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COMMUNICATION

WRITTEN PROCEDURE

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Subject: **END OF WRITTEN PROCEDURE**
Council conclusions on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association
Process
The Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Albania

Delegations are informed that the written procedure, opened by CM 1941/20 of 24 March 2020, was completed on 25 March 2020 at 10h00.

All delegations agreed to:

- the approval of the Council conclusions on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association process - the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Albania, as set out in Annex 1 of document 6954/20; and
- the approval of the accompanying Council statements, as set out in Annexes 3 and 4 of document 6954/20.

Therefore, the above Council conclusions on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association process - the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Albania and the accompanying Council statements are approved.

The statement by the Commission and the statement by Bulgaria are reproduced in the Annex to this CM.

The above statements will be included in the summary of acts adopted by the written procedure as the statements to be entered in the Council minutes, in accordance with the third subparagraph of Article 12(1) of the Council's Rules of Procedure.

Statement by the Commission

In accordance with its updated report, the Commission considers that on the issues listed by the Council for Albania as necessary for the adoption of the negotiating framework and prior to the first intergovernmental conference, Albania has already achieved significant progress by increasing its efforts and delivering further tangible and sustainable results in these key areas. The Commission will continue to monitor the progress and track record on all these areas and will return to them in the annual country reports on Albania.

Statement by the Republic of Bulgaria with regard to the adoption of the Council Conclusions on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process

With reference to paragraphs 3, 8 and 10 of General Affairs Council Conclusions on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process of March 2020,

Pursuant to its statements for the minutes of the Council Conclusions on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process of December 2012 and of October 2019,

Bearing in mind the Communication of the European Commission on "Enhancing The Accession Process - A Credible EU Perspective For The Western Balkans" of 5 February 2020,

Also bearing in mind the Treaty on Friendship, Good-Neighbourliness and Cooperation between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia (hereafter "the Treaty") and its importance in paving the way towards the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the latter,

Recalling that the Treaty's implementation has been largely blocked since November 2019 due to the unilateral decision of the Republic of North Macedonia to suspend indefinitely its participation in the work of the Joint Multidisciplinary Expert Commission on Historical and Educational Issues, established under Art. 8. 2. of the Treaty.

The Republic of Bulgaria reiterates the following:

1. The formulation used in paragraph 3 of the Council Conclusions in reference to the **Communication of the Commission** does not prejudice or limit the positions that Member States, including the Republic of Bulgaria, will be taking while working on the future negotiating frameworks for the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Albania;
2. The implementation of the Bilateral Treaty will be evaluated at all stages of the accession process of the Republic of North Macedonia to the EU, including prior to giving the Republic of Bulgaria's consent to **holding the first Intergovernmental Conference (IGC)**.

- 2a. The Republic of Bulgaria would like to highlight its understanding that the implementation of the Treaty shall encompass:
- Guaranteeing that adherence to the amendments in the Republic of North Macedonia’s constitution under the Prespa Agreement will be implemented in parallel with strict adherence to the Treaty in its entirety;
 - Active engagement by the Republic of North Macedonia in reaching a definitive agreement on the entire spectrum of the work of the Joint Multidisciplinary Expert Commission on Historical and Educational Issues created under the Treaty, including reaching agreement on key figures and events from our common history with the Republic of North Macedonia up to 1944, on specific dates for the joint commemoration of those events and figures on which agreement has been reached; and replacement of information signs and other indications, including those on historical and cultural monuments, in pursuance of the agreed texts;
 - The abstention of political figures and representatives of state institutions in the Republic of North Macedonia from statements/positions that could be interpreted as putting into question or contradicting the texts agreed upon by the two governments;
 - Discontinuation by the Republic of North Macedonia of any support to organizations claiming the existence of a so-called “Macedonian minority” in the Republic of Bulgaria, including in international organisations such as the Council of Europe and in multilateral formats and monitoring mechanisms;
 - Alignment of Republic of North Macedonia’s positions and actions in international organizations and forums with Article 11 of the Treaty, including by declaring that there are no historical and demographic grounds for seeking minority status for any group of citizens on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria.

- The undertaking of measures by the authorities in the Republic of North Macedonia to actively prevent, and where necessary investigate and prosecute, any form of discrimination or hate speech against its citizens with Bulgarian self-identification or Bulgarian descent and cultural affiliation;
- Initiation by the Republic of North Macedonia of a rehabilitation process of the victims of the Yugoslav communist regime, repressed because of their Bulgarian self-identification;
- Swift implementation of the reform of the intelligence and security services, an important part of which would be the unveiling of collaborators from modern-day Republic of North Macedonia who worked for the security and intelligence services of former Yugoslavia.

2b. Before it can approve the future Negotiating Framework for accession of the Republic of North Macedonia to the EU, the Republic of Bulgaria expects tangible actions and results in the implementation of the Treaty on behalf of the Republic of North Macedonia.

The Republic of Bulgaria's agreement to the future Negotiating Framework will be conditional, inter alia, upon the following:

- The reference to good neighbourly relations, including the full implementation of treaties between the Republic of North Macedonia and EU Member States as a requirement against which progress will be measured throughout the accession process in the future Negotiating Framework and one whose implementation will be assessed within negotiating chapter 35 "Others";

- Proactive guarantees provided by the Republic of North Macedonia in multilateral fora that the use of the short name envisaged in the Prespa Agreement refers solely to the political entity “Republic of North Macedonia” and not to the geographical region of North Macedonia, part of which falls within the sovereign territory of the Republic of Bulgaria. In addition, solely the full name of the Republic of North Macedonia should be used in EU documents/positions/statements, including the future Negotiating Framework. The Republic of Bulgaria uses the constitutional name “Republic of North Macedonia” *erga omnes* as the only name of that country;
- Implementation of the “language clause” agreed between Sofia and Skopje in the agreements of the Republic of North Macedonia with the EU, including in the future Negotiating Framework. Thus, the linguistic norm spoken by the population of the Republic of North Macedonia should only be referred to as “the official language of the Republic of North Macedonia” in EU documents/positions/statements, including the future Negotiating Framework. No document/position/statement by the EU and its institutions can be interpreted as recognition of the existence of a separate so-called “Macedonian language”.

3. The Republic of Bulgaria will give its consent to holding the **first IGC with the Republic of Albania** once further tangible progress has been achieved in guaranteeing the rights of the Bulgarian national minority in the country, especially in the context of the forthcoming population census.