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## MACEDONIA: WAR ON HOLD

Although a political agreement has now been signed, and NATO is poised to enter Macedonia, the possibility of a full-blown civil war, with serious regional consequences, remains high. This briefing paper continues ICG's analysis of the Macedonian crisis.<sup>1</sup> It examines what has happened in the past several weeks, the political agreement signed by the contending parties on 13 August 2001, and what yet needs to be done, in particular by the international community, if that agreement, against still heavy odds, is to bring peace.

### I. OVERVIEW

Macedonian and Albanian political leaders signed a political agreement – hailed by its Western midwives as a peace agreement – on 13 August 2001. NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson and the European Union's High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, flew to Skopje to attend the signing ceremony. But the strange context of the signing showed just how implausible it is that, without further extraordinary efforts, the agreement will actually provide a workable way to keep multiethnic Macedonia out of civil war. Details of the agreement had been hammered out by 8 August in Ohrid, a resort town chosen for the negotiations because it was some distance away from the latest fighting. Signature was delayed five days, however, while Macedonian government troops and ethnic Albanian rebels engaged in the deadliest series yet of tit-for-tat retaliations. Terms of the agreement were withheld from the public lest they provoke violent responses from hardliners on both sides. The ceremony, when it finally occurred, was carried out almost furtively, in a small room of the President's residence, without live television.

The Ohrid agreement provides for significant constitutional amendments and political reforms that would improve the status of the ethnic Albanian minority (approximately one-third of the country's population of two million) while

maintaining the unity of the Macedonian state. It requires ratification in parliament, however, by a vote of two-thirds, within 45 days of signature.<sup>2</sup>

Each of the main players has its own set of highly sensitive conditions that must be met before the agreement can begin to fulfil its potential:

- ❑ The Macedonian side insists the ethnic Albanian rebels must prove their good faith by giving up their arms to NATO before it will ratify the agreement.
- ❑ The ethnic Albanian rebels insist that they will not disarm until the Macedonian side proves its good faith by ratifying the agreement.

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<sup>1</sup> See ICG Balkans Briefing, *Macedonia: Still Sliding* (27 July 2001), and ICG Balkans Reports No. 113, *Macedonia: The Last Chance for Peace* (20 June 2001), and No. 109, *The Macedonian Question: Reform or Rebellion* (5 April 2001).

<sup>2</sup> The 45-day deadline for parliamentary ratification is contained in Annex C of the agreement. As discussed below, the chronological, political and confidence-building relationships between ratification and other vital steps along the road to peace, including disarmament of the ethnic Albanian rebels, are likely to be highly contentious in the days ahead. Annex C also requires that parliament adopt one of the important promised reforms – a law on decentralisation of local government – within 45 days.

- NATO says it will deploy in Macedonia to collect the rebels' weapons but only for 30 days and not until a firm cease-fire is in place. (Gunfire was still crackling sporadically near Skopje on 13 August, after the signing, and Macedonian special forces used at least a dozen heavy fire artillery grenades during an unsuccessful attempt to recapture a portion of Tetovo the evening of 14 August.) NATO did announce on 14 August, however, that it had reached agreement with the NLA on terms and procedures for an eventual arms turnover.

The substantially mirror-image requirements obviously can only be satisfied with considerable further effort and finesse – and more than a modicum of good will by all concerned. Unfortunately, despite the agreement, there is little trust or even expectation of peace among either ethnic Albanians or Macedonians. That puts a heavy burden on the international community, which will need to decide a number of questions urgently. These include whether NATO's mission should be expanded to include quicker entry, perhaps without all its conditions having been met; whether the mission should have a more open-ended time frame and a more vigorous, traditional peacekeeping role; whether NATO can do more to stop the flow of arms and fighters across the border from Kosovo; as well as how to use the period before an anticipated donors conference to leverage badly needed economic assistance with both ethnic Albanians and the Macedonian government.<sup>3</sup>

## II. MILITARY BACKGROUND TO THE 13 AUGUST AGREEMENT

A familiar pattern has developed in Macedonia. As soon as an agreement seems within reach, an explosion of violence threatens to derail the peace process. After a gruelling seven weeks of negotiations led by a senior EU representative, former French Minister of Defence Francois Leotard, and a special U.S. representative, Ambassador James Pardew, the Macedonians and ethnic Albanians reached a tentative political agreement on 8 August. The ethnic Albanian rebels indicated acceptance through a statement issued by Ali Ahmeti, political director of the National Liberation Army (NLA).

