million Euros were spent, and commenting that the government wanted to hide the illogical data in the Election list in which last year could have been found (under age) minors and persons of one hundred years of age as voters. Position MPs claimed that opposition is not offering novelties, other than trying with a renewed discussion on the matter to worsen interethnic relations in the country.

5.3. Radiodiffusion Committee at Work

Members of the Radiodiffusion committee are considering in asking the parliament to issue an authentic interpretation of the articles that prohibit political involvement in the ownership structure of the media. This is due to the European Commission report in which remark is given on the application of the law on property of media and media concentration in relation with political activities of the media owners. The Radiodiffusion Committee as regulatory body should also answer to the communication obtained from the Government seeking explanation about the Council's position about article 11 from the Law on Radiodiffusion

which forbids a possibility for political involvement of media. Article 11 of the Law on radiodiffusion says: “political parties, state organs, organs of public administration, public enterprises, local selfgovernment units, carriers of public functions and members of their families cannot perform radiodiffusion activity, nor be founders, cofounders or to acquire ownership share of the radiodiffusers.

The president of the Committee, Zoran Stefanovski stated that the body is obliged to give answers as it was constantly addressed for the issue. “The information was initiated for Sitel, Channel 5 and Channel 77. These were some of the media that did not submit statements. They are national media. It was obvious, as it is about persons in office, that media are owned by members of their families, which is contrary to Article 11. This does not mean that we shall focus only to these media, because the number is gradually increasing” says Stefanovski.

5.4.The Process of Lustration Undergoing a Third Legal Change

By the end of January, the Constitutional Court temporarily stopped 13 articles of the Law on Determining an Additional Condition for Performing a Public Function (the official name of the Lustration Law). The Court initiated a procedure for questioning the constitutionality of these provisions as it considered that by lustration of these persons authorities are interfering into the moral integrity and dignity of individuals for which a procedure has been initiated. The Court also remained and repeated the previous position that lustration should not be applied after 1991 when the new constitutional order containing contemporary rights and standards were established. After following the regular Court procedure, the abrogation of those articles came 40 day later. By this abrogation, was stopped the lustration of previous officials, journalists, members of non-governmental organizations, and religious communities representatives. The process is not going to be applied also for former officials, if they are not pretending to get a new official position at present times for which they are obliged to submit a statement for not being previously involved in informing activities. The Court is convinced that in general the law as such is not questionable, but judges believed that even after their first intervention by abrogation and the changes in the Law in 2009 and 2010, still exist legal dilemmas and articles that should be put to the test. Main argument which was said by the judge-referee was that by the lustration process “the future should be protected and not the past”.

Party reactions on this decision varied. Opposition parties SDSM and PEI stated that the Court decision only proves that lustration process is completely out of track while VMRO-DPMNE said that it was just an effort to block the process of lustration. Experts comment that things are crystal clear after this Court’s decision: The Constitutional Court did not do anything else but being consistent to its previous decision, following the legal logic.

The VMRO-DPMNE executive committee met and discussed the Constitutional Court decision. The party said that they will not back up from the idea to submit a

third change of the law. So, in spite of the two decisions of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Macedonia regarding the first Law on Lustration (see previous Barometers regarding the first decision) and the changes of the Law by which in a roundabout way were introduced the same provisions that have been abrogated the first time (this year's second decision) the party on power repeatedly decided to undergo a third version of the law that contains even more questionable solutions than the ones already intervened by the Court. These novelties anticipate the Committee for Facts Verification to be able to issue parts of dossiers at the Internet. Suggestion in the draft is that if the Committee establishes a fact that a person was collaborator to the secret services, and in case this person claims that this claim is not correct, the Committee may display publicly on its Internet page the materials on basis of which the Committees' decision was brought. VMRO-DPMNE has not given up the lustration process, said in February Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, saying the law's amendments would soon enter parliamentary procedure, whereas an end must be put to a dark past in order to move forward. "Lustration is a difficult process, which requires serious engagement, with lots of resistance on the way, be it from the Constitutional Court or powerful individuals", said PM Gruevski. He stressed the process should have begun in the 1990s, and although with enormous delay, it must be completed.

Pavle Trajanov (former minister of interiors and coalition partner to VMRO-DPMNE) does not agree with the suggestion, believing that this shall only distort the process, as it will be used for political discreditation. He also thinks that lustration should last no longer than five years and should not target a wide scope of citizens, but only those candidates who have aspirations to be in office. "We should remain focused on the substance, which means those who cooperated with the services to pass through a process of lustration which will last five years and then to come the process of reconciliation and victims' rehabilitation. This is what it is said in the Resolution of the Council of Europe and we should not run away from that".

The VMRO-DPMNE parliament coordinator Silvana Boneva thought that these changes are necessary and that the process of lustration should be lead openly, as it was done by the post-communist countries. She said that it is awaited what kind of decision the Court shall bring (meaning the second time Court decision) in order "the suggestions not to be in contradiction with the decision", as she claims the Court to be "an obstacle for the process' flow, as it demolishes the laws brought by parties". According to her, disclosing the identity of the informer was not a dilemma not in Germany, in the Czech Republic, nor in Slovakia, where the process was lead openly and no one thought that there is a breach of human rights and freedoms. Boneva also said that the public needs to know what had happened in the past, and not to think that there is some kind of settling accounts with political non-like-minded persons. What's more, intentions are with these new legal changes to lustrate the "transitional oligarchs" who have been informers in the previous system and have become very rich due to their favorable position in the past.

As the new draft was discussed at the Assembly, a serious fight was barely avoided between DUI and DPA MPs. To MPs were offending each other by calling the other “monkey” and “informers”.

