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PRESIDENT XHAFERI MEETS GREEK MFA KOTZIAS

The President of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, Mr. Talat Xhaferi met the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Greece, Mr. Nikos Kotzias, who is officially visiting the Republic of Macedonia. President Xhaferi expressed pleasure from the dynamics and the direct bilateral meetings with the Republic of Greece, as well as the Meetings in the framework of UN seeking solution of the name dispute which burden the deeper cooperation of the two states for decades. The results of the positive spirit of the prime Ministers' Meetings is the lifting of the blockade for the membership of the Republic of Macedonia in the Adriatic – Ionian Strategy and the implementation of the second phase of the Agreement for Stabilization and Association with EU. Aside from the complex political relations, the Republic of Macedonia and Greece have good economic cooperation. Greece is the fourth biggest invest-

tor in the Republic of Macedonia, but the two states lack of direct bilateral cooperation, except at the margins of the multilateral meetings and regional initiatives. Minister Kotzias expressed pleasure for meeting the President again in the Parliament. The need for establishing wider framework, providing positive movements and processes between the states is necessary, since the bilateral relations at the moment resemble a caged bird, unable to fly, stated Minister Kotzias. Fortunately, the two sides share values, traditions and merits and request the politicians to resolve the problems and establish realistic dimensions, while the excellent cooperation in many areas, such as police, defence should be broadened to the education, culture, exchange of expertise in the science and research centres and many other areas of priority.



BULGARIA IS A FRIEND AND SUPPORTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

The delegation of the Parliamentary Group for Cooperation with the Parliament of the Republic of Bulgaria, led by the Vice President of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, Ms. Frosina Tashevska-Remenski, met today with the President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, Mrs. Tsveta Karajancheva. Vice-President Remenski thanked for the unanimous support of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria on the Agreement on Friendship, Good Neighborhood and Cooperation with the Republic of Macedonia, as an act of translating the declarative efforts into specific activities of common interest, and a way to build new bridges of friendship and cooperation on all levels between the two countries. The current Government and the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia have initiated essential processes that are in the interest of the state and its political and regional

stability, so that the country courageously walks on its path to full membership in NATO and the European Union, Remenski said. Vice-President Remenski called for support from the Republic of Bulgaria and shared her European experiences and practices with the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia. President Karajancheva gladly offered the experience, especially on the functioning of the Bulgarian National Assembly, but also requested closer cooperation of the parliamentary commissions on issues related to the European integration. The Republic of Bulgaria and the current EU Council Presidency, taking into account the key priorities of integrating the Western Balkan region into the EU, introduces a personal investment and willingness to help implement the necessary reforms. On that road, the Republic of Macedonia can count on the Republic of Bulgaria as its sincere friend and supporter. The attendees



agreed that after the 11-years stalemate in the bilateral relations between the friendship groups, the activities should be intensified and dynamised in the future.

FIFTH SESSION OF THE SEECP PA

Delegation of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia to the Parliamentary Assembly of the South-East European Cooperation Process, led by the Head of the Delegation, Talat Xhaferi, President of the Assembly, participated at the 5th annual session of the SEECP PS, held on 13 and 14 April in Ljubljana, Republic of Slovenia. In his address, President Xhaferi underlined that Europe without the Western Balkans looks like a mosaic, in which few parts are missing in order for that picture to be complete and perfect. At the same time, in Europe, and globally, certain geopolitical and geostrategic processes are very significant: from the debt crisis, the referendum in the UK and the beginning of a process known as Brexit, then the refugee crisis to the latest cooling of relations between the UK, EU and Russia, clearly outlines these new geopolitical processes. Metaphorically speaking, the EU needs to fill that gap as soon as possible in its image with full integration of the Western Balkans region, thus completing the wholeness defined by the EU founding father like Schuman, Monnet, Gasperi, Adenauer, Churchill. I am convinced that the Parliamentary Assembly of the South East European Cooperation Process and other organizational



forms can and should help to find the right answers and measures of the current geostrategic processes; answers that will lead to the strengthening of the region from all aspects, and thus the strengthening of each country individually, concluded President Xhaferi.