While the political negotiations were proceeding at Ohrid, NATO said it could begin deployment into Macedonia to disarm the rebels within 48 hours under appropriate circumstances.<sup>4</sup> It conducted parallel negotiations of its own with Macedonian President Boris Trajkovski and the NLA. The talks with Trajkovski have sought to define the scope of the NATO mission and to devise an amnesty plan for ethnic Albanian fighters who turn in their weapons. At the same time, NATO met with Ali Ahmeti to discuss a "technical agreement" specifying weapons to be collected and modalities.<sup>5</sup>

Just as the last compromises were being reached by the Macedonian and ethnic Albanian negotiators in Ohrid on 8 August, the political agreement was cast into doubt by a spiral of violence worse than anything the country had yet experienced. It began when five ethnic Albanian rebels were slain by Macedonian police in a Skopje neighbourhood. Although Minister of Interior Ljube Boskovski portrayed the pre-dawn raid as a success, the ethnic Albanian rebels retaliated within 48 hours with two ambushes that killed eighteen Macedonian soldiers. Additionally, five Macedonian highway workers were abducted and brutalised. Macedonian-

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<sup>3</sup> Annex C states that the four Macedonian and ethnic Albanian political parties signatory to the 13 August political agreement invite the European Union, the World Bank and others of the international community to convene such a conference after parliament has ratified the political agreement and passed the law on decentralisation of local government.

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<sup>4</sup> NATO Spokesman Major Barry Johnson announced in a Skopje press conference on 6 August 2001 that NATO troop deployment could begin within 48 hours of signing a political agreement.

<sup>5</sup> NATO announced that it signed this technical agreement with the NLA on 14 August.

language television repeatedly broadcast graphic footage of the men, who had initials – presumably of the torturers – carved into their backs.<sup>6</sup>

Macedonian officials informed Western diplomats on 8 August that the government would launch a major retaliatory military offensive. They said they would sign the peace agreement on 13 August, but only if the international community did not block this offensive. Macedonian politicians, especially the prime minister and the speaker of the parliament, argued that they could not sell the peace agreement to legislators and the public unless the government first demonstrated its strength on the battlefield. In effect, they insisted on having free rein to fight until the official signing.

For two days, the country held its breath in anticipation while Western entreaties to call off the offensive were rebuffed. The attacks came in waves throughout the weekend of 11-12 August as aircraft and helicopters recently repaired in Ukraine provided air cover for strikes at alleged NLA strongholds. Urban warfare raged in Tetovo and in the villages to its north while a second front was opened in Radusa, on the Kosovo border between Skopje and Tetovo. A cease-fire was called late on 12 August but was broken early the next morning.

Despite the firepower employed, the pyrotechnics do not seem to have produced many additional casualties or shifted control of much territory. It remains to be seen what psychological impact, if any, they will prove to have on either side. Since the Macedonian offensive began, however, there have been several notable developments that could influence both military and political calculations. Firstly, there is growing evidence that the NLA is being actively supported and supplied from Kosovo more extensively than previously estimated. Secondly, circumstantial evidence suggests that the NLA is no longer united (if it ever was), and a new group, perhaps a rival, has emerged.<sup>7</sup> Thirdly, unlike in Kosovo in 1999,

extensive sympathy among ethnic Albanians for the rebel fighters has not translated into many new, indigenous recruits to armed struggle. Ethnic Albanians in Macedonia have not picked up weapons and attacked their neighbours.

The Macedonian government claims that shelling came from villages inside Kosovo and that between 600 and 1,000 Kosovo Albanians entered Macedonia near Radusa, where fighting was particularly heavy.<sup>8</sup> A previously unknown ethnic Albanian organisation, the Albanian National Army (ANA or AKSH in Albanian), issued a press release to all media in the Kosovo capital Pristina on 6 August claiming responsibility for the murder of two Serbian policemen 3 August 2001 in Muhovac village, in southern Serbia.<sup>9</sup> The ANA described its objective as a "pan-Albanian war for national union of the Albanians in one Albania".<sup>10</sup> The same group claimed responsibility for the two ambushes on 8 and 9 August, which killed eighteen Macedonian soldiers.