“The offered idea opens many dilemmas in the sense that it is doubtful who will decide on publishing of these dossiers, is there a possibility of selectiveness and will this bring even more problems in the work of the Committee for Facts Verification” - Marjan Madzovski, one of the drafters of the first law text says that publishing dossiers of the persons who opposes the decisions of the Commission would be an instrument for proving in what way a certain decision has been brought. Still, he warns that one should be very wary with this legal matter: “This should be regulated very carefully and to be careful not to publicize classified materials. This means that firstly documents’ confidentiality must be removed and then to publicize them. I think that this is a good opportunity by this measure to suitably be replied to a certain statement, comment or position of the person who publically makes statements about the decision taken by the Committee and in that way the public shall have an opportunity to see both sides” - he estimates. “Five years are enough for the lustration to be carried out, and that is a recommendation obtained by the Council of Europe. But, even from now should start a reconciliation process, that is closing of the past, and history to be left to historians. Names of collaborators should be published when the process of reconciliation will end. We should focus more on what is the goal of the lustration, and that is for those who were breaking human rights not to be carriers of a public function” says Madzovski.

Contrary to this, the opposition on the other hand, thinks that the process is gone out of control, by provoking long-term and personal damage to some people and to the society fabric as a whole. SDSM MP Ana Pavlovska-Daneva commenting the new draft law on lustration stated that the party supports the lustration process, but it is against the repeatedly (although twice already abrogated by the Constitutional Court) given time frame application of the law until 2006. By giving this time-frame SDSM thinks that are amnestied the informers who have been active during VMRO-DPMNE’s and Gruevski’s rule. “By this law everyone should be encompassed, those who do that today and profit because of that”..”the party has nothing against lustration of the persons who gained state owned capital from enterprises that were owned by the state, but they should also bear criminal responsibility”..”before VMRO-DPMNE mentioned transitional oligarchs we suggested constitutional change according to which criminal deeds linked with the transformation of state owned property shall not become obsolete-here is the right moment to build a consensus”-she said.

At the same time frame when the Courts decision was brought, media informed that the President of the Constitutional Court Branko Naumovski was fined with 500EUR last October. He was fined on grounds that he bought an apartment but did not declare it to the Anticorruption Committee, although he had a legal

obligation to do so. Still, it is symptomatic why this event became interesting and “exclusive” a couple of months after the misdemeanor occurred.

5.5. Opposition Criticizes Health System Reforms

Health system reforms are a failure- accused the opposition on an Assembly session, called on their initiative to discuss the “collapse of the health sector”. Some of the omissions are the breaking up of the main Clinical Center located in Skopje, introducing cameras and “guides” in the hospitals, while the new method of obtaining doctors orders contributed to a bigger chaos. Critics are for the absence of regulating the new package of health services, the integrated system of emergency, the non-existence of a new Clinical Center; non-finalization of the diagnostic center in Tetovo; audit reports regarding illegal purchases are not looked at; vaccines for which the date for use has expired are thrown away in vain, etc. As a consequence of mistaken reforms, the health debt grew to 50 million Euros. Payments for the sickness leave are late, same as money for the pharmacies, for the primary health doctors etc. “The Government brings partial solutions, so instead improved health system, patients are still put on artificial waiting lists” it is said in the information sent to the Assembly by SDSM, NSDP, Liberal Party and PEI.

VMRO-DPMNE MPs responded with accusations about the work of SDSM when was on power. It was mentioned that when SDSM left the government left behind a debt of 86 million Euros and said that in the last six years in health are invested more than 100 million Euros, which has not been done in the last 20 years. They also mentioned the projects which have been realized in the last six years- decrease the price of medicaments up to 70%, purchase of 100 ambulance vehicles, investments in equipment etc.

Opposition replied that previous debts by the government were simply transferred to the health institutions and the real debt is hidden. The equipment mentioned is paid only 25% and there is still a debt of 70 million Euros which shall be returned by the future generations.

5.6. MI Gordana Jankuloska Third Interpellation

The Minister of Interiors Gordana Jankuloska in February faced a third Assembly interpellation initiated by the opposition, as the request was signed by 42 opposition MPs. Although the request was not signed by DPA and NDP MPs, they also agreed there responsibility should be sought for Jankulovska’s work and that she should resign. Opposition cites five reasons why responsibility is sought: keeping in secrecy the case and the proof from the Ministry of Interiors about the Martin Nashkovski case (see previous Barometers), abuse of the ministerial position for political settling of accounts and arrest of Ljube Boskovski, direct interference for approval of tapping, obstruction of supervision and control of the MI work by the Assembly Committee in charge, as well as abuse of

function during election campaigning and political revanchism for tearing down the apartment complex “Kosmos” owned by the MP Fijat Canoski.

The president of the Assembly Committee in charge for supervision over the measures for communication following and the president of NSDP party Tito Petkovski previously reacted that Jankulovska does not allow the Committee insight in the documentation regarding the “Boskovski” case. Jankuloska then replied that there is no such documentation, because Boskoski was not tapped.

“The Ministry of Interiors in the last couple of years has become a mechanism for political accounts settling, a mechanism for rule by fear and violence, and a hole of corruption. Not in one moment citizens did not obtain a reply where are spent their money, as enormous sums are flowing every year on the account go the MI budget. Main postulates of this society, with the help of the MI have become fear and repression, instead of democracy and human rights. MI has become a state in a state” - stated Petkovski. According to him, justice from the Minister was selective, as for her own party, although election party expenditures significantly exceeded the legally allowed sum and there was no proof for the origin of the money there is no systemic reaction, while Ljube Boskoski on the other hand got seven years of imprisonment.

In her defense, Jankuloska said that Petkovski was a transition politician who was listening to the party directives by his boss, Branko Crvenkovski, neglecting the courts orders, and respecting only the party orders. Regarding “Kosmos”, she said that the police acted only on basis of request of the Gazi Baba municipality for enhanced supervision during tearing down of the apartment complex. For the Martin Neshkovski case, she stressed that the perpetrator was discovered and punished with 14 years imprisonment and that the opposition was using “personal misfortunes for their political promotion”.

