

UN chief urges all sides in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to proceed with name change 'through country's institutions'

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has urged all political forces in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) to implement plans to undergo a formal name change, following a consultative referendum on Sunday, through the country's institutions.

In a statement released by his spokesperson, Mr. Guterres took note of the referendum outcome, and the importance of the fact that an overwhelming majority of those voting, supported the Prespa Agreement.

Signed by FYROM Prime Minister Zoran Zaev, and Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras on 12 June by Lake Prespa – which borders Greece, FYROM and Albania – the agreement is a mutual accord to resolve the long-running dispute between Greece and the FYROM, over the latter's name.

Although more than 90 per cent of the voters backed the name change, only a third of eligible electors took part, according to news reports. To move forward with the change, the FYROM parliament must now vote in favour, with a two-thirds majority, and the Greek parliament must also give its approval.

In his statement, the Secretary-General reiterates the commitment of the United Nations to “provide all necessary support, if required”, both through his Personal Envoy and through the relevant UN agencies, funds and programmes.