If a new ethnic Albanian rebel group from Kosovo has indeed taken a major part in the latest round of fighting, it would lend support to the Macedonian government's claim that at least some aspects of the conflict have been exported from Kosovo. The presence of a new group could also greatly complicate an arms collection exercise since NATO has hitherto been negotiating with the NLA.

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<sup>6</sup> MTV, A1, Sitel, Kanal 5 and Thelma news broadcasts from 8-11 August 2001.

<sup>7</sup> The ANA, see below.

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<sup>8</sup> ICG telephone interviews with eyewitnesses in Radusa confirm that some ethnic Albanians from Kosovo crossed the border on 11-12 August but ICG cannot verify their numbers.

<sup>9</sup> This was the most serious incident in southern Serbia since the former Liberation Army of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja was demilitarised and neutralised and Serbian security forces regained full responsibility for the Presevo Valley and the erstwhile Ground Safety Zone (GSZ) on the border to Kosovo in spring 2001. See ICG Balkans Report No. 116, *Peace in Presevo: Quick Fix or Long Term Solution?* (10 August 2001).

<sup>10</sup> As reported in the Macedonian Information Agency (MIA) daily report on 6 August 2001.

### III. THE POLITICAL AGREEMENT OF 13 AUGUST

Negotiations on the agreement reached at Ohrid 8 August and signed five days later were conducted for the Macedonian side by Prime Minister Lupco Georgievski and President Boris Trajkovski, both of the VMRO-DPMNE party,<sup>11</sup> and former prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski of the SDSM party.<sup>12</sup> They were conducted for the ethnic Albanian side by Arben Xhaferi of the DPA party<sup>13</sup> and Imer Imeri of the PDP party.<sup>14</sup> Georgievski and, to a lesser extent, Trajkovski saw the negotiations as a zero sum game in which any compromise was likely to lead to an ethnic partition of the country. Crvenkovski, who represents the more moderate Macedonian viewpoint, believed that some modest changes to the constitution were inevitable if full-scale civil war was to be averted. The two ethnic Albanian negotiators approached the negotiations as an opportunity to change drastically the basic premises upon which the Republic of Macedonia was founded.<sup>15</sup>

The agreed reforms will – if implemented – greatly expand minority rights but they fall short of initial demands to elevate ethnic Albanians to equal status with Macedonians as a “constituent nationality” in the country. Instead, they provide for amendment of key passages of the constitution, including its preamble, to portray a concept of citizenship that removes what Albanians and the country’s other, smaller, minorities perceive as the preferential status formerly given to Macedonians.

The political agreement would also broadly expand use of the Albanian language in communities with substantial numbers of ethnic Albanians, prevent a Macedonian majority in parliament from ignoring minority concerns in

legislation relating to cultural or ethnic issues, increase ethnic Albanians in the police force and public administration, recognise the importance of Islam and Catholicism in the country, and decentralise the government structure. The ethnic Albanian negotiators generally succeeded in expanding minority rights. The Macedonian negotiators limited the erosion of their status as a constituent nationality. In general, both sides find the agreement unsatisfactory but workable – if they can be persuaded that the other side will act in good faith.

The most contentious issues were resolved in the following manner:

#### A. USE OF ALBANIAN LANGUAGE

It was agreed that the Albanian language may be used at the local level in municipalities where Albanians comprise at least 20 per cent of the population. Albanian can also be used to communicate with representatives of central government branch offices. Albanian can be spoken in parliament (with a simultaneous translation provided in Macedonian) and in parliamentary committees. The Macedonian language, however, will be the only official one for government sessions, and will continue to be used as the country’s official language at the international level.<sup>16</sup>

#### B. PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF ETHNIC ALBANIANS

Public administration jobs will be reserved for ethnic minorities based on their percentage of the population according to the most recent census. Under new guidelines, ethnic Albanian presence in the police force will be increased dramatically, and local authorities will gain

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<sup>11</sup> The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation-Democratic Party for Macedonian Unity.

<sup>12</sup> The Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia.

<sup>13</sup> The Democratic Party of Albanians (also known as PDSH in the Albanian language abbreviation).

<sup>14</sup> The Democratic Prosperity Party (also known as PPD in the Albanian language abbreviation).

<sup>15</sup> The ethnic Albanian rebels did not have a seat at the table but their viewpoints were assumed to influence the positions taken by the ethnic Albanian political party leaders.