During the process of interpellation, a group of citizens, supporters of the killed Martin Neshkovski protested in front of the Assembly, as an act of dissatisfaction of the work of the Minister. At the end, as expected, the interpellation was rejected by the parliamentary majority.

5.7. Australian Government Erases Term 'Slav-Macedonian', to use 'Macedonian'

After a long-standing lobbying campaign, the Australian government has withdrawn the so-called Slav-Macedonian Directive, by which the Macedonian community was renamed in 1994, said the Australian-Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC). The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs decided to drop the use of ‘Slavic Macedonians’ and to use the term ‘Macedonians’ instead. In a letter dated 9 January 2012, the Acting Chief of Staff to the Department of Foreign Affairs wrote: “I can reaffirm that the ‘Slavic Macedonian’ Administrative Circular is no longer operative in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

(DFAT). As is standard practice with inoperative Administrative Circulars, it has been cancelled and the document archived. Similarly, DFAT has advised me that the 'Slavic Macedonian Directive' is not in use in other agencies, including the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and the Australian Bureau of Statistics." This marks the end of a significant and long-running campaign by the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee to gain governmental acceptance of the Macedonian community's right to self-identification. The campaign began in 1994. The decision of the Australian Government marks the return to the successful policy of multiculturalism, a position that the AMHRC has long advocated. "Whilst the AMHRC is pleased with the Australian Government's current shift in policy toward the Macedonian Community, it now reiterates its call upon the Government to take the next logical step and recognize the Republic of Macedonia under its official and democratically chosen name," reads AMHRC's official announcement.

Republic of Macedonia and Australia established diplomatic relations in October 1995.

5.8. Macedonian Flag Set on Fire at Pristina Handball Match

The Macedonian flag was set on fire by fans dubbed "Plisat" during a game between the youth national teams of Macedonia and Kosovo, held in February in Pristina. As a result, the match was stopped for a few minutes. After the game, the Macedonian team coach told Kosovo media that a large portion of people came to see the match, not humiliate his country. According to Pristina daily "Express", the Macedonian flag was burned in revenge of the chants by Macedonian fans during the recent European handball championships in Serbia. The newspaper reads that fans chanted anti-Macedonian songs during the entire match in Pristina, accompanied by signs with offensive content.

The Macedonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in February strongly condemned the incident. Such incidents, also involving insulting slogans, are not in favour of the excellent neighbourly relations between Macedonia and Kosovo. "We think that Kosovo authorities should apply the strictest sanctions to the perpetrators of this incident and take adequate measures to prevent similar incidents in the future", MoFA says in a press release. The Ministry is also launching adequate diplomatic activities in an attempt to prevent such incidents that are not in favour of building neighbourly ties, reads the press release.

5.9. February Interethnic Clashes

Series of interethnic incidents started in February, after the yearly festivities held in Vevcani, a village near Struga in which among many of the criticizing, often bizarre and satirical masks was included a mockery towards the Kuran.

Discontent was shown with the fire that bursted in a church in Labunishta⁵, as the act was interpreted as a reaction of the mockery. Followed a protest, burning the state flag, throwing stones on buses and interethnic fights among high-school pupils in Struga which spread in the capital as well. There were many calls for the atmosphere in and around Struga to calm down including the President of the Republic Gjorge Ivanov who called for talks the heads of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Islamic Community. EU Representative Office demanded from the authorities to clear the incidents while the opposition feared that things may get out of control.

Premier Nikola Gruevski condemned the violent incidents among young people of different ethnicities in Skopje and in several other cities in Macedonia calling on stakeholders to respect country's coexistence. He stressed that the violent behavior was "dishonest and illegal" and that perpetrators would be punished. He called on political stakeholders not to abuse the situation by using "hate speech" in an attempt to directly or indirectly encourage teenagers to take part in such incidents. By doing so, the PM added, they are creating a bad image for themselves as political factors. "I urge everyone - political and non-political stakeholders, individuals, citizens, teachers, professors, parents including young people - to act with responsibility in the spirit of coexistence, which has been built in Macedonia for years, decades even centuries," PM Gruevski pledged. He added that the Interior Ministry and other relevant institutions would take measures to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Police filed charges for violent crime against 28 people in connection to the incidents amongst young people. It also solved some of the incidents that happened overnight when a public bus was pelted with rocks and 10 cars were damaged in one of Skopje's settlements. Charges have been filed against people of different ethnic background with the youngest being only 11 years old. As a preventive measure police officers have been ordered to use public transportation when going to work, in an attempt "citizens to feel safer and to increase their trust in institutions."

"Inciting interethnic tensions is a very dangerous game which may put to jeopardy the country's existence", stressed SDSM leader Branko Crvenkovski during his visit to Struga. According to him what happened in 2001 should be a lesson for everyone and the government instead of transferring the blame to the opposition should face and solve the problems. For a longer period of time was created an environment for these things to happen. "Our position as a party is clear- we do not ignite anyone, on the contrary we always call on everyone to calm down the passions, because interethnic tensions bring no good to anyone. Still, the most responsible are the system's institutions, they should prevent incidents, while if they do happen, and to discover the perpetrators and sanction them instantly in order not to encourage others. If there are no sanctions it will incite the others to do it as well"- said Crvenkovski.

⁵ Another village near Struga

5.10. Grisly Murder in Smiljkovci Village and Operation “Monster”

On April 13 around Orthodox Easter, Filip Slavkovski, Aleksandar Nakevski, Cvetanco Acevski and Kire Trickovski, namely in their late teens and twenties, as well as Borce Stefkovski – who was a 45-year-old man, were brutally murdered on the shore near the village of Smiljkovci, just outside Skopje. They were killed by automatic weapons at close range. One day later police confirmed that "Opel Omega" vehicle found 10km from the murder site was used in the crime near Skopje village of Smiljkovci.

