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PRESS RELEASE

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Since its establishment, AHEPA has been the guardian of the national issues of its native homeland. Within this context, AHEPA answered the recent challenge from the FYROM and its aspirations for NATO membership under the name of “Macedonia.”

AHEPA performed its patriotic duty of informing the Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs of Canada as to the chronic and unresolved challenge of the FYROM’s name claim due to the intransigence of its leadership. It also ensured that the Ministers were aware of the certain pre-conditions of a state to qualify for a membership invitation based on NATO Treaty’s Articles 2 and 10.

We believe that our letter has been extremely constructive while strengthening the national rights of Greece. We also want to inform the wider Greek community that AHEPA will continue supporting every national challenge faced by Greece which is always based on the immutable principles of Hellenism: Democracy, Freedom and Civilization.

For more information on AHEPA and its work, visit our website at www.ahepatoronto.org.

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April 11, 2012

Hon. Baird, John, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Hon. Peter Gordon MacKay - Minister of National Defence
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Re: The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – NATO Membership

Honourable Minister Baird and MacKay:

NATO will be holding its 25th summit in Chicago Illinois, U.S.A. on May 20 and 21, 2012. One of the three major themes of this year's summit will be for the alliance to strengthen its network of partners across the globe. We understand that the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will be seeking entry into the alliance further to the unanimous decision by the partners in Bucharest 2008 for an invitation to be extended as soon as a mutually agreeable solution to the name issue with Greece has been reached.

Since then, the International Court of Justice has passed a ruling that Greece was in violation of Article 11(1) of the Interim Accord of 1995 which provides for Greece not to object to FYROM's application into international organizations unless it is referred to in such organizations under a different name than previously agreed through United Nations Security Council resolution 817 (1993).

We support NATO Secretary General Rasmussen's statement made on December 5, 2011, the day of the ICJ ruling, that "The ruling does not affect the decision taken by NATO allies at the Bucharest Summit in 2008. We agreed that an invitation will be extended to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as soon as a mutually acceptable solution to the name issue has been reached. This decision was reiterated at subsequent summit and ministerial meetings".

Since the Bucharest 2008 summit, the FYROM has embarked on a hostile and irredentist policy flagrantly violating historical truths regarding the Symbol of the Sun of Vergina and casting doubt on the territorial integrity of the south Balkans.

The Greek government has respectfully requested, on numerous occasions, for the FYROM to abandon its provocative claims against Greek sovereignty and has requested the continuance of negotiations under United Nations auspices for the resolution of the name issue as a precondition for an invitation to join NATO in accordance with the decision made at Bucharest 2008.

Over the past three months the FYROM has also embarked on a campaign designed to equate the ICJ ruling, which they present to be in their favor, with justification for attaining a NATO membership. Please allow us to properly define the issue.

Firstly, we would emphasize that Greece did not object to the FYROM's invitation because of the name dispute. FYROM applied for membership in Bucharest under its provisional name. Greece's countermeasure in Bucharest was in response to the FYROM's unfriendly, uncooperative and irredentist behavior since the 1995 Interim Agreement.

Secondly, FYROM has not established its suitability to join NATO because it has displayed a history of not adhering to the principles of the North Atlantic Treaty.

ARTICLE 2 of the treaty requires that parties "will contribute toward the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations...by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded, and by promoting conditions of stability and well-being". The FYROM's irredentist behavior toward Greece cannot be disputed. Written and oral statements have been made that support cold war ambitions against Greece's territorial sovereignty. The NATO alliance was founded to oppose and defend against such aggression.

Of particular disappointment were statements made by FYROM's Prime Minister, Nikola Gruevski that the bilateral talks under the auspices of the U.N. were a "waste of time". An aspiring leader of a NATO member country should have greater respect for the U.N. and its efforts through Mr. Nimetz to resolve the name dispute.

Thirdly, the ICJ ruling does not compel Greece to relinquish its rights under the North Atlantic Treaty, ARTICLE 10, which requires unanimous agreement to "invite any other European state in a position to further the principles of this treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic Area". Clearly, the FYROM does not meet the admission criteria of ARTICLE 10 given the blatant irredentist and uncooperative actions and behavior it has displayed over the past three and four years.

NATO members at the Chicago Summit should therefore not lose clear sight of Greece's reasons for objection at the Bucharest Summit. The name issue is bilateral in nature and the ICJ ruling cannot eradicate NATO's obligations to uphold its principles, under ARTICLES 2 & 10, without violation of the North Atlantic Treaty.

We kindly request that summit discussions on this issue include the official response of the Greek government to the ICJ ruling which is as follows: "The ICJ's ruling does not have a bearing on the name dispute and that such a dispute, as the ICJ suggested, should be resolved within the framework of the U.N. Security Council resolutions and through negotiations under the auspices of the U.N." In short, the name dispute falls under the jurisdiction of the Security Council and FYROM's candidacy for NATO membership should be judged by the North Atlantic Treaty.

AHEPA is the largest Hellenic association in the world with chapters in the United States, Canada, Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria & UK and sister chapters in Australia and New Zealand. It was established in 1922 by visionary Greek Americans to protect Hellenes from prejudice originating from the KKK, and in its history, AHEPA joined with the NAACP and B'nai B'rith International to fight discrimination. The mission of the AHEPA family is to promote the ancient Greek ideals of education, philanthropy, civic responsibility and family and individual excellence through community service and volunteerism.

Yours truly,

George Vassilas
President
AHEPA Canada