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<sup>16</sup> How sensitive the language issue is was demonstrated at the press conference held by the principal Macedonian and ethnic Albanian negotiators after they signed the political agreement on 13 August. When Mr. Xhaferi addressed reporters in Albanian and referred to the confirmation of his right to do so in the agreement, Prime Minister Georgievski walked out in protest and President Trajkovski called for Xhaferi to apologise, *The New York Times*, 14 August 2001.

some influence on the selection of police chiefs in their communities.

The Ministry of Interior (MVR) retains its central structure but recruitment of minority police will become a new priority. The U.S. had previously signed an agreement with Macedonia to train 500 ethnic Albanian policemen. Under the new guidelines, an additional 500 ethnic Albanian cadets will be trained and enter the police force by the end of 2003. These 1,000 new ethnic Albanian policemen will mainly be employed in regions populated with Albanians and in proportion to the demographic composition of communities.

Local police chiefs will be selected by municipal councils from among three candidates proposed by the Ministry of Interior. If a municipal council refuses the candidates, a second list will be proposed. If the second list is also refused, the government will make the appointment in consultation with the municipality.

#### **C. ETHNIC MINORITIES' INCREASED VOTING CAPACITY IN PARLIAMENT**

In future all legislation with cultural or linguistic significance will require a two-thirds majority including at least half the affected minority's members of parliament. The ethnic Albanian negotiators fought hard for this change. Currently, ethnic Albanians hold only 24 seats in the 120-seat parliament, and laws can be passed without a single Albanian vote. There is no agreed definition or delimitation, however, of the meaning and scope of the term "cultural or linguistic significance". Serious parliamentary disputes can be anticipated, therefore, between Macedonian members arguing for a limited interpretation and ethnic Albanian members arguing for a more generous interpretation.

The Albanian negotiators insisted that Article 131 of the constitution, which deals with the votes required to implement constitutional changes, also be revised to require use of this new "outvoting protection mechanism" for any constitutional amendment. The Macedonian negotiators suggested that the new mechanism should be employed only for constitutional amendments concerning ethnic relations. In the end, the Albanians accepted that constitutional amendments affecting five areas would be voted

under the new mechanism, including local administration, territorial division, use of languages, protection of cultural identity, and use of flags and symbols.

#### **D. CONSTITUTIONAL PREAMBLE**

The problematic preamble of the constitution, which includes the line, "the provision of peace and a common home for the Macedonian people with the nationalities living in the Republic of Macedonia",<sup>17</sup> is to be replaced by a constitutional declaration on the historical genesis of the Macedonian state that stresses the civil character of Macedonian society.

#### **E. ROLE OF THE MACEDONIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

The name of the Macedonian Orthodox Church will remain in Article 19 of the constitution but "the Islamic Community, the Roman-Catholic Church and other religious communities" will also be mentioned. Ethnic Albanians sought this in order to reduce the special status of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

#### **F. CULTURAL HERITAGE**

Article 56 of the constitution regulates the protection of cultural heritage. Pursuant to the suggestion of the Albanian negotiators and the international facilitators, the phrase "Macedonian people" is to be deleted so that the article will read "The State shall guarantee the protection of cultural identity and heritage of the Republic of Macedonia".

#### **G. COUNCIL ON INTERETHNIC RELATIONS**

The Council has been in existence for some time but largely ignored because its ethnic Albanian membership has been inconsequential. The Albanian negotiators accepted a Macedonian proposal that the Council henceforth be

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<sup>17</sup> Preamble of the *Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia*, contained in the penultimate paragraph.

comprised of seven ethnic Macedonians, seven ethnic Albanians and five representatives of other nationalities. The appointments will be confirmed by a two-thirds vote in the parliament.

#### **H. SCHEDULE FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES**

As noted above, Annex C (“Implementation and Confidence Building Measures”) stipulates that the 13 August agreement is to be ratified by parliament (by two-thirds majority) within 45 days and that a new law providing for decentralisation of local government will be adopted in that same time period. Likewise, it expresses the wish – effectively the expectation – that an international donors conference be held after the 13 August agreement has been ratified and the law on decentralisation of local government passed. Annex C further commits Macedonia to conduct a new census, under international supervision,<sup>18</sup> in October 2001 and to conduct internationally assisted and supervised elections in January 2002.

