

**Extract from the Presidency Conclusions of the Brussels European Council,
Brussels 17.12.2005**

X. REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA¹

23. The European Council welcomes the Commission's Opinion on the Republic of Macedonia's application for EU membership. It welcomes the significant progress made by the Republic of Macedonia towards meeting the political criteria set by the Copenhagen European Council in 1993 and the Stabilisation and Association Process requirements established by the Council in 1997.

24. In the light of the Commission's analysis, the European Council decides to grant candidate country status to the Republic of Macedonia, taking into account, in particular, the substantial progress made in completing the legislative framework related to the Ohrid Framework Agreement, as well as its track record in implementing the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (including its trade-related provisions) since 2001.

25. The European Council makes clear that further steps will have to be considered in the light of the debate on the enlargement strategy, as provided for by the Council conclusions of 12 December 2005; of compliance by the Republic of Macedonia with the Copenhagen political criteria; of the requirements of the Stabilisation and Association Process and the effective implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement; and of the need for further significant progress to respond to the other issues and criteria for membership included in the Commission's Opinion and implementation of the priorities in the European Partnership, on the basis of specific benchmarks. The absorption capacity of the Union also has to be taken into account. The European Council invites the Commission to report on developments in future progress reports.

¹The Secretariat for European Affairs intervened in the text by replacing the reference “former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” with the constitutional name “Republic of Macedonia”