

**AMERICAN HUNGARIAN FEDERATION
OF METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, DC**

A Founding Member of the Hungarian American Coalition

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**U.S. SENATE UNANIMOUSLY RATIFIES NATO TREATY; SENATORS
RAISE RIGHTS OF MINORITIES**

**FEDERATION SUPPORTS EFFORTS AIMED AT ENCOURAGING ROMANIA AND SLOVAKIA
TO RESPECT RIGHTS OF HUNGARIAN MINORITIES AND
RESTORE COMMUNAL PROPERTIES**

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) “[S]ignificant challenges remain for each of the seven candidate countries. They include: . . . eliminating discrimination against ethnic minorities . . . in . . . Romania and Slovakia; . . . completing the restitution of religious and communal properties . . .” said Democratic Ranking Member and former Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Senator Joseph R. Biden (D-DE) on May 7 during the debate on the Protocols of Accession to enlarge NATO. “I am also hopeful that Romania will move forward with steps to ensure progress on outstanding property issues, including those of significance to Hungarian and other minority groups in Romania,” stated Senator George V. Voinovich (R-OH).

On May 8, the Senate unanimously ratified the Protocols of Accession by a vote of 96 to 0, including several declarations and conditions that the Foreign Relations Committee on April 30 had unanimously adopted. In Declaration 8, the “Senate finds that individuals and communal entities whose property was seized during the Holocaust or communist period should receive appropriate compensation . . .” Just prior to the vote on ratification, Senator Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ) noted, “I have one concern that I would like to mention: the rights of the large historic Hungarian minorities in Slovakia and Romania. I urge both countries’ governments to continue to work with their Hungarian communities to resolve property restitution disputes and other contentious issues.”

The Senate also adopted a controversial declaration that calls on the President to place on the agenda of NATO’s North Atlantic Council the “NATO ‘consensus rule’” and “the merits of establishing a process for suspending the membership in NATO of a member country that no longer complies with the NATO principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law set forth in the preamble to the North Atlantic Treaty.”

The American Hungarian Federation of Metropolitan Washington, D.C. for some time has urged that Romania and Slovakia be expected to respect the rights of their respective Hungarian minorities and restore communal properties. It also actively participated in the public debate preceding the vote by the Senate on enlargement.

On April 29, the Federation submitted a statement to Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The Federation stated that, “an enlarged NATO, consisting of stable and secure countries and as an organization of collective defense, is in the vital interest of the United States.” The Federation noted, however, that “an indispensable component of security in Central and Eastern Europe is a

commitment to democracy, including the respect for the rule of law and the rights of . . . minorities” After summarizing a number of shortcomings of Romania and Slovakia, the Federation concluded that the “review and reform process should not stop with full NATO membership The United States and NATO will have to continue to monitor the pace of progress and reform to ensure that the new members live up to their commitments and promote regional security by respecting the human rights of their national and religious minorities. As part of this process, Romania and Slovakia should be expected to expeditiously resolve the long-pending religious, educational and other Hungarian minority community property restitution matters.”

In addition, the Federation’s recent activities included: dissemination of an Action Alert urging individuals to ask their Senators to make a statement on the record on behalf of the Hungarian minorities; participation in the telephone campaign; submitting information about the situation of the Hungarian minorities in Romania and Slovakia to State Department officials during a roundtable discussion on “NATO Enlargement and the Current State of the Trans-Atlantic Alliance;” and dissemination of information to Lord Robertson, Secretary General of NATO, regarding Romania’s Hungarian minority. On May 8, Frank Koszorus, Jr., the Federation’s president, debated Ivan Eland, Senior Fellow and Director of the Center on Peace and Liberty, The Independent Institute, and Pavol Demes, Director of the Central and Eastern Europe Office of The German Marshall Fund, regarding NATO and minority rights on a Washington, D.C. radio talk show. That afternoon he attended the NATO enlargement ceremony at the White House during which President Bush addressed the invited guests.

“As the Senate debate made clear, this is not the end but the beginning,” said Mr. Koszorus. “Although the ‘golden carrot’ of NATO membership may be gone, we must continue to raise our voice to ensure that democratic reforms in Romania and Slovakia don’t stop, that the rights of the Hungarian minorities are fully respected, and their grievances expeditiously and judiciously addressed and resolved, including long-pending property restitution matters,” he added.

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