

## Jens Stoltenberg welcomes North Macedonia's upcoming NATO accession

Written by Martin Banks on 28 October 2019 in News  
News

The NATO chief's comments come after the US Senate approved the accession of North Macedonia to NATO last week.



**Photo credit: Press Association**

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The decision marked a victory for Skopje after the EU summit in mid-October decided not to start accession talks with North Macedonia and Albania. EU leaders have come under fire from MEPs over the decision.

Stoltenberg, speaking at a news conference in Brussels, said its accession was deserved but added, "it is not for me to speak on North Macedonia's EU membership."

Speaking at the same news conference at the NATO headquarters in Brussels, US Ambassador Kay Bailey Hutchison, the country's permanent representative to the Alliance, said she was "delighted" for North Macedonia, saying the move "sends a signal that our door is always open."

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She said, "North Macedonia has done a terrific job and worked very hard for example on the name issue. It is now on the way and will be a fully-fledged ally very soon when all national parliaments have ratified."

Twenty-two countries have ratified the NATO accession protocol for North Macedonia. The country can join once the remaining seven also do so.

"It is not for me to speak on North Macedonia's EU membership" **Jens Stoltenberg**

North Macedonia signed an agreement earlier this year clearing the way for membership after the country officially changed its name from "Macedonia." Greece had blocked its neighbour's NATO membership since 2008.

However, the refusal to open EU accession negotiations has again been condemned. European Council President Donald Tusk called the decision not to start talks with North Macedonia and Albania "a mistake" while Parliament's President David Sassoli said he was "deeply disappointed."

"North Macedonia has done a terrific job and worked very hard for example on the name issue. It is now on the way and will be a fully-fledged ally very soon" **US Ambassador Kay Bailey Hutchison**

Both countries had their hopes dashed after three member states - Denmark, France and the Netherlands - refused to agree to opening accession talks.

## About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

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