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The three primary functions of the President of the Republic of North Macedonia encompass the leadership of foreign policy, ensuring national security and territorial integrity as the Supreme Commander of the armed forces, along with fostering political dialogue to promote internal political and social cohesion. Therefore, the position of the President requires a unifying leader guided by values.

As a candidate for the Presidency of the Republic, I aim to establish a joint program agreement with you, denoting my accountability and commitment. In this agreement, I present before you the pledges I aspire to fulfill.

North Macedonia is our common homeland, and like any home, it requires strong pillars.

These pillars are:

- 1. Integration into the European Union
- Rule of law

- 2. Security
- 4. Consensus democracy

My foreign policy will be rooted in European and pro-Western values. In my capacity as Supreme Commander, I will provide for our defense and the enhancement of regional security. As a President guided by values, I will advance consensus democracy in our multi-national and multi-cultural society.



North Macedonia stands at a critical crossroad. The country, the region and the world are experiencing an era of crisis, turmoil and disorder.

Externally, the Russian aggression against Ukraine has ushered in a new chapter in international and regional politics, carrying far-reaching consequences for the world order. The foundations of the international system, based on democracy, the rule of law, and multilateral collaboration, are now directly threatened. We witness the rise of geopolitical rivalries, protectionist tendencies, and economic disruptions, alongside the undermining of the frameworks supporting the rule-based international order.

The countries of the Western Balkans find themselves on the frontline of Russia's geopolitical confrontation with the West, prompting most governments in the region to take a clear stand alongside our allies, the European Union (EU) and the United States of America (USA). However, opinion polls indicate that a significant portion of the region's citizens, particularly Serbs, but also a significant number of fellow Macedonians, continue to perceive Russia as an ally. Furthermore, emboldened by Kremlin support, some regional leaders have become instruments of Putin's agenda and openly threaten regional peace and security. Security in the Balkans is fragile. There is therefore an imperative need for increased engagement from our strategic partners and enhanced cooperation among them.

Internally, polarization has grown significantly in society, induced by a triple economic, political, and ethical crisis. Just as the country was recovering from impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and its repercussions have disrupted trade and supply chains, led to unprecedented inflation, and aggravated challenges faced by businesses and households. Our country is facing an epidemic of corruption, which has eroded citizens' trust in public institutions.

The stalemate in the country's EU integration process has caused an increase in Euroscepticism among certain segments of the population, aggravated by the spread of anti-European narratives which are largely propagated by malign influences from the Kremlin, disseminated through online disinformation campaigns and pro-Russian propagandists operating within North Macedonia.

North Macedonia has regrettably become a fertile breeding ground for extremist forces seeking to deepen divisions within our multicultural society, fostering animosity towards the European Union, the United States of America and NATO, while also undermining the foundations of liberal and consensus democracy.

The challenge ahead of us is of utmost importance. We are the generation that must ensure that Putin's aggression does not spell the demise of Western democracy or hold back our country's path towards integration into the European Union.

The next President of the Republic will assume office in a world where the rules-based international order is under threat. The next President will need to guide the country towards reconciliation, healing the wounds of polarization and extremism.

The President will have to focus on anchoring North Macedonia in the European Union, reducing internal tensions, and lead an uncompromising fight against the corruption epidemic. Hence, the time calls for a leader with integrity, credibility, and the courage to rise above the daily politics and break the balances that have contributed to the installation of this situation.



The President of the Republic is the first among the four bodies leading foreign policy, together with the Assembly, the Government, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As President, I will take an active part in defining the country's strategic directions and in creating, defining, and implementing North Macedonia's foreign policy, as an inseparable part of European civilization and liberal democracies. The country's foreign policy will be based on pro-Western values, which must be vigorously defended in the current geopolitical circumstances.

The European Union is our unquestionable goal. European integration will be the cornerstone of our country's foreign policy. The integration of North Macedonia into the EU is our only alternative and a guarantee for peace, security, stability, addressing structural challenges, sustainable economic growth and retaining our youth home.