The case named “Monster” was assessed by MI Gordana Jankuloska who said that investigation of the multiple murders is developing well, and taking into consideration it was a heavy and complex crime, she appealed for patience. “We are doing our best to disclose the circumstances under which five people have been killed, most probably without any particular reason” she said, pointing out that the Ministry has mobilized all of its departments and set up an operational headquarters in favor of swift resolving of the case. “Mol has been searching for the perpetrators and working on determining the motive of this murder. We extend deepest sympathies to the families of the victims. We appeal for calm, media's restrain from speculations over the case and any action that could stir up inter-ethnic tensions,” Jankuloska said.

In mid-April, the Minister stated that there were certain preliminary findings about the perpetrators and motive involving the multiple murder. She also urged the media to be restrained and welcome the appeal made by the Association of Journalists calling on objective and professional reporting. “According to our estimations, the day of the murder, the way the men were killed are not a coincidence,” Jankuloska said. Asked to reveal the ethnic origin of the suspects, the Minister replied: “For Mol, the perpetrators of crimes are perpetrators and it doesn't focus on ethnic origin, but on someone's involvement in a crime.” It's a fact, she said, that these people are members of a group that supports radical Islam and that a large quantity of weapons have been found, which is not in the spirit of any religion.

Mol summoned about 25-30 persons for questioning. It also urged anybody who has any information on the case to immediately contact the police. In the operation participated 800 policemen who checked 26 buildings mostly around Skopje.

In early May individuals arrested in police operation “Monster” were transferred to the Skopje Criminal Court. The Ministry of Interior was expected to submit criminal charges for terrorism against all those for whom there is evidence of being part of the massacre. Media inform that terrorism charges have been submitted against five persons aged 24 to 54. Three of them - one person aged 27 and two brothers (32 and 33 years old) - are most probably suspected of killing the five fishermen. The other two are charged for being accessories in

committing the crime⁶. "Some of the arrested persons are directly involved in the murders near Smiljkovci village", the MI Jankuloska said – "and there are persons for whom there are no data that they were on the crime site". The persons were arrested in several facilities in Aracinovo, Suto Orizari, Cair and Cento⁷. The Interior Ministry said they found an automatic gun, four pistols, a bomb, eight bullets for "black arrow" rifle, six bullets for grenade launcher, six frames for automatic gun, ten camouflage uniforms, seven tactical vests, a vehicle, around 10.000 euro, computers and cell phones. Interior Minister Gordana Jankuloska said that main motive most probably was their idea of killing in the name of Radical Islam and the goal was to create feeling of fear in wider public.

"The motive is their idea, belief and following the Radical Islam, which is dangerous for believers of Christianity, Muslim religion", Jankuloska said adding that some of the arrested persons fought in Afghanistan and Pakistan against NATO troops. She said that when it comes to terrorism the victims are not always directly connected with the perpetrators or with the motive due to which the criminal act is committed. "We have suspected that in this case it is about murder where victims are not directly connected with any of the perpetrators however the intention of the criminal act was to create feeling of insecurity and fear in wider population", Jankuloska said.

Asked by the journalists to give an assessment on the security situation in Macedonia and whether the country is facing danger from Radical Islam and other possible terrorist attacks, Jankuloska reminded that Macedonia is part of the global coalition for peace and by number of citizens making it fifth according to participation of ARM peacekeepers in mission in Afghanistan. "And by this the Republic of Macedonia is on the side of the countries that can be potential target of Radical Islamists. We are not underestimating the situation in not a single moment and we are not excluding possibility of Radical movement of individuals or groups. Members of police, Security and Counterintelligence Bureau and Bureau for Public Security are closely monitoring the situation, we act preventively and repressively because nothing should change the way we

⁶ Interpol will search for Alil Demiri (1985) and Afrim Ismailovic (1980), both from Skopje, who are under suspicion for committing a multiple murder near Smiljkovci village and still at large. Under the Skopje Basic Court order, the Ministry of Interior issued a national and international arrest warrant for the two suspects, against whom terrorism charges were filed. An investigative judge has ordered a 30-day detention for them, and for Agim Ismailovic, who is also under suspicion of committing the murder, as well as their helpers Aziri Fejzi and Sejdi Rami. All of them are charged for terrorism. Same period of detention has been also ordered to other four suspects for illegal possession and trade of weapons. The criminal charges for terrorism, submitted by the Ministry of Interior for the multiple murder near Smiljkovci, has been accepted, meaning that all evidence that the Mol has presented to the court were sufficiently convincing to determine the preliminary detention and resume with the investigation. According to MI Jankuloska, analyses are ongoing over determining if the seized weapons are the ones used for the crime. "Even without this aspect, there is sufficient material evidence that points to the perpetrators of this crime", she added. Asked if the perpetrators had links with groups from abroad, the Minister said it was too early to say in this stage of the investigation if there is possible connection.

⁷ All are municipalities located at the outskirts of Skopje.

live, in peace and coexistence of all citizens in Macedonia," Jankuloska said, adding that situation is closely monitored, there are no serious changes however this should not leave us relaxed because it is obvious that followers of Radical Islam are prepared to most gruesome criminal acts and murderers, as it was the one in Smiljkovci village.

5.11. Protests in Skopje Against Police Operation 'Monster' and Reactions

It is estimated that over 10000 young people staged a protest in May against, as they said, "the set up political process" and the claims that perpetrators of the multiple murder near Smiljkovci village are Islamic terrorists. The group started its march from the Jaja Pasha Mosque and via the 'Bit Pazar' - the oldest open market in Skopje, wrapped it up in front of the Government building, where some of the protesters were throwing stones on the police. Nobody has been injured in this incident. The protesters chanted slogans 'Albanians are just Muslims, not terrorists', 'We will not allow rigged trials'. The group says the protest was organized via social networks.

