
MACEDONIA'S PARLIAMENT ENDORSES NAME DEAL WITH GREECE FOR SECOND TIME

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In June, the two countries settled on the new name Republic of North Macedonia. Athens had long objected to its northern neighbors use of Macedonia, saying it implied claims on the Greek province of that name and an appropriation of Greece's ancient cultural heritage.

The decades-old dispute had blocked Macedonia's entry into NATO and its hopes to join European Union.

On Thursday 69 deputies in the 120-seat parliament voted in favor of ratification of the deal, its second such endorsement.

Opposition deputies from the rightist VMRO-DPMNE party, which opposes the deal, did not vote. One deputy abstained.

The final (name) agreement is not jeopardizing Macedonian identity, it ... cements it, Foreign Minister Nikola Dimitrov told deputies.

Nationalists in Greece, which must also ratify the name deal, remain vehemently opposed.

Last month, Ivanov refused to sign the ratified agreement, saying it violated the constitution. Ivanov can refuse to sign again, but cannot veto it indefinitely.

Parliament speaker Talat Xhaferi, an ethnic Albanian, said on Thursday he planned to send the agreement for publication in the official gazette without Ivanov's signature.

Macedonia has to amend its constitution to conform with the provisions of the deal and a referendum is expected in the autumn.

Adoption of the agreement would pave the way for the next NATO summit to invite Macedonia to join the alliance and for the Balkan country to start membership talks with the EU.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-greece-macedonia/macedonias-parliament-endorses-name-deal-with-greece-for-second-time-idUSKBN1JV1MP>