Once a leader in European integration, North Macedonia now finds itself stuck while neighboring countries advance swiftly towards EU accession. The reasons for our stagnation are clear: the lack of political will to implement European reforms, coupled with corruption and chauvinism towards EU requirements.

Without fulfilling conditions outlined in the negotiating framework for North Macedonia's EU membership, particularly concerning the recognition of the Bulgarian minority in the preamble of the Constitution, the first intergovernmental conference of July 2022 and the successful conclusion of the screening process will remain a dead letter. The negotiating framework is inalienable, and constitutional amendments are inevitable.

Global challenges, such as climate change, the technological revolution, and demographic shifts, cannot be solved in isolation. International cooperation is necessary for establishing rules and undertaking coordinated efforts to address these challenges collectively, within the framework of existing international institutions.

Our foreign policy will be based on the principles of peace, good neighborly relations, enhancing regional cooperation, active engagement in multilateralism, and unwavering adherence to international law. Disagreements between the President,

the Government, and the Assembly regarding foreign policy priorities, coupled with inadequate coordination, have compromised our credibility in the eyes of our allies. North Macedonia will lead a pro-Western policy in global affairs, bolster its position in regional cooperation, and increase the integration of our diaspora in the state. Foreign policy will be implemented in a coherent and predictable manner towards our partners.

For as long as Russia continues its military aggression in Ukraine and destabilization efforts in the Western Balkans, North Macedonia will refrain from engaging in cooperation with Russia. Our actions will be determined by common policies with our allies in the EU and NATO.

Within the region, our collaboration will be guided by our values. One of them is our unwavering support for the Republic of Kosovo as an independent and sovereign state. Consequently, North Macedonia will abstain from participating in regional initiatives that exclude Kosovo as an equal partner. The Open Balkans initiative, supported by Russian diplomacy, as a tool to advance Kremlin's political and economic dominance in the region, particularly through Serbia, where pro-Russian sentiments and interests are high. Since the onset of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, over 300 Russian companies have registered in Serbia, more than half of which operate in the IT sector and maintain direct or indirect collaborations with companies from North Macedonia, thus infiltrating the country's economy. Therefore, we see the Open Balkans initiative as a competitor to NATO and the EU.

- I will coordinate efforts with the international community to secure a commitment from the EU's High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy that, following constitutional changes, there will be no additional demands on North Macedonia beyond the 2022 negotiation framework.
- I will entrust the mandate for the formation of the next Government to the candidate or parties that prove majority support in the Assembly, requesting their proposed Prime Minister to submit to the Assembly a time-bound plan for implementing the necessary constitutional changes to progress the country's European path.
- To strengthen efforts towards EU membership, I will enhance cooperation with the Assembly to initiate and facilitate the approval of laws and reforms arising from EU standards. Priority will be given to areas such as the rule of law, public administration, digitalization, human rights, and freedom of expression.
- Based on Article 121 of the Constitution, I will propose to the Assembly the immediate withdrawal of North Macedonia from the Open Balkans initiative, as long as Serbia fails to fully and genuinely implement the Brussels agreements and the Ohrid Agreement of 2023 for normalizing relations with the Republic of Kosovo, reached within the dialogue facilitated by the EU and supported by the USA.
- I will support intergovernmental mechanisms for implementing the Prespa Agreement and the Friendship Agreement with Bulgaria to mitigate potential tensions and address their external and internal implications.

- I will facilitate the preparation and implementation of a comprehensive state strategy for strengthening diplomatic engagement in the region, focusing on fostering regional economic, educational, and cultural cooperation, as well as innovation and digitalization.
- I will ensure the full alignment of North Macedonia's foreign policy with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, particularly in areas such as EU sanctions, the fight against terrorism, cybersecurity, border management, and migration.
- I will organize an annual diplomatic summit in collaboration with our main allies to strengthen partnerships and promote cooperation on matters relevant to the countries of the region.
- I will develop a presidential strategy aimed at promoting foreign investments, including the establishment of a dedicated department within the Presidency exclusively focused on attracting foreign investments, organizing economic missions of the President and coordinating activities with the relevant state bodies.
- Distinguished individuals and entrepreneurs in our diaspora will be appointed as Honorary Consuls, to enhance the country's image and facilitate comprehensive communication between our diaspora and the respective countries.

