



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



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**Press statement by the President of the European Council
Herman Van Rompuy,
following his meeting with the President of the
former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Gjorge Ivanov**

It is my pleasure to welcome President Ivanov on his visit to Brussels. We discussed today the European perspective for his country, which has candidate status since 2005. We agreed on the importance of maintaining a strong focus on the EU track and achieving further results in the High Level Accession Dialogue with the European Commission. While welcoming the important reforms already made, I encouraged further efforts, in particular on freedom of expression, electoral reform and interethnic relations.

Domestic stability and reconciliation remain of utmost importance in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as in the rest of the region. This is why the EU gives weight to the implementation of the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement. The EU remains fully supportive of the spirit and the letter of this Agreement, which is an essential element of democracy and the rule of law.

We also discussed the name issue and I took the opportunity to recall the relevance of good neighbourly relations for the accession process. I encourage both countries to find a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution. Moreover, regional cooperation is essential to European integration and in this context, I welcome the Chairmanship of your country, Mr. President, in the South East European Cooperation Process.

To conclude, the European Union remains fully committed to the European future of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. I welcome the strong public support for the EU in the country and I am confident that success is achievable, once the remaining issues have been resolved.

The EU is ready to help, but ultimately it is a task for each country to implement the necessary reforms and fulfill the criteria. It is my hope that all countries in the region, including your country, Mr. President, continue to advance towards the EU. The future of your country lies in Europe.

P R E S S

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