

THE EU CONCLUDED TALKS ON STABILIZATION AND ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT WITH SERBIA

- ☒ The talks on Stabilization and Association agreement with Serbia are already finalized. EU Enlargement commissioner Oli Rehn said that "he is happy to announce they have reached a technical deal on the content and text of the agreement." Still, signing the deal depends on Serbia's full cooperation with the ICTY. The Head of the Serbian delegation, Serbian Prime Deputy Minister, Bozidar Delic is optimistic and hopes that the requirements will be accomplished by the end of the year and in 2008 the country will be recognized as official EU candidate. EU is expecting the chief ICTY prosecutor Carla Del Ponte's upcoming report on Serbia's co-operation with the ICTY, on base of which it will proceed towards finalization of the SAA. Independently, in an interview with Austrian daily, Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel, responding to a question on whether it was possible to sign the Stabilization and Association Agreement with Serbia before Hague fugitive Ratko Mladić was handed over and the Kosovo issue settled, said he did not see any contradictions in those plans. [Setimes 11/09; B92 14/09/2007]

MONTENEGRIN PRESIDENT VISITS MACEDONIA

- ☒ President of Montenegro, Filip Vujanovic, met with his Macedonian counterpart last week in Skopje, Branko Crvenkovski. During the meeting they discussed their countries' aspirations for EU and NATO, as well as the possibility of establishing a joint business council in order to increase the economic co-operation. Macedonian president stressed that Macedonia is ready to share its experience and to give full support to Montenegro. Vujanovic, also met with Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and Parliament speaker Ljubisha Georgievski. Gruevski and Vujanovic confirmed historically, good and friendly relations between Macedonia and Montenegro and they should in the future become even deeper and stronger not only on bilateral, but on the regional and European level [SeTimes 12/09/2007, Makfax , MIA 12/09/2007]

FRANCE REITERATED ITS OPPOSITION TO EU MEMBERSHIP FOR TURKEY

- ☒ French President Nikola Sarkozy restated his opposition to EU membership for Turkey but also added he would not block the countries ongoing accession talks. In his opinion, the negotiations on 30 chapters should lead to a special partnership for Turkey. Obviously, Sarkozy's position on Turkey promoted during election campaign has not

changed. German Prime Minister, Angela Merkel, is also against full membership for Turkey and has urged a "special partnership" as an alternative while her coalition partner, the Social Democrats, are in favor of Turkey joining the EU. Meanwhile, Turkey's new foreign minister and chief EU negotiator, Ali Babacan, insists on Ankara to continue with reforms. So far the country has adopted significant domestic reform program and the government hope to respond EU standards requirements in most areas by 2013. [Setimes 12/09/2007]

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SECURITY IN SOFIA

- ☒ Last week, Sofia hosted an international conference on security. Interior Minister Rumen Petkov, who attended the conference said that the fight against terrorism requires multinational co-operation through trans-border operations, the official in charge of co-operation with the UN war crimes tribunal. At the conference, Nikolay Zlatev, head of the National Security Service presented a report by the Bulgarian counter-intelligence services which states that there is no danger of a radicalization of Islam in Bulgaria. According to Valentin Petrov, head of the National police Service, crime rates in Bulgaria have decreased to levels prior to 1990 and the same applies to the number of organized crime gangs. [Setimes 13/09/2007]