

POLITICAL LEADERS' MEETING ON MACEDONIA EURO ATLANTIC PRIORITIES

- ☒ The leaders of the four largest political parties in Macedonia met Thursday December 13 to reach a consensus on key laws that are crucial for the country's integration into EU and NATO. The meeting was initiated by Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski with an intention to bring together the leaders of the ruling coalition and leaders of opposition. The discussions at this meeting were focused on development draft laws and projects of the Government, the parliamentary rules and procedures and other relevant issues. Macedonia's political leaders also agreed on Judicial Council nominee, President Branko Crvenkovski's choice, Naser Ahmetagic, won support from the ruling VMRO-DPMNE, the Social Democratic Alliance for Macedonia, the Democratic Union of Integration and the Democratic Party of Albanians. Completion of the Judicial Council was one of the main conditions imposed by NATO and the EU in regards to Macedonia's integration bids. [Makfax, 13/12/07]

SANADER ASKED TO FORM A NEW CROATIAN GOVERNMENT

- ☒ Croatian President Stipe Mesic formally designated the current Prime Minister Ivo Sanader to form a ruling coalition and head the Croatian government in the next four years. Three weeks earlier Ivo Sanader's Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) won the majority seats in the parliamentary elections but without securing the outright majority. HDZ claimed 66 of the 153 seats, but had to overcome a challenge by the opposition Social Democratic Party (SDP), which, with 56 seats, also tried to form a broad majority coalition. In the statement for national television, Mesic said that Sander "has provided guarantees that he has support of more than the minimum 77 deputies and is yet to announce the structure of the upcoming cabinet. The new government has the task of finishing the reforms needed for closing the EU membership talks. [DW World, 15/12/07]

KOSOVO STATUS ISSUE ON EU SUMMIT AGENDA

- ☒ On December 14, EU leaders met in Brussels in order to discuss few critical issues including Kosovo's future status and possible instability in the Balkans, after negotiation process has been exhausted. Referring to the Balkan conflict in 1990, Belgian Foreign Minister Karel de Gucht reminded the participants of "what happened in former Yugoslavia when EU did not take things in hand". Most of the EU countries, including EU's big four show their readiness to recognize Kosovo's independence although there is a fear that granting the province's secessions without the UN's approval could encourage similar actions in many countries in Europe. According to news agencies, EU leaders agreed on draft statement saying that the European Council agreed with the UN Secretary General that the status quo in Kosovo is unsustainable and urgent decision towards Kosovo settlement is essential for the region's stability. Kosovo has been a UN protectorate since the end of the 1998-1999 conflict. The draft summit statement stresses it is a unique case and does not establish a precedent. [B92, 13/12/07; Setimes, 14/12/07]