#### **IV. NATO’S ROLE**

Signing of the political agreement was the main precondition set by NATO, which has undertaken to send 3,500 troops to Macedonia to collect the weapons of the ethnic Albanian rebels. Even following signature on 14 August of the technical agreement with the NLA on the weapons collection terms and modalities, however, NATO’s deployment is not automatic. Nor, if it occurs, are there many who believe it can, under the terms presently envisaged, provide the degree of mutual confidence and security that likely will be necessary before the two sides implement the political agreement.

NATO’s plans are subject to a final decision by the North Atlantic Council (the NAC), which a spokesman has indicated could be taken as early as 15 August. It is believed that once that occurs, actual deployment could begin in two days and be completed in a further ten to fourteen days. At that point, as NATO presently sees its role, it would remain in country for no more than an additional 30 days to receive the weapons that the rebels agreed to turn over.

This scenario involves multiple complications. Before the troops will be sent into Macedonia, NATO insists, an unconditional, open-ended and effective cease-fire must be in place. The fairly sharp fighting at Tetovo on the evening of 14 August indicates that the present cease-fire is still tenuous. There is no consideration at present of NATO entering Macedonia unless it can be assured that its troops will face little danger and that their mission will be short.

Peter Feith, special envoy of the NATO Secretary-General, conducted the military negotiations with Ali Ahmeti of the NLA. The rebels stated that their cooperation would depend upon being satisfied with an offer of amnesty for their fighters from President Trajkovski but also upon satisfaction that the Macedonians were implementing their commitments, most notably parliamentary ratification of the 13 August political agreement. By signing the 14 August technical agreement with NATO, the NLA indicated it now accepts Trajkovski’s assurances on amnesty. It has also said that NLA members are willing to accept the Macedonian

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<sup>18</sup> The Council of Europe and the European Commission of the EU are specifically requested to provide this international supervision.

government's offer for their reintegration into the society.

As presently planned, NATO's Operation Essential Harvest would be conducted in three phases:

1. preparation and deployment, during which a range of issues will need to be coordinated with the Macedonian government, presumably including a Status of Forces agreement;
2. weapons and ammunition collection, including receipt, temporary storage and safe transport. Collection sites would be located near areas where large numbers of weapons are believed to exist; and,
3. redeployment, including the removal and final destruction of all weapons and ammunition collected, followed by the departure of all NATO troops.

Macedonians and ethnic Albanians, unsurprisingly, have different views and expectations regarding what the true NATO mission should be as well as its duration. The Macedonians want an active, aggressive disarming of the NLA, which they believe is essential if the rebels are not to hold back sufficient resources to resume the conflict at will. NATO is reluctant to conduct itself in this manner, not least because there would be considerable potential for some kind of retaliation against its KFOR peacekeepers in Kosovo. Macedonians and NLA are agreed that they do not desire a strong, long-term NATO presence though for different reasons. The Macedonians are adamant that NATO should come, disarm and quickly depart, leaving the government free to act as it considers necessary without being subject to an international protectorate. Ethnic Albanian politicians may be sympathetic to a longer term NATO presence as providing assurances against government efforts to roll back the concessions made in the 13 August agreement, particularly if the NLA is indeed disarmed. Some rebels, however, oppose an extended NATO mission because they want to retain freedom of action to "liberate" more territory, at least if they consider the Macedonians are going back on their word.

## V. PROSPECTS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE 13 AUGUST AGREEMENT

Prime Minister Georgievski and President of Parliament Stoyan Andov represent the strong nationalist faction of the Macedonian spectrum. In important speeches given during the 2 August celebrations that commemorated the World War II liberation of Yugoslavia and the brief Macedonian rebellion against the Ottoman Empire in 1903, both stated that the signing of a peace agreement while "terrorists" occupied part of the country would be a shameful act for Macedonia. Andov warned that the parliament would consider a political agreement only when "the last terrorist will be disarmed and the terrorist formation discharged".<sup>19</sup> On 14 August, Andov only somewhat more moderately said that he would permit parliament to begin to "discuss" the agreement signed the previous day when NATO had taken in one-third of the NLA arms but that there would be no vote on ratification until all the weapons had been collected.<sup>20</sup>

Given that Andov controls parliamentary procedures, what he says about preconditions to ratification have to be taken at least as seriously as what the NLA says about proofs of government good faith before it gives up its arms. It appears unavoidable, therefore, that NATO will have to perform a delicate balancing act with Operation Essential Harvest if implementation of the reforms contained in the 13 August agreement are to get off the ground.

