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### FRANCE WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT WB COUNTRIES

The President of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, Mr. Talat Xhaferi, during the Speakers Conference in Vienna, held a bilateral meeting with the Vice-President of the National Assembly of France, Ms Carole Bureau-Bonnard and the Chair of the Commission for European Affairs in the French Senate, Ms Jean Bizet. The interlocutors assessed bilateral relations as good but pledged for more intensive high-level cooperation in the coming period.

President Xhaferi informed about the adoption of laws from the reform agenda and asked for support for the European integration process. The French side expressed confidence that France will continue to support the countries of the Western Balkans because it believes that their stability is essential for Europe, but that it will insist on strict adherence to the membership criteria.



## HISTORICAL MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER TSIPRAS

The President of the Assembly Talat Xhaferi, met today with the Prime Minister of the Republic of Greece, Mr. Alexis Tsipras, who is the first Greek prime minister to pay an official visit to the Republic of North Macedonia. President Xhaferi, assessing the meeting as historic, pointed out that after the entry into force of the Prespa Agreement, a legal framework was established that would allow parliamentary cooperation on all grounds and in that direction informed the attendees of the invited invitation to his counterpart Nikolaos Vucis to hold a bilateral visit to the Republic of North Macedonia, as well as a request to the Greek side for the establishment of a group of friends in the Greek Parliament with the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Prime Minister Tsipras, noted that major decisions have been made and major steps have been taken in

the past period, and in this context congratulated President Xhaferi on the ratification process of the Prespa Agreement, a difficult process both for the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia and for the Parliament of Greece. He expressed regret for the three-decade gap between the two parliaments, expecting that the Agreement opens the possibility of filling that gap. The Government of the Republic of Greece is taking steps to support the European integration processes of the Western Balkan countries, because it believes that it is a road that will provide peace and stability, which is important for the peoples of these countries, emphasized Tsipras. He assured President Xhaferi that Greece will give serious support and will be a trusted partner in achieving the strategic goals of the Republic of North Macedonia.



## 16TH JPC MEETING IN STRASBOURG

The 16th meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Committee - the Republic of North Macedonia and the European Union (the Parliamentary Stabilization and Association Committee) was held in the European Parliament in Strasbourg. At the meeting, parliamentarians focused on several aspects of the reform agenda, including reform of the judiciary, the fight against organized crime and corruption, the reform of the security and intelligence services, the reform of the public administration and human rights and the media. They welcomed the entry into force of the Prespa Agreement, as a clear commitment of the Republic of North Macedonia to resolve bilateral disputes through dialogue, to promote good neighborly relations and thus pave the way towards the Euro-Atlantic integration process.

The discussions also called for the government and the opposition to jointly ensure continuity and focus on reforms and visible progress on the European path, as well as continuing the implementation of EU-related reforms, and it was stressed that the country is well prepared for accession negotiations, given its long-standing candidate status. At the end of the meeting parliamentarians adopted [Recommendations](#) addressed to the European Parliament, the Parliament and the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, the Council of the EU and the European Commission.



## POLISH SUPPORT FOR NATO AND EU MEMBERSHIP

The Vice-President of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia Goran Misovski and the Parliamentary Group for Cooperation with the Parliament of the Republic of Poland met with Ryszard Terlecki, Ryszard Terletski, Deputy-Speaker of the Polish Sejm. Terlecki congratulated the adopted constitutional changes that opened the way for the Republic of North Macedonia to continue the process of integration into NATO. Republic of Poland Supports the Republic of North Macedonia in the aspirations for NATO and EU membership.

Vice-President Misovski informed the collocutor that the Assembly will continue to implement the obliga-

tions deriving from the Prespa Agreement. In the past period, the country was faced with really tough, but necessary decisions, which had to be brought to the benefit of the citizens and for the benefit of the country, given that NATO and EU membership are our strategic commitments for which there is a broad political consensus since their independence. The political, reform and economic criteria show that North Macedonia is moving in a positive direction, the MP Kuzmanovska said, and concluded that the reform process is inclusive with the opposition.



## HATS OFF ON THE SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTION OF THE NAME ISSUE

The Parliamentary Group for Cooperation with the Parliament of the Czech Republic and the Chair of the Defense Committee Harry Lokvenec, met with Jan Hamacek, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of the Czech Republic. The Chairperson of the Parliamentary Group, Jagoda Shahpaska, expressed satisfaction from the meeting with a delegation from a friendly country that we are connected through our Slavic roots. European integration is very important, because it means development in all social spheres, access to a larger market, placement of products in the wider European area. Euro-integration of the country, Shahpaska said, means fulfilling the vision of numerous politicians decades ago.

"Hats off" was Mr. Hamacek's comment on the successful resolution of the name issue and the acceptance of a difficult and painful compromise. He offered openness to share positive experiences on the road to NATO and the EU, but also to their mistakes that they made, with the aim, frankly, that the friendly country, possibly does not repeating them.