The US Embassy in Skopje issued a statement urging citizens to express their opinions peacefully and to remain calm during protests announced to take place in the next couple of days and to allow the legal process to take its course in this case in accordance with the laws and judicial procedures of Macedonia regarding "Monster". "We are aware that there have been calls for demonstrations across the country in connection with last month's murder of five persons near the village of Smiljkovci. While the right to gather and peacefully express one's views must be respected, we continue to urge all citizens to express their opinions peacefully and to remain calm and allow the legal process to take its course in this case in accordance with the laws and judicial procedures of Macedonia," reads the statement by the US Embassy in Skopje.

Albania supports complete, accurate, legal and just investigation in connection to the massacre near Smiljkovci Lake in Skopje in order those who will be found guilty to get the deserved punishment, Albania's Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Edmond Haxhinasto has stated. At the same time, he called for restrain urging the gruesome murder not to be seen from a religious and ethnic point of view, Albanian media report. "The gruesome murder should not be perceived from a religious and ethnic point of view, because criminals are just that - criminals," Haxhinasto has said. His statement is the first official reaction by a Tirana official following the arrest of several suspects for the murder of five men in April.

The US Department of State appealed suspects for terrible murders of five people near the capital to receive due process under the law and ultimately to ensure that justice is served. »And obviously, I said, we're following the investigation as it moves forward. But we would just say that any suspects for these terrible murders, regardless of their identities, ethnicities, or religious affiliations, receive – we would ask that they receive due process under the law

and – ultimately to ensure that justice is served», Mark C. Toner, spokesperson said at the daily press briefing in the US Department of State.

5.12. Operation “Detonator”

Eastern Macedonia was the center of this spring’s police actions when were discovered the illegal activities of a large criminal group, apparently linked with local police and political structures as well⁸. The MI Gordana Jankuloska and her assistants praised themselves that they arrested a group which for years terrorized inhabitants in Kochani, Vinica and Kriva Palanka. It was said that 16 people were charged for associating for criminal intentions, drug trade, money laundering, violence, usury, racket, murder attempts, gambling. Out of these, six persons between 2009 and 2011 created a group that made extortions, traded drugs, used violence, was involved in the illegal gambling business, owned illegal weaponry. The other persons joined the group and through the security agency “Titan Group” forced citizens and business owners to make agreements for securing their shops or businesses. In case of refusal, the group was demolishing the shop after which citizens unwillingly were agreeing and paying money for additional security. The police confiscated around 800 gambling devices (poker machines, electronic roulette tables etc) which were illegally imported and used in the country.

Media and the public intensively commented that it is strange how for six years organs in charge were silent and did not undertake any action for what was happening in front of their eyes. Many wondered where were the Customs, the Public Revenues Office, the Ministry of Interiors, or labor and sanitary inspections for such a long time, not knowing what was happening?

SDSM vice-president Gordan Georgiev commented on the scandal and case “Detonator”, seeking responsibility as it was found that on almost half of the country’s territory the police instead of preventing, it protected and organized crime; in addition the Macedonian Customs allowed illegally to be smuggled thousands of poker machines which represents a convoy of full trucks; and at the same time the Public Revenue Office (UJP) obviously played blind on the fact that in hundreds of illegal gambling houses were made millions of sums of illegal cash money, for which no one paid taxes.

6.PARTY DEVELOPMENTS

6.1. Party Merging With VMRO-DPMNE

During the first half of the year, a couple of minor parties with similar ideological background merged with the ruling VMRO-DPMNE after the party gave a call for unification: VMRO-Macedonian (leader is Boris Stojmenov, former Minister of

⁸ Involved was the husband of a VMRO-DPMNE MP.

Finance under the 1998 VMRO-DPMNE government, currently an MP in coalition with the ruling party and family owner of Channel 5 TV); same did Filip Petrovski, former member of VMRO-DPMNE who left the party and formed the Democratic Right, and now rejoined VMRO-DPMNE; VMRO-United, for which party remained unclear whether it still formally exists, as its' leader Tomislav Stefkovski is deceased; and one wing of Ljubco Georgievski's VMRO-People's Party including Marijan Dodovski, that broke out and rejoined VMRO-DPMNE.

6.2. Ljubco Georgievski is Back at the Macedonian Political Scene

After the parting of Marjan Dodovski and his supporters from VMRO-Peoples' Party, the party held a Central Committee in which the up to now honorary president Ljubco Georgievski was appointed acting President. Followed the party congress in which Ljubco Georgievski was elected officially president of VMRO-Peoples' Party, as he promised that he will revive the "real" VMRO from the nineties, when it was established. A second promise made by him to his electorate was to destroy the totalitarian rule of Gruevski: "If you are not a Macedonian from ancient times, than you are a traitor- what is wrong with these on power- it was allowed for our minds to be lead by five semi-educated journalists"-he said. Media comment that the "value" of Marjan Dodovski may be less than expected if he manages to sweep off a smaller portion of VMRO-Peoples' Party supporters in favor of VMRO-DPMNE, as fact is that many former officials deriving from this party remained faithful to Georgievski. As a third reason, Georgievski mentioned the already abandoned VMRO ideology, which according to him is violated by the current power. "In today's DPMNE are sitting persons with communist ideology from three parties: Democratic Alternative, Socialist Party and SDSM"-he stressed. Georgievski announced that he will be active all around the country, reviving the old party membership structure.

It is interesting to note however, many "orthodox" party supporters who are party members from its founding days believe that through his politics, Gruevski is getting too close to Belgrade (due to family former ties and relations) and that relations with the Sofia friends have been abandoned.

