

ALBANIA ELECTED A PRESIDENT

- ☒ On Friday 20 July, Albania elected Democratic Party member Bamir Topi to take over the presidency in the country. In the first two rounds of voting, Topi and former PM, Fatos Nano were running for the post, but neither could gather the necessary votes, as the opposition boycotted the election process. In the third round, a new candidate -- centrist Democratic Alliance Party member Neritan Ceka, supported by the signature of 20 MPs joined the race, so in this round Nano was eliminated. Topi managed to get necessary votes and Ceka got only five votes. After the elections, various reactions emerged. The Socialist Parliamentary Group leader Ben Blushi resigned due to the decision of six members of his party to support Topi. On the other hand, after elections the Prime Minister Sali Berisha said that the fact that the parliament functioned in accordance with the constitution is a real victory for the rule of law. According to Albanian Constitution, the president-elect must receive three-fifths of the parliamentary votes -- or 84 total votes -- which required consensus between majority and opposition. If the

elections were not successful the country would have faced political crisis and early elections would have been necessary since outgoing President Moisiu's mandate ended Tuesday July 24. [SEE Times 23/07/07]

STABILIZATION AND ASSOCIATION COUNCIL MEETING

- ☒ Macedonian delegation led by Minister of Foreign Affairs, Antonio Milososki, attended the fourth session meeting of the Stabilization and Association Council between the European Union and the Republic of Macedonia. The meeting took place in Brussels on 24 July. Macedonian delegation consisted of Deputy Prime Ministers Imer Aliu and Zoran Stavreski, minister of Interior Gordana Jankulovska and Minister of Justice Mihajlo Manevski. The EU delegation was headed by State Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Portugal, Manuel Lobo Antunes, also including Slovenian Foreign Minister, Dimitrij Rupel, and representatives of EU member states, the Council of EU and the European Commission. The two parties discussed the progress made in implementing the political and economic criteria set in the Stabilization and Association Agreement as well as foreign policy issues of common interest and latest political occurrences in EU related to the reform treaty and

enlargement process. Generally, Brussels gave a positive feedback, especially on progress made in the reforms in public administration, regional cooperation and good relations with neighbor countries, but still did not mention possible term for start of the negotiations for EU accession. [B92, DW – World 24/07/07]

GRUEVSKI – DELIC MEETING IN SKOPJE

- ☒ Macedonian Prime Minister, Nikola Gruevski, last week in Skopje hosted Serbian Deputy Prime Minister, Bozidar Delic. The aim of the visit was to strengthen the traditionally good neighbourly relation between Serbia and Macedonia. The meeting focused on three questions: Economic cooperation, EU integration and Kosovo status. The most important conclusions both sides agreed upon were construction of a grid network and completion of the Belgrade-Skopje highway as well as fostering bilateral and regional cooperation. Delic in Skopje also met with Governor of Macedonian National bank Petar Goshev and Minister of Economy Vera Rafajlovska. [Mia, B92 24/07/07]