

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN ALBANIA

- ☒ Political parties in Albania can not reach a consensus on the question on the future president of Albania. The first two technical rounds of voting did not feature candidates. During the second round, on July 10, MPs voted for two candidates, the ruling coalition's candidate, Democratic Party (DP) official Bamir Topi, and Former Socialist Party Chairman, Fatos Nano. Again none of the candidates managed to gain the necessary 84 votes. Another attempt by Parliament to elect a successor to outgoing President Alfred Moisiu failed on Saturday (July 14th), amid a continuing boycott by the opposition. This time, the battle was between Bamir Topi of the ruling Democratic Party and Neritan Ceka leader of the opposition Democratic Alliance Party. The crisis started after an unsuccessful deal between the opposition and the government that Albania's representative to NATO, General Arjan Zaimi, would be the joint candidate of the ruling and opposition parties. If the parliament can not elect a president in five rounds, the country will be forced to hold general elections within 60 days, according to the constitution. The mandate of current president Moisiu expires on July 24, which means that the election process must end before this deadline. [SETimes.net, 10/07/07; Albanian news 14/07/07; Makfax 15/07/07]

KOSOVO PRIME MINISTER ASKS EU TO ACCELERATE TALKS ON THE STATUS OF THE REGION

- ☒ During a joint press conference with EU high representative Javier Solana on Wednesday July 11, Kosovo Prime Minister, Agim Ceku, asked the European Union not to wait for a resolution of UN Security Council and to start heading towards the recognition of independence for Kosovo. Javier Solana said that the European Union had one position on the issue and wanted UN Security Council to make the final decision about the independence of Kosovo. The day before, diplomats from the Security Council confirmed that western countries were working on a compromise that would let four months to Serbians and Albanians of Kosovo to reach an agreement. In case the talks fail, the resolution project would not contain any threat of independence. [AP, 11/07/07]

BULGARIA'S RULING COALITION DECIDED ON TWO MINISTERIAL POSTS

- ☒ Petar Dimitrov, MP from Bulgarian Socialist Party, is the new Bulgarian Minister for Economy and Energy and Miglena Tacheva from Movement of Simeon the Second (NDSV) is the new Justice Minister of Bulgaria. The choice that three-partite coalition consisted of Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), Movement for Simeon the Second (NDSV) and the Rights and Freedom Party (DPS) made last week

should preserve the balance between the three coalition partners. As it was announced in government's press release, the two appointments will be introduced and voted in Parliament on Wednesday. Dimitrov, head of parliamentary commission on budget and finance, will replace Rumen Ovcharov who resigned at the beginning of May and Tacheva, former deputy justice minister, will replace Georgi Petkanov. [B92,14/07/07]

POSITIVE SIGNALS FOR MACEDONIA

- ☒ Members of European Parliament suggested to their state officials in the Council to give Macedonia date for start of the accession negotiations as soon as possible. European Parliament last week adopted resolution on Macedonia which will be, according to Belgian diplomat, a very clear signal to European commission when deciding on starting negotiations. Although, it is not an obligatory document, this resolution means that Macedonia made a step forward, even though there is still a lot to be done until getting a date for starting the accession negotiations. In order to precisely discuss Macedonian Government activities in the next period, Macedonian Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and vice Prime Minister Ms. Gabriela Koneska will meet in Brussels the EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn and EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana. They will discuss the current political situation in Macedonia, political dialogue and the progress of reforms for fighting corruption in Macedonia. [Dnevnik, 16/07/07]