As President of the Republic, I pledge to advocate for a value-based foreign policy agenda, with the primary objective of leading North Macedonia towards European Union membership by the year 2030.



NORTH MACEDONIA PRODUCER OF SECURITY

The European Union, United States, and NATO stand as our indispensable allies. As a reliable partner, we collaborate closely with them and stand ready to contribute to global peace and security. Our commitment to security is unwavering. North Macedonia does not merely consume security, but actively produces it.

NATO has been present in the Western Balkans, and the Western Balkans have been part of NATO since the 1990s, through operations, partnerships, and membership in the Alliance, now gained by many countries in the region.

Croatia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Albania, and North Macedonia are full members of NATO. Despite Russia's persistent efforts, through both covert and overt means, to block our country's admission to NATO, these efforts ultimately failed, thanks to the wisdom of the local political factor and the unwavering support of our allies.

While North Macedonia currently faces no direct external threats, the threat posed by Russia persists, as it continues to incite fear and create instability. Our external security is guaranteed through our NATO membership and defense cooperation with the United States. We are not alone, but our safety remains a paramount concern.

As a member country, we are committed to contributing to the implementation of NATO's strategic concept, which prioritizes collective defense, based on the 360-degree approach and the basic pillars: deterrence and protection, prevention and management of crises, as well as cooperative security. We are committed to NATO's open-door policy and will persist in strengthening our partnership with Ukraine as it progresses on its path towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

Aligned with our obligations and responsibilities arising from North Macedonia's NATO membership, we will continuously invest in Euro-Atlantic security and stability, committed to building our capabilities in solidarity with our allies and fostering strong transatlantic relations.

Our defense strategy is multifaceted, aiming to enhance the stability of our defense system, develop new capabilities, and synchronize our defense plan with NATO and EU standards. We also strive for greater efficiency and rational utilization of human, material and financial resources, alongside fostering public awareness and confidence in the importance of defense for the advancement of democratic society.

North Macedonia will continue to contribute to maintaining security and peace in the region and the world, through active participation in peacekeeping operations, crisis management operations and cooperative security of our international partners. To ensure our contribution to the full spectrum of NATO-led operations and missions, North Macedonia will maintain deployable military assets at 50% of the total structure of our multi-functional ground forces. In the long term, we will participate in international operations with military forces and personnel that will gradually increase to 10% of the overall structure of the Army.

When it comes to aviation, we are realistic. The limited resources of North Macedonia make it impossible to follow modern trends in aviation and impose the maximization of regional defense cooperation with the countries of South-Eastern Europe NATO member countries.

Indeed, security encompasses more than just military capabilities; it also includes political initiatives, management of various components, and economic, energy, and technological capacities aimed at safeguarding the human environment. Therefore, we must also think about other aspects of security. Cybersecurity, for instance, should be part of our defense.

As President, I will advocate the enactment of legislation aimed at enhancing cyber defenses, facilitating information sharing between government agencies and the private sector, investing in cybersecurity education and training programs, and implementing robust incident response protocols. Furthermore, collaboration with key stakeholders, including cybersecurity experts, law enforcement agencies, and technology companies, will strengthen the state's cybersecurity.

Regarding Moscow's energy influence, given that we have been 100% reliant on natural gas from Russia so far, we must commit to reducing our energy dependence on Russia to zero, among other measures, by maximizing the utilization of alternative supply system capacities.

I will also approach security as a human concept because our families need security. Human security implies the necessity for people to live in freedom and dignity, to be able to freely enjoy their rights and to develop their human potential. Only a state without corruption, with a justice system that punishes the criminal and carefully protects the victim, can be a just and safe state.

