

MACEDONIA SIGNED VISA FACILITATION AGREEMENT WITH EU

☒ Macedonian Interior Minister Gordana Jankulovska, EU Security and Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini and the Portuguese Interior Minister in Brussels have signed visa facilitation and readmission agreements which will make easier for Macedonian citizens to acquire EU visas mainly in terms of low visa fee costs and quicker application procedure. The Agreement will bring simplified document requirements for certain groups of travelers for example students, business people, journalist, participants in scientific and cultural activities and civil society representatives. Document envisages free visas for short-stay of Macedonian citizens in Romania and Bulgaria. Similar agreements EU signed with Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. The Agreement will enter into force in 2008. [Makfax , 18/09/2007]

INTERNATIONAL TROIKA CONTINUES KOSOVO TALKS IN LONDON

☒ International troika will hold a meeting in London in order to continue negotiations on Kosovo status with officials from Belgrade and Pristina. It is expected that at the meeting the two sides will establish conditions for direct talks between them. Belgrade Delegation led by Kosovo Minister Slobodan Samardzic and Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic will firstly meet international envoys in London and will present List of Topics, all focused on Kosovo Status. They expect Kosovo officials to also expose their proposal by September 19. According to Jeremic, Belgrade diplomatic initiative is aimed at getting the European Union to back away from the idea of unilaterally recognized independent Kosovo. The Albanian side, led by Kosovo Prime Minister Agim Ceku warned that Kosovo is no longer prepared to accept any more postponements and they want to finish the process Ahtisari started regardless of the possible consequences. [B92 18/09/2007]

WESTERN BALKANS SECURITY CONFERENCE IN SLOVENIA

☒ Last week Slovenia hosted a two day conference on stability in the Western Balkans. At the opening, Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel underlined that after Slovenia, he expects that all Balkan countries will follow its path to EU membership. Speaking on security in the region, he mentioned Kosovo issue by reminding that, "the three principles established by Contact Group - that Kosovo cannot be divided, that there is no return to the situation before 1999, and that the province cannot be adjoined to any neighboring territory -- should be respected in ongoing negotiations." According to Slovenian foreign policy chief, offering the Western Balkans a European perspective is a key tool for solving the security issues in the region. Council of Europe, Deputy Secretary General Maud de Boer Buquicchio noted that although all Western Balkans states have made progress over the past years, the region is still facing security risks, mainly because of organized crime, people trafficking and corruption that are biggest threats in the region. [Setimes 23/09/2007, B92 23/09/2007]