** United Nations Office in Belgrade**

**Daily Media Highlights**

**Thursday, 13 February 2014**

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**LOCAL PRESS**

**One court for northern Kosovo agreed in Brussels (*Politika*)**

Upon the conclusion of the 22nd round of negotiations with Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim **Thaqi** and EU High Representative Catherine **Ashton**, outgoing Serbian Prime Minister Ivica **Dacic** stated in Brussels that representatives of Belgrade and Pristina managed to achieve certain convergence of stands on judiciary in Kosovo. He added that the agreement, confirmed by the prime ministers, will be finalized by the working groups. It is generally agreed that Kosovska Mitrovica will have one court with territorial jurisdiction across seven municipalities, but the representation of the court departments will have to be based on the ethnic structure of the population - Dacic specified after the meeting, which was attended by outgoing Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandar **Vucic**. The Prime Minister said that this round of dialogue was very difficult, because the Albanian side insisted that the court’s jurisdiction includes seven municipalities and for judicial affairs not to be divided according to ethnicity criteria. He, however, noted that solutions were found for distribution of cases according to certain categories, as well as an agreement on the buildings which will house judges and prosecutors. Dacic said that the two sides are on the right track to reach an agreement that will allow the Serb community in northern Kosovo to retain its uniqueness and originality. The Prime Minister stressed that a halt in the dialogue with Kosovo must not be allowed, because in June, Serbia is scheduled to hold another inter-governmental conference as part of the accession negotiations with the EU. He added that the dialogue must continue because the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina is the key criterion for Serbia’s progress in accession negotiations with the EU. The Prime Minister said that the Serbian delegation requested that the EU finds out why a number of Serbs have been recently arrested in the province, including a candidate for mayor of Kosovska Mitrovica Oliver **Ivanovic**. This does not mean that we want to influence the work of the judiciary, but to seek clarification as to why this was done, considering the fact that the arrests may lead to destabilization of the political situation in northern Kosovo - said Dacic. The Prime Minister said that they also discussed technical issues of the upcoming parliamentary elections in Serbia in the territory of the southern Serbian province. He added that these issues will be resolved in coordination with the OSCE. EU High Catherine Ashton announced that Prime Ministers Dacic and Thaqi will finalize an agreement on judiciary in Kosovo at their next meeting in Brussels. Ashton said that they had an in-depth discussion on all the key issues related to the judiciary on the basis of the Brussels agreement. All the relevant elements are now being put together as a package which the two prime ministers will finalize at their next meeting, Ashton stated.

**Dacic discussed elections in Kosovo with OSCE representative (*Radio Serbia*)**

Outgoing Serbian Prime Minister Ivica **Dacic** has talked with the OSCE Special Representative for Western Balkans Gerard **Studman** about conducting Serbian parliamentary elections in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija and the possibility for the OSCE to offer logistic support in organizing the election process. Dacic supported the idea to agree on a joint strategy of the states of the region for resolving problems of illegal migrations. The decision for Serbia to preside over the OSCE in 2015 is great recognition for our country, but also for the entire region. Serbia’s goal is to promote regional cooperation through the OSCE presidency and affirmation of the entire region on the international plane, said Dacic.

**Vucic: There was no change of Brussels agreement (*Tanjug*)**

Outgoing Serbian First Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandar **Vucic** has stated there was no change of the Brussels agreement after the latest round of talks in Brussels. Answering a reporter’s question whether the deal to set up a single court for seven municipalities changed the Brussels agreement, Vucic said: “Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. Nothing has been changed, and nothing has been agreed. He added it was difficult for him to explain Belgrade’s tactics since there are things he can’t say publicly, but that the people should trust Serbia’s leadership.

**Vulin: We expect our guarantees to be accepted (*RTS/Tanjug*)**

Outgoing Serbian Minister without Portfolio in charge of Kosovo and Metohija Aleksandar **Vulin** has stated Serbia expects its guarantees to be accepted in regard to its request to release the arrested Kosovo Serbs on bail. He explained that the 22nd round of dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina in Brussels touched on one of the political leaders of Kosovo Serbs Oliver **Ivanovic**, a retired police officer Dragoljub **Delibasic**, and all other Serbs who were recently arrested in Kosovo, and no one knows why exactly and how it is possible that their basic human rights are violated. We expect our guarantees to be accepted, Vulin reiterated.

**Samardzic: Dacic and