- North Macedonia commits to maintaining a stable multi-year defense budget equivalent to 2% of the gross domestic product, as a fundamental prerequisite for effective long-term defense planning, fostering the development of new capabilities and the modernization of our armed forces, in alignment with NATO standards.
- The allocation of defense budget resources will be optimized as follows: up to 50% for personnel expenditures, up to 30% for operational, maintenance, and training expenses, and up to 20% allocated for equipment and modernization. This will enable the realization of defense goals and the development of new capacities, essential for addressing security challenges.
- Defense capabilities will undergo a redesign aimed at gradually downsizing personnel and replacing outdated equipment with sophisticated equipment, in line with NATO standards. The Ministry of Defense and the Army will undergo restructuring and rationalization in accordance with NATO's recommendation for a staff of 650-700 administrative personnel and 6,800 troops, while also taking steps to ensure equitable and adequate representation within the sector of the military.
- Army commands and units will be consolidated into smaller locations to reduce redundant infrastructure. In this way, additional financial resources will be provided for the renovation and modernization of the infrastructure, as well as for the improvement of the working and living conditions of the defense personnel.
- I am dedicated to enhancing our involvement in the European Union's Common Security and Defense Policy, contributing to EU peacekeeping missions worldwide, and reinforcing our country's role in regional security frameworks. Priority will be placed on fostering regional cooperation with fellow NATO member states and the Republic of Kosovo through joint exercises and academic exchange programs.
- Within the powers of the President for appointments within the Army and the Intelligence Agency,
 I will select only the best and most proven professionals with impeccable backgrounds and demonstrated respect of liberal democracy and the pro-Western values that define our country.

- I am committed to end our energy reliance on Russia and fostering energy source diversification across all sectors, as the best path to security and stability. To achieve this goal, I will convene experts including academics, energy specialists, economists, and environmentalists to collaborate on the development of a state energy concept.
- To enhance regional cooperation in addressing shared security challenges such as terrorism, organized crime and illegal migration, we will organize regional training sessions, hackathons, and seminars, promoting the exchange of information, creating opportunities for joint operations, and supporting capacity-building initiatives.
- Innovation is a key sector for both the security and the development of our country. The Presidency will unreservedly support our young men and women, who can shape the future of North Macedonia. I pledge to establish innovation schools managed by the Office of the President. I will commit to the growth of public and private investments in research and development (R&D) activities. I will initiate a Presidential Award for the most innovative startups and small and medium enterprises of the year.
- I will establish a Cybersecurity Task Force comprising representatives from relevant government agencies, relevant ministries, and industry experts. This Task Force will help the development of a protocol for inter-institutional coordination, enhancing our capacity to investigate and prosecute cybercrimes. Additionally, it will also help the building of international partnerships for sharing information to coordinate responses to both local and global cyber threats.
- I will implement a public awareness campaign to educate citizens about best practices in cybersecurity.
 I will collaborate with various institutions to promote cyber security, including the establishment of a Presidential Award to honour young people who promote cyber security in the country.

As President of the Republic, I solemnly vow to utilize all available means to secure North Macedonia, striving to make it a bastion of safety. I am committed to fostering regional peace and stability, prioritizing the fulfillment of our NATO and EU obligations by maintaining credible and contemporary defense capabilities. In my capacity as Supreme Commander, I pledge transparency, accountability, and inclusivity within our Armed Forces, reflecting the diversity of our society.







The corrupt political system is our number one enemy, the biggest obstacle to the development of North Macedonia and the well-being of the citizens, but also the primary barrier to our country's European integration.

While the process of European integration is a source of external stability, it has so far failed to translate into an internal narrative of Europeanization - a social, political and economic transformation driven by the prospect of EU membership.

The project of the integration of North Macedonia into the EU should unequivocally reflect into an enhanced standard of living for its citizens, the promotion of European values, and the effective functioning of state institutions. Failure to achieve these outcomes risks bringing disappointment and diminishing support for EU membership among North Macedonia's citizens.

In September 2017, the Group of Senior EU Experts on systemic issues of the rule of law in North Macedonia (the Priebe group) cautioned against the repetition of mistakes of the past in our country. The Priebe group warned that a form of state capture should not replace another.

Regrettably, despite the investments made by our partners in reforms and new laws, this warning has indeed become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The European integration process remains primarily focused on technical reforms, failing to foster cohesion in the rule of law between North Macedonia and the EU.

The overall picture is grim. The judiciary has never been more captured and dysfunctional, with a significant portion of judges and prosecutors entangled in corruption and subjected to political influence.