GERMANY – FRIEND TO MACEDONIA AND THE REGION

The Chairman of the Committee on European Issues, Mr. Artan Grubi, and its members, met with a Delegation from the Committee on European Affairs in the German Bundestag, led by the Chairman Gunther Krichbaum. Mr. Grubi pointed out that the visits of the German colleagues is coming in the right time and is very needed for the country, since Germany is a key Member State of the Union and a great friend of Macedonia and the region. At the meeting held shortly before the publication of the European Commission Progress Report on Macedonia, Mr. Grubi stressed the conviction that the country would receive a clear and unconditional recommendation for the start of negotiations and requested German assistance in obtaining and negotiating date this year as well as for invitation to NATO membership at the Alliance's Summer Alliance. The MPs expressed satisfaction for the efforts by both sides to initiate new dynamics in the political dialogue and enrich the overall bilateral cooperation between the two states. It was also concluded that parliamentary cooperation must deepen. Macedonian MPs thanked their interlocutors for the continued support and dedication to the European integration of the countries of the Western Balkans, and they expressed their gratitude in particular for Germany's support through "the Berlin Process". The German MPs reaffirmed the support of the Federal Republic of Germany in relation to the country's European and Euro-Atlantic integration, assessing that Macedonia's integration into NATO and the EU will result in sustainable peace and stability within the country and in the region.



MEETING OF MACEDONIAN – FRENCH FRIENDSHIP GROUPS

The Chairman, MPs, Mr. Pance Ivanov and the Members of the Parliamentary Group of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia for Cooperation with the Parliament of the French Republic, met today with a Delegation from Friendship Group France - Macedonia at the French National Assembly led by its President, Mr. Bernard Sour. At the beginning of the meeting, Mr. Ivanov thanked France for the continuous support to issues that are extremely important to the country and its efforts on the road to the EU. The President of the Friendship Group, Mr. Bernard Sour, said that he was honored to attend this meeting and conveyed the message that the wishes and efforts for close cooperation between the two countries are commonly shared. He also noted that Macedonia is an important country for France, and therefore called for intensified cooperation, and more frequent contacts to enrich the relations between parliamentary administrators. Both sides welcomed the recent unconditional positive recommendation for the start of negotiations by the European Commission, hoping it to turn into an unconditional start date for negotiations, and they called for exchange between France and Macedonia in other fields, such as education, youth, sports, culture, cultural heritage, non-governmental sector, as well as study visits for the services.



ADDRESS OF THE EU HIGH REPRESENTATIVE, MS. FEDERICA MOGHERINI

The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, Ms. Federica Mogherini addressed at the 43rd Session of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia. At the beginning, she reconfirmed the decision by the European Commission to recommend to the Council to open negotiations, meaning that the country is back on track with a clear, clean, positive and unconditional recommendation to open. This is an achievement for all institutions of the country, from the President Gjorge Ivanov, to the Government, to the Parliament, to the different political groups and parties, to the local authorities, to the civil society, a contribution of every single citizen of this country. This is the strongest sign of maturity in a democratic system. The European Union integration process sometimes is a lot of procedures, standards, processes, conditions

to be met, but at the end of the day it is all about the transformation of a society and standards that the citizens want to see applied to their own lives, to their own communities, to their own society, the way in which their life happens every single day. She also recognized and acknowledged the impressive work and steps also in addressing bilateral issues and regional dynamics. Ms. Mogherini pointed out that she tends to avoid speaking about enlargement, but prefers speaking about the re-unification of Europe, seeing the potential in the Republic of Macedonia to move fast towards EU membership. At the end, she concluded that there is a new atmosphere in the country, recognised in Brussels and everywhere inside the European Union and hope that the Council at the end of June will follow the Commission's recommendation and determine a date for opening of negotiations.



WOMEN MPS CLUB UNIQUE GOAL: GENDER EQUALITY!

The Women MPs' Club recently marked the 15th anniversary of its formation. As the first club in the region, it has been an example for many years to other parliaments how women can unite around important issues, surpassing the political, ethnic and religious borders.

Among other things, it was emphasized that the Parliament will start with the realization of the project for promotion of women MPs club contribution. For this purpose, a "Women's room" will be opened in the Assembly, following the example of the Swedish Parliament, in which women MPs can debate to solve the problems of women. It was also pointed out that since the establishment of the Club, great results have been achieved in the protection of women's rights, but that they need to be much more involved in their promotion by adopting and implementing laws in the interests of gender equality. At the celebration of the 15th anniversary, they sent a message that they are satisfied with the achieved, but they are not satisfied that they are still considered as numbers and quotas.

The recently adopted Istanbul Convention should be a constitution for their future work.



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