Other influential Macedonian politicians have been scarcely more sanguine than Georgievski and Andov about the prospect for real peace and reform. Vasil Tuperkovski, leader of the Democratic Alternative party, seemed to summarise the feelings of many Macedonians in

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<sup>19</sup> Georgievski said: "A document signed under occupation of Macedonian territories and with terrorists in our mountains will be disgraceful and humiliating for every Macedonian citizen. The Republic of Macedonia possesses combat technique and competent fighters to reestablish its territorial integrity and only then will we sign any documents".

<sup>20</sup> AFP, 14 August 2001.

an interview<sup>21</sup> in which he suggested that the “international community should give Macedonia two guarantees - first, NLA disarmament, second, the status of Kosovo. What will even a signed agreement be worth if after a few years the international community grants Kosovo an independent status? Soon, there will be war again in Macedonia.”

Many Macedonian parliamentarians from the VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM parties clearly fear that implementation of the 13 August agreement would ultimately lead to ethnic partition of the country. Several members of SDSM have already warned Georgievski and Crvenkovski that they do not have a mandate from the Macedonian people to destroy the country. Georgievski and Crvenkovski reportedly have defended their signatures on the document as the consequence of an ultimatum from the international facilitators that unless the agreement was signed Macedonia could face economic sanctions and an embargo on imports of arms.<sup>22</sup> Such tepid defences of the agreement by those who negotiated it and negative reactions in the Macedonian media as its details have come out strongly suggest that it will be stillborn like so many other hopeful diplomatic initiatives in the Balkans over the past decade if left to domestic political dynamics.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The “peace” agreement has been signed, NATO deployment for a short-term, soft mission looks imminent, and most international facilitators have gone home after congratulating themselves – deservedly – for giving Macedonia a chance to escape civil war. Macedonians and ethnic Albanians may have reached the point, however, where they are no longer much interested in living together. If they are left largely to their own devices, they almost surely will not use this perhaps last opportunity effectively.

The international community has gone to great lengths to help Macedonia in the past half year. It has done so not out of altruism, of course, but because it has recognised that civil war and the collapse of what had seemed to be the most promising multiethnic example in the Balkans would likely delay achievement of a stable, multiethnic Bosnia, damage prospects for peacefully negotiating Kosovo’s final status, jeopardise Serbia’s democratic transition, and even put question marks over NATO and EU enlargement. The international community will now have to do even more or face the prospect of experiencing those consequences.

One necessary measure is for NATO to do a better job of sealing the border between Kosovo and Macedonia to cut off the flow of fresh recruits and supplies to the ethnic Albanian rebels. A second imperative is to rethink urgently the mandate NATO is prepared to assume in Macedonia. NATO’s hesitation to do so is understandable. There is a genuine risk of becoming caught up in a highly fluid situation that could degenerate into combat without a clearly defined enemy or a promising exit strategy. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see how either side will ever gain enough confidence in the other’s good faith unless NATO abandons the stance that it will not stay longer than 30 days in country and will not do more than collect those arms that are voluntarily given to it.

The international community will also need to apply political sticks and carrots as intensively to the task of implementing the 13 August agreement as it did to its negotiation. The first opportunity comes in the period before the international donors conference that is anticipated shortly after ratification of the 13

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<sup>21</sup> *Utrinski Vesnik*, p. 5, “The international community Should Give Written Guarantees For NLA Disarmament, 8 August 2001.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*



August political agreement. Both sides know the country needs foreign assistance not only to recover from the ravages of the past six months but also to meet the costs of the 13 August agreement in the short term and to qualify for the ultimate goal – membership in the European Union – in the long term. Prospective donors, and especially the EU, have a narrow window to devise a conditionality strategy that, combined with a vigorous NATO presence, might just “give peace a chance.”<sup>23</sup>

**Skopje/Brussels, 15 August 2001**

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<sup>23</sup> Among vital matters directly related to implementation of the 13 August agreement for which Macedonia needs early funding and other assistance are making the promised decentralisation and education reforms function, the census and electoral reforms, and disarmament and paramilitary issues. ICG will discuss these and a strategy for the international donors conference in detail in an early subsequent report.

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