The increase in impunity in cases of high-level corruption, aggravated by amendments to the Criminal Code in 2023, alongside instances of selective justice in politically motivated cases, has resulted in a mere 2% of citizens placing trust in the judiciary.

Adequate funding for law enforcement and corruption prevention bodies is an indispensable component of an independent, effective and efficient system and a prerequisite for the rule of law. The current funding levels - 37.7 million euros for the judicial system, 10.8 million euros for the Public Prosecution and a mere 0.9 million euros for the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption in the 2022 budget – starkly clarify the inability of these institutions to fulfill their obligations. For instance, the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption in 2022 operated with only 34 employees out of the planned 64, while the Public Prosecution had a total of 170 prosecutors, representing a deficit of 82 prosecutors compared to the average recommended by the European Council (nine per 100,000 inhabitants).

Our justice system and anti-corruption mechanisms are, in essence, in a state of clinical death. They require comprehensive reforms.



- I will call upon the Assembly to introduce a legislative package for the comprehensive reforms in the judicial system. This package should include the law on the vetting of judges and prosecutors, the reform of systems governing their selection, advancement, discipline, and dismissal, as well as the full digitalization of courts in accordance with the Strategic Framework of the Council of Europe.
- I will advocate for the establishment of a Commission on Standards in Public Life, based on the experience of the United Kingdom. This body will aim to promote ethics and morality in public life, more specifically with a focus on promoting Nolan's 7 principles for Public Life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, transparency, honesty and leadership. Operating as an advisory body to the President and key state entities responsible for upholding the rule of law, the Commission will function independently and will report to the Assembly. The Chairman of the Commission will be elected by the Assembly and the Commission will have its own budget independent from other bodies.
- I will advocate to double public investments in the judiciary, public prosecution and in the institutions responsible for combating corruption, with a particular priority for these bodies: the Basic Public Prosecution for the Prosecution of Organized Crime and Corruption, the Specialized Department for the Trial of Offenses from the Sphere of Organized Crime and Corruption, the Bureau for Public Security, the State Audit Office and other investigative centers, as well as law enforcement units tasked with investigating corruption. In the medium term, legal reforms are needed to ensure that the budget preparation process for the judiciary and anti-corruption institutions is overseen fully or at least partially by independent and autonomous bodies, rather than solely by the government, from the stage of preparing the draft budget to its approval by the Assembly. This will quarantee that the budget of these institutions will be protected from political interference.

- I will commit to revoking the amendments made to the Criminal Code in 2023, which have proven anti-European and detrimental to the fight against corruption. Specifically, the amendments to Articles 353, 353-v and 394 have contributed to a rise in impunity for high-level corruption, making it impossible to prosecute or serve a sentence. This contradicts North Macedonia's obligations as a candidate state for EU membership. It is imperative to amend the Criminal Code once more to align it with European anti-corruption legislation and the practices of member states.
- I will propose for appointment to the Constitutional Court and members of the Judicial Council, only the best professionals, with the highest possible moral integrity and who have proven their pro-European values.
- I will utilize my presidential pardon powers to put an end to selective justice in politically motivated cases.
- As President of the Republic, I pledge not to decree the promulgation of lenient laws that diverge the country from European standards, as has occurred in the past.
- Regarding public administration, I will advocate for reforms in the public sector aimed at reducing bureaucracy and enhancing service delivery through e-government initiatives, process digitalization, and performance-based management systems.

As the President of the Republic, I will fight the corruption of the political system with all my being, and I will undertake tangible measures to restore citizens' trust in the justice system. My primary objectives include advancing an independent, efficient, and equitable judiciary, rooting out corruption, fostering a depoliticized and meritocratic administration, and empowering citizens to engage in public discourse through universal access to information.

The change LEIN



North Macedonia stands at a critical crossroad. The triple economic, political and ethical crises have led to societal polarization, they have deepened divisions, fueled Euroscepticism, bolstered extremist narratives, and undermined liberal and consensual democracy. We must confront and overcome this challenge, just as we have overcome historical junctures over the three decades of independence. We must emerge from this transition as a unified country.

