

## PRESS RELEASE

### Background information

#### Alexis Tsipras and Zoran Zaev

**Münster/Westphalia, August 2021** : The Prime Ministers of Greece and North Macedonia, Alexis Tsipras and Zoran Zaev, have achieved a feat of diplomacy by reaching an agreement in the decades-long conflict over the name Macedonia, thereby making a significant contribution to stability in the entire Balkan region.

Macedonia changed its name to the Republic of North Macedonia on February 12, 2019. This settled a conflict between the neighbors that had been bitterly fought for over three decades and had previously prevented today's North Macedonia from joining NATO and the European Union. The signing of the bilateral agreement between Greece and North Macedonia on the name issue ("Prespa Agreement") on June 17, 2018 now serves as the basis for rapprochement with the EU. Greece had not accepted the country name Macedonia, as a region in the north of its own country is also called Macedonia.

The treaty was the subject of highly controversial and polarizing discussions in both countries, but was then successfully concluded. The driving force behind the agreement was the respective prime ministers on both sides. The Macedonian Zoran Zaev and the Greek Alexis Tsipras achieved a diplomatic feat with the Prespa agreement that sent out a signal to the entire world. Balkan region. They showed that even a problem that was considered unsolvable can be solved with the will to compromise and perseverance. The two prime ministers thus made a significant contribution to calming the situation in the region.

Both heads of government at the time, but especially the Greek one, subordinated their personal careers to political reason, regardless of whether they would remain in office. Without these two statesmen, there would have been no solution, the name dispute would not have ended in the long term and the neighbourly feud would have continued to destabilize the entire Balkan region.

Alexis Tsipras, born in 1974, was Greek Prime Minister from 2015 to 2019. He is the leader of the SYRIZA party. His time in office as prime minister was largely shaped by the Greek sovereign debt crisis.

Zoran Zaev, born in 1974 like Tsipras, was Prime Minister of North Macedonia from May 31, 2017 to January 3, 2020. Zaev resigned from office to allow for new elections. The parliamentary election did not take place until July 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. On the night of August 31, Zaev was re-elected Prime

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Minister of North Macedonia. He has been chairman of the Social Democratic League of Macedonia since 2013.