

THE ADRIATIC THREE TO GET NATO INVITATIONS

- ☒ Alliance diplomats stated to regional media that Albania, Croatia and Macedonia are likely to receive membership invitations to the next NATO enlargement summit in 2008. US President, George W. Bush, claimed Croatia has already earned its invitation, while Albania and Macedonia still have some reforms to implement before 2008. Albania needs additional progress on combating corruption and organized crime, while Macedonia should show notable progress with the political dialogue between the government and the opposition parties. The US president is expected to visit Tirana, Albania on June 10, and meet the heads of government of all three Adriatic states expecting to become NATO members soon. In the meantime, both Albanian and Macedonian governments are working hard on implementing required reforms. [*Makfax 21.5; Seeurope.Net 21.5*]

EU TO INTRODUCE NEW IMMIGRATION MEASURES

- ☒ The European Union will soon introduce new immigration measures for third countries (which include the Western

Balkans) as an answer to the economy's demands for a larger labour force and the need to curb illegal immigration. The EU will prepare a list of occupations and profiles which will soon be needed in the EU. Those who qualify will work under temporary agreements, as long as there is a need for their services. These measures, already referred to as the "blue card", will also apply to Western Balkans countries, once they sign the readmission agreements with the EU. The Western Balkans states are a significant source of immigrants, both legal and illegal, to the EU, which is why the negotiations about readmission agreements are a controversial political issue for the governments in the region. [*Dnevnik 21.5; Makfax 22.5*]

EU DEMANDS GREATER COOPERATION WITH ICTY FROM SERBIA

- ☒ One week after Serbia got its democratic government, EU Enlargement Commissioner, Mr. Olli Rehn, visited Serbia and discussed the prospects of re-opening the SAA negotiations between Serbia and the EU. Mr. Rehn stated that a lot depends on the new Serbian government and the level of cooperation with The Hague Tribunal. According to Mr. Rehn, negotiation can resume as soon as notable progress is shown regarding

efforts to arrest General Ratko Mladic and others indicted to the ICTY. Serbian President, Mr. Boris Tadic, confirmed that cooperation with the war crimes tribunal in The Hague is among the highest priorities of the new government and added that Serbia should not waste any more time when it comes to EU integration efforts. [*Balkan Times 21.5*]

EBRD REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR GREATER INVESTMENT IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

- ☒ The Annual EBRD conference was held last week in Kazan, Russia. EBRD representatives stated that South Eastern European economies experienced significant growth of 6.4% in 2006. The countries with highest rate of growth in the region are Bulgaria, Romania and Montenegro. EBRD experts stated that the forecasted rate of economic growth for SEE is also high – 5.7%, which is encouraging news to the governments on the region. The conference also hosted potential investors interested in financing projects in the region. Some of the SEE countries also sought EBRD support for some strategic infrastructural projects intended to boost the economic development of the region. [*Avaz 21.5; Seeurope.Net 22.5; Jutarnji 21.5*]