Undoubtedly, Russian influence operations, with the objective of sowing divisions within our society and undermining trust in state institutions, have played a significant role in shaping the current state. Kremlin-controlled media outlets, civil society organizations, and politicians connected to Russian interests have all contributed to this malign influence, which aims to obstruct North Macedonia's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures.

I am concerned about the growing divisions within our multicultural society and the repercussions these divisions have on our internal security. A society that is fragmented cannot effectively defend. On the contrary, this poses a risk of internal destabilization.

With a vision guided by genuine principles and ideals, let us strive for the promotion and strengthening of consensus democracy, in the spirit of Arbën Xhaferi, who was and continues to be my political guide. As far back as 1999, Arbën articulated concerns about a permanent reductionism in North Macedonia, highlighting the that the Constitution is narrower than reality, what the Constitution permits, the law restricts, what the law permits, institutions limit, what institutions permit, individuals may not fully implement.

Unfortunately, even after 25 years, some segments still reflect the permanent reductionism articulated by Arben Xhaferi. The constitution still offensively refers to the Albanian language as the official language spoken by 20% of the population and that differs from the Macedonian language. The law only partially implements this constitutional provision geographically and institutionally, as it lists specific places where Albanian is recognized as an official language. Similar observations can be made regarding the constitutional principle of equitable and adequate representation. The law on public sector employees violates the Constitution by exempting institutions within the defense and sécurity sectors from the requirement of equitable representation, suggesting that a significant portion of the country's citizens are insufficiently loyal or trustworthy to serve or lead within these sectors.

I think it is imperative to protect and advance the values that have positioned North Macedonia as a success story in the eyes of our international allies. Let's be proud of what we have achieved together. Success lies in our unity, working alongside one another, not against each other. Let's prove that consensus and liberal democracy, equality, the rule of law, and the market economy form the bedrock of our multi-national and multi-cultural society.

We should not focus on what divides us, but on what unites us. We refuse to be polarized into left and right, Euro-enthusiasts and Euro-sceptics, pro-Western and pro-Russian, young and old, Macedonians and Albanians. Rather than narrowing down our identities, we should work together for greater trust and cohesion.

As President, I aim to address these issues. I am committed to integrating the institution of the President into the framework of consensus democracy, in line with the spirit of the Ohrid Agreement, so that the President can genuinely be guarantor of national unity and a symbol of democratic values.

As President of the Republic, I pledge to protect consensus democracy, freedom of expression, and the rule of law under all circumstances. I will listen, engage in dialogue, and prioritize the well-being of each and every citizen. As President, I pledge to be a unifying factor and to work for the best interest of all citizens of North Macedonia.

- With the next amendment of the Constitution, I will request that the President is elected in the Assembly using the double majority mechanism, ensuring the President truly represents the unity of the people. Ideally, the President will be elected with a two-thirds (2/3) majority of all Assembly members' votes, with a majority of votes from MPs representing non-majority communities in North Macedonia. However, if no candidate secures a two-thirds (2/3) majority in the initial two ballots, a third ballot will be conducted between the two candidates with the highest number of votes in the second ballot. The candidate who gets a majority of votes from all Assembly members and a majority from MPs representing non-majority communities will be elected President.
- I will strive to remove the derogatory characterization of the Albanian language as "the language spoken by at least 20% of the population" in the Constitution and ensure that the Albanian language, in its alphabet, is an official language throughout the Republic, on an equal footing with Macedonian.

- I will prioritize the promotion of equitable and adequate representation for all communities within the diplomatic network, the military, the security sector, the judiciary, and other sectors where Presidential proposals or appointments are made, always in accordance with principles of depoliticization, non-discrimination, and meritocracy.
- In cooperation with civil society organizations and the media, I will undertake a presidential initiative to stand up for media freedom with a particular focus on combating pro-Russian disinformation. Russian media and those financed by Russia will be closed, while ensuring respect for the right to freedom of expression and information.

One of the most significant figures in European and world history,
Konrad Adenauer: "
When everybody else thinks it's the end,
we have to begin!"
Let this be a new beginning!



The victory LEN



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APRIL 2024

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