Mr. Lokvenec informed the guest on the defense reform processes through the preparation on the adopted Strategic Defense Review, as important in terms of joining the Alliance, as well as on the establishment of the Operational-Technical Agency, the Oversight Citizens' Council, aimed to strengthen confidence of the citizens in state institutions.



## STUFY VISIT FOR LGBTI RIGHTS IN NETHERLANDS

Parliamentarians from the Inter-Party Group for the Rights of LGBTI persons paid in a study visit to the Netherlands to obtain best parliamentary and legislative practices on this matter. Co-ordinator Maja Morachanin, informed its hosts that the group is the only parliamentary group in the region working on these topics. From the activities so far, she underlined the adoption of the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services and the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, in which sexual orientation and gender identity are explicitly listed as grounds for discrimination. She also emphasized the role of the group is to raise public

awareness of the elimination of hate speech, violence and discrimination against LGBTI people. In this context, she referred to the participation of MPs in a series of debates and conferences, as well as in the media campaign "Do not judge who loves who". The also MPs expressed support for the proposal of inclusion of the Republic of North Macedonia in the global Coalition for Equal Rights.



## INTEGRATION SHOULD CONTINUE, DESPITE BREXIT

In the framework of the Speakers Conference in Vienna, President Talat Xhaferi had a bilateral meeting with Mr. Andrej Danko, Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic. At the meeting, Xhaferi expressed gratitude for the open and continued bilateral support, especially for the ratification of the protocol for full NATO membership of the Republic of North Macedonia, informing that the entry into force of the Prespa Agreement shows the clear determination of the country for promotion of regional reconciliation and good neighborly relations, and stressed the commitment to meeting the tasks of the reform agenda and achieving visible progress on the European path.

Mr. Danko welcomed the achievement of the agreement with Greece as a brave, strategic step and as a clear signal to the international community that the country is ready to tackle challenges. Regarding the enlargement of the European Union, Speaker Danko expressed support for the integration of the Western Balkan countries and emphasized that the process should continue despite the internal problems of the Union, such as Brexit. President Xhaferi asked for support for receiving date to start negotiations this year as a strong impetus for continuing the reform course.



## PUBLIC DEBATE ON THE REFORM IN THE SECURITY SECTOR

The Committee on Defense and Security held a public debate on the Draft Law on the National Security Agency and the Proposal of the Law on Coordination of the Security and Intelligence Community in the Republic of North Macedonia.

The importance of security sector reform in terms of the country's accession to the EU and NATO is through legal regulation, control and oversight, to lay the foundations of a modern, professional and developed service of the new National Security Agency. On the other hand, the proposed law on coordination of the security-intelligence community will regulate the

manner of coordination of the security-intelligence services in the country. In the debate, experts in the area of defense and security, called for defining of the issue of national security, changes in the concept of the Coordination Council, inclusion of the BPS and the Intelligence and Financial Police as new members of the Council, changes in the manner of election of the Secretary General and the Agency service, harmonization of the legal methodology or the adoption of an integral security law.



## PUBLIC DEBATE ON THE LAW ON FREE ACCESS OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

The Committee on European Affairs held a public hearing on Draft Law on Free Access to Information of Public Character, aimed to give the opportunity to a wider circle of social actors in the country to express their opinions. The Chair of the Committee informed the participants on the OSCE remarks regarding the need to add a provision that the law refers to bodies that mainly working with public funds, to align the exemptions with international standards and establish a protocol to ensure the dissemination of information of public interest, while respecting the privacy of individuals.

Participants stressed that a proactive approach is needed regarding the publication of information by the Government as well as its institutions obligated to provide this information and publish a greater number of information on their websites. This would also reduce the requirements and the administrative procedures. It was also pointed out that this law is also important from the aspect of the freedoms and rights of the citizens for obtaining public information, but also from the aspect of prevention and detection of corruption of any kind in the society.



## 10<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF PARLIAMENT OF WOMEN IN MONTENEGRO

A Delegation of Women MPS took part at the 10th Session of the Parliament of Women held in the Parliament of Montenegro. The session was dedicated to the situation of women in the Western Balkan countries. The session was opened by the President of the Parliament of Montenegro, Ivan Brajovic, with the conclusion that the demands for increasing the political participation of women, greater economic independence and full protection from any form of violence were never only the demands of women, but that they were in fact the conditions and the obligations of every modern society.

The President of the Women MPs Club of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, Ms. Gulumerser Kasapi pointed out that: the women should be respected and supported every day in the year and that the 8th March, the International Women's Day, is only a good reminder for all the women who have decided to raise their voice and oppose the "social rules". She pointed out that she is proud to be able to boast of the achievements so far and the result of the work of the Club and was decisive that they will not stop here, but will continue along with all the women in the region, because the region needs women to



change the overall ambience of life.



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