

Republic of Macedonia

31. The Council welcomes the progress made in a number of important areas and that the country has substantially addressed the key priorities of the accession partnership. The smooth implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement should facilitate further steps. The presidential and local elections of 2009 met most international standards. The implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement remains an essential element of democracy and the rule of law in the country. The Council stresses that the reform agenda must be continued. In particular, continued efforts are needed to fight corruption and to ensure the independence and impartiality of the judiciary.

32. The Council notes that the Commission recommends the opening of accession negotiations with the Republic of Macedonia and will return to the matter during the next Presidency.

33. Maintaining good neighbourly relations, including a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution on the name issue, under the auspices of the UN, remains essential. The Council is encouraged by recent positive developments concerning the relations between Greece and the Republic of Macedonia.