"Mr. Gruevski, in EU there is order and system, and rule of law is the highest priority, organized crime, racket and corruption in EU are severely sanctioned, so we openly ask: If you were an investor, would you Mr. Gruevski dare to invest in a country in which by default in every good business enters a family accomplice of the executive power?..."VMRO-PP recommends you to stop with you circuses called investment "roadshows" because to the people and the investors is clear that all that remained to you is to spread "fog" and save your rating which vertiginously falls. If you have sincere intentions to attract investments, firstly save the country from the organized crime and the vested mafia structures that make racket everywhere and you will be convinced that the obstacle for attracting foreign investments was located among your ranks"- VMRO PP says in their press-release.

The old-new leader of VMRO-People's Party Ljubco Georgievski chose Ohrid as his starting city for his political comeback. Under the motto "For Democratic Macedonia" the coalition named "Pelister" which includes LDP, Dignity and United for Macedonia started their meeting against the government. It is more than certain that Georgievski shall compete either with the coalition of four or all will go together with SDSM. It is expected on the local elections VMRO-PP to stand behind the SDSM candidate. What is not known yet is whether there will be coalition on the municipality councils' lists.

6.3. SDSM Leader Branko Crvenkovski Announces new Party Tactics

SDSM leader Crvenkovski announced new tactics and rhetorics in the opposition work. He said that priority in 2012 shall be to liberate the citizens from fear. After the elections last year, he preferred to lead the political battle through the institutions, so in spite of critiques for opposition passivity, priority was given to the parliamentary opposition while he was putting together the party counseling bodies. At the beginning of the year he started touring the places out of the capital, in contact with the citizens (Veles, Vevcani, Kavadarci, Gevgelija and other places) and anticipating opposition victory on the local elections in 2013 in which voting will have the significance of a referendum vote for the survival of the current government. "If the opposition on local elections undoubtedly shows that the majority of citizens in this country support her, and not the current government, it will be a signal for early parliamentary elections, which is a custom practice in every European state" he said, emphasizing that he expects people in the next period to articulate their growing dissatisfaction, as life with this government is becoming harder.

In later interviews, Crvenkovski said that if citizens on local elections give support to SDSM, there is a probability for the party to demand early national elections. He announced that he will suggest the creation of a wide opposition front, regardless of the ideological position of the parties or the ethnic affiliation. According to him lately has been evolving a natural process of concentration of parties that have mutual similarities, like right and center parties. As this phase is finalizing, now are opened possibilities for talks with SDSM. Crvenkovski emphasizes that the party does not intend to win only on basis of the protest votes. On the contrary, the party is ready to get out with a quality party program and cadres. Regarding the results obtained from public opinion polls he said that public opinion polls are for a long time ago means for creation of public opinion and not for its measuring. Proof is the big discrepancy of what the polls from last election were indicating and what was obtained in reality.

SDSM estimates that the government has a narrowed maneuver space and that now is the right moment for the opposition to act. Prognosis is that economic crisis will deepen and citizens will feel even more the growing poverty, while pessimistic attitude of the government towards integration processes may make DUI reconsider its participation in government. Regarding speculations for forming an expert government, SDSM leader said that the party shall not support

such a government because the situation the country is in and the problems which is facing cannot be solved by an expert government instead of a government with political legitimacy.

At his interview in May, Crvenkovski addressed the public stating that "Macedonia is facing with catastrophic situations in literally all spheres of social life." "The government completely ignored us while the consequences of this arrogant behavior are felt even today. We wanted to impose a competition of ideas, we offered solutions to the problems and improvement of citizen's life. In the Assembly we suggested dozens of laws in all spheres. Literally all were rejected. Most often without debate, with simple outvoting by the parliamentary majority. The VMRO-DPMNE government persistently continues with the same mistaken policies not taking into account the fatal consequences it provokes. SDSM is the largest opposition party and our duty is to oppose this irresponsible behavior, to double our efforts, to articulate the growing dissatisfaction of citizens, to increase pressure over the government. Therefore, we shall have to apply other methods for promotion of our suggestions and policies for improvement of the conditions. Today, we announce that SDSM decided to get out on the squares around Macedonia. Every week in a different city we shall organize a protest gathering in which we shall identify the mistaken government policies, we shall locate the problems and offer solutions." After giving the timetable for the meetings, Crvenkovski said that the party shall promote the future candidates for mayors and as a final meeting shall be the Skopje protest meeting on September 2nd in which shall be made the total balance of the 6 years rule of Gruevski and VMRO-DPMNE. "The real battle for better and more successful Macedonia has just begun"-he said.

Regarding the "name issue" Crvenkovski stated: "The dispute with Greece is too important, maybe the most important problem we have had because it blocks our euroatlantic future, but provokes other difficulties within the country"... "This dispute cannot be solved with improvisations and bidding on press conferences by anybody; this process can only be lead in an organized manner by those who have legitimacy to lead the country, and if they need to seek support from the opposition, we are here". He added that SDSM shall support any solution that will not interfere or damage our national identity while at the same time shall be acceptable for Gruevski's government.

Discussing the Eurounegration processes Crvenkovski commented: "As long as Gruevski is on power, we shall not see NATO and EU. They do not want NATO membership, nor negotiations with the EU, because it will have control from outside there will be monitoring, here will be missions above the institutions which will not allow media to be shut down, to arrest people, to abuse the courts, to build monuments, to have a high level of corruption. They (meaning the Government) do not want such a thing, they want to continue ruling as before, as if this country is their private property". He called upon the party members to take responsibility and to encourage citizens who expect the largest opposition party

to take on responsibility and to change situations in the country, which continuously sinks from day to day.

Regarding the VMRO-DPMNE attacks to him personally, in his interview for Radio Free Europe Crvenkovski says: "To me is perfectly clear that VMRO-DPMNE would be the happiest if I do not exist. However, unfortunately for them, I am here with a stronger motivation and will to lead this political battle and they will have to face that."

The Central Committee of SDSM brought the decision for the rules the way and the procedure through which the local party organizations shall determine the party mayor candidates. On June 3rd starting from Strumica, SDSM protests throughout the cities in Macedonia all summer long, under the motto "For the Future of Macedonia," while the meeting in Skopje shall be held on September 2nd. "Goal is to organize a protest gathering every week in different city in which shall be identified the mistaken moves of the government, problems shall be located, solutions shall be proposed"- stated Crvenkovski. According to him, Macedonia is facing a catastrophic situation in literally all spheres of societal life. "Unemployment and poverty are on a record high level, with a growing tendency. There is non-liquidity of the economy, industrial production is falling, and the number of firms with locked accounts is growing. General country's debt radically is growing, while non-productive government expenditures do not cease. Crime and corruption are growing, often we can see that it happens with government sponsorship and direct police protection, the Public Revenues Office the Customs and other state institutions. Interethnic and interreligious relations in the country are disturbed, mutual mistrust is growing. Euroatlantic integrations are fully blocked, with no chances for any advanced step in the near future. SDSM in the last period behaved extremely constructively taking into account for national and state interest above all. We warned timely and publically for all mistaken policies that were applied by the government. The government completely ignored us, and consequences of this arrogant behavior we feel them even today- Crvenkovski said.

The largest meeting in Macedonian history, shall be held in Skopje. This was announced by the party Secretary general Andrej Petrov, who said that Macedonia does not need "New Wave" (referring to the VMRO-DPMNE announcement for a new party policy that implies refreshing of the current party cadres who are in office with new ones), but new government, as analysis are showing that the country is heading in the wrong direction in many of the key pillars: democracy, economy, Euro-integration process, security.

7.RESEARCH, POLLS, RATINGS

7.1. VMRO-DPMNE Maintains Highest Rating, Gruevski Most Popular Politician: Poll

VMRO-DPMNE has maintained the highest rating among political parties, whereas leader and incumbent PM Nikola Gruevski is the most popular politician, shows the latest poll conducted by the Institute for Political Research from Skopje (IPIS) in May.

When asked which party they would vote for if elections were held next week, 23.1 percent of respondents said VMRO-DPMNE, followed by SDSM with 14.9 percent, DUI - 6.7, DPA - 4.2, NDP - 1.8, LDP - 1.1, and VMRO-NP - 0.5 percent. A total of 30.6 percent of those surveyed did not know which party they would for, while 15.7 percent would not vote for any party.

Referring to the person they would pick as the next PM, 23.5 percent said Nikola Gruevski, followed by Branko Crvenkovski with 8 percent, Ali Ahmeti - 6.3, Menduh Thaci - 2.7, Rufe Osmani - 2.3, Radmila Sekerinska - 2, Arben Xhaferi - 1.4, and Ljubco Georgievski - 1.2 percent. Twenty-nine percent do not know who they would pick, 15.6 percent would not elect any of the above, while 8 percent would choose another. The telephone poll was carried out on May 25-29, encompassing 1,111 respondents.

7.2. CIA Poll: SDSM Convincingly Ahead of VMRO-DPMNE

Exclusively published by the paper agency Sky were the poll results conducted by the Center for Research and Analysis – Skopje that show serious advantage of opposition parties, above all before the ruling VMRO-DPMNE. The research is in fact continuation of the series of CIA research, conducted in 15 cities: Skopje, Veles, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kichevo, Ohrid, Bitola, Prilep, Kavadarci, Gevgelija, Shtip, Kochani, Strumica, Kumanovo and Delchevo.

On the question “For which party you would vote if elections would be held tomorrow?” 26,31% would vote for VMRO-DPMNE, while 31,27% would vote for SDSM. Other parties showed the following rating: VMRO-PP (2,53%), United for Macedonia (1,56%), Dignity (0,52%) and LDP (0,44%) which as a coalition have over 5% of citizens’ support with a growing tendency. In the Albanian block results are: DUI 3,97% and DPA 2,80% while Rufe Osmani’s Party got 0,74%. About 13% said that they will not vote for any party, while undecided are 14,37%. Branko Crvenkovski got support as a leader in 32% of the cases, Nikola Gruevski 27%, Ali Ahmeti 4,78%, Menduh Tachi 3,31%, Rufe Osmani 1,25%, Ljubco Georgievski 1,44%. The poll was conducted from 23 to 30 May 2012 on a representative sample.

7.3. May Public Opinion Poll by »Rating«

Rating Agency for the daily newspaper Dnevnik conducted a poll showing 67% of the citizens believing that Macedonia is heading in the wrong direction, while 29% believe that we are moving in the right direction. The poll has been conducted from 2 to 8th of May. Part rating shows VMRO-DPMNE with 22,1% support, while SDSM with 18,6%. LDP and Peoples' Party have 2,5% each, while the rest opposition parties from the macedonian block are supported by 3%. In the Albanian block DUI has 7% and DPA has 4% rating. Rufe Osmani's part has 2% support. About 40% of the polled do not know for whom they will vote or are undecided. Over 0% think that Macedonia is not a secure country. 80% state that they lived better in former Yugoslavia, while over 70% of the citizens think that economic situation in the country is bad.

7.4. Freedom House Report for 2011

According to the Freedom House rating of the democracy level, in 2011 Macedonia is a partly free country. On the scale from 1 to 7 (where 1 is the highest and 7 the lowest grade) freedom rating is 3, civil liberties are marked 3 and political rights are graded by 3. The overall rating for Macedonia was not moving for a longer period of time, although in the last couple of years there were negative indicators (warnings) for direction of democracy development.

As the Report reads: Corruption remains a serious problem. Transparency with regard to public expenditures is still weak, and the law on public access to information does not require that the details of public contracts be revealed. No sanctions have been imposed on political parties that do not comply with financing regulations. Macedonia was ranked 62 out of 178 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2010 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution provides for freedom of the press, but political tensions have increased pressure on the media. In November 2010, police raided the headquarters of the opposition-oriented A1 TV in Skopje to investigate alleged financial irregularities at companies controlled by the station's owner, Velija Ramkovski. In late December, Ramkovski and more than a dozen associates were arrested and charged with crimes including money laundering and tax evasion. The opposition denounced the case as a politically motivated attack on independent media. Also during the year, government-aligned media outlets carried harsh criticism and threats aimed at rival outlets and journalists. Libel is punishable by fines, and libel suits against journalists are common in practice. The public broadcast service, Macedonian Radio and Television (MRTV), lacks reliable, independent funding, exposing it to political influence. Macedonia's media outlets, like society at large, are strongly divided along ethnic lines. There were no reports of restrictions on access to the internet during 2010, though a new law gave the Interior Ministry the authority to monitor internet and telephone

communications without a court order. The security services have a history of improperly wiretapping journalists.

The EU's 2010 progress report on Macedonia noted no advances in the implementation of reforms intended to improve judicial independence, and political influence over the courts—including apparently politicized appointments—remained a problem. In late 2010, a commission operating under a 2008 lustration law found that the head of the Constitutional Court had collaborated with communist-era security services, potentially forcing him to resign. The finding was under appeal at year's end. The judge, Trendafil Ivanovski, had recently faced sharp criticism for a series of judgments that went against the ruling coalition. Also during the year, a new automated case-management system published roughly 34,000 decisions, promoting transparency in the judicial system, and some progress was made in reducing the courts' case backlog. Prison conditions are generally unsatisfactory, with overcrowding and poor health care among the main concerns.

As partly free like Macedonia are ranked 60 other countries (or 31% of the total of 194 countries and territories in the world included in this research) including Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo, while Serbia, Montenegro and Croatia are estimated as free countries.

7.5. U.S. Department of State Releases Human Rights Report

2011 was a tumultuous and momentous year for everyone involved in the cause of human rights, U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton said while unveiling the Department of State's annual report on human rights. Regarding Macedonia, the Department of State in its report singles out remarks in connection to the rule of law, meddling into judicial authority and media, persecution of political opponents, corruption, police impunity. It cites the worsened inter-ethnic relations between Macedonians and Albanians, discrimination of Roma people and other ethnic and religious minorities, poor prison conditions, domestic violence, discrimination of women and persons with special needs, LGBT community, etc.

As the report states: The most important human rights problem was the government's failure to fully respect the rule of law, which was reflected in its interference in the judiciary and the media, selective prosecution of political opponents of the country's leaders, and significant levels of government corruption and police impunity. Tensions between the ethnic Albanian and Macedonian communities, as well as societal discrimination against Roma and other ethnic and religious minorities, constituted another area of human rights concern.

Other significant human rights problems reported during the year included poor conditions and overcrowding in some of the country's prisons, domestic violence, and some discrimination against women and persons with disabilities. There was societal prejudice against members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and

transgender (LGBT) community, who were the subject of harassment and use of derogatory language, including in the media. Macedonia was also a source, destination, and transit country for men, women, and children for sex trafficking and forced labor.

The government took some steps to punish police officials guilty of excessive force or impunity and strengthen the internal police investigation unit, but impunity continued to be a problem. There were credible claims during the year that the government interfered in high-profile cases involving abuse of office or misuse of official position to coerce officials or party members or intimidate key opposition leaders.”

7.6. Reporters Without Frontiers Ranking Macedonia on Freedom of Speech

Reporters Without Frontiers put Macedonia on the 94th place regarding the freedom of speech. In 2009 the country was on the 34th place, while in 2010 on the 68th place. Estimation is that media freedom in Macedonia in 2011 fell in real abyss. In the year when censorship dominated as never before in the media Macedonia fell 60 places downwards to the 94th place from the ranked 179 states with index 31,67 in only two year. Media freedom became key factor for Macedonia’s advancement towards the community of western democratic states (see previous Barometers concerning the closing of A1 TV). As a general remark, Reporters Without Frontiers say in their report: “Repressions were the leading topic last year. Freedom of information has never been so narrowly linked to democracy, the journalists work has never bothered in such an extent to the enemies of freedom”.

7.7. Westminster Foundation Research

In January were published the results of the research supported by the Westminster Foundation in which citizens think that this Assembly is more efficient than the previous one, but that still is not able to control the Government. Respondents believe that now the Assembly is more efficient and transparent, and that MPs discussions are improved. However, in spite of the fact that MPs elect the ministers, the Assembly still does not manage to establish control over the Government while at the same time MPs are not very interested in submitting draft-legislation. Polled were 1.111 citizens, who graded on a scale for 1-5 the Assembly with the mark 2,86. Although this mark is not a very good one, still it is the highest given for the Assembly, compared with January 2010 (2,59) or December 2010 (2,4). Parliamentary discussions are also graded somewhat better as now re positively graded by 39% of the polled. Still, 88% of the citizens think that MP should show greater initiative for introducing legislation.

7.8. Partization in the Country – a Dominant Characteristic in Macedonia According to Research

According to USAID research titled “Democracy and Governance in 2011” realized by the agency “Rating” on a sample of 1.200 respondents. A worrisome trend is that Macedonian citizens become members of political parties for personal interest above all. Data showed that partization of the country is bigger than in socialism; the firm hand of a politician is more desired than the established systemic procedures; people get party membership only for personal gains; corruption has taken over the social fabric like cancer; media are under severe pressure of the government and the courts; there is a dominant mistrust towards state institutions.

Most surprising fact is that 26% of the polled stated that they are members of a political party, which is almost 4% more than in 2010 and 6% more than in 2009, and moreover is much more than in socialist times when members of the Communist party were only 10% of the population. About 77,5% of the polled stated that they are members of a party only for personal benefit, while only 10% state that they would like to contribute in realization of a party program.

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Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, office Skopje
Ul. Kosturski heroj 38, 1000 Skopje, MK
Tel: +389 2 3093182
Fax: + 389 2 3093180
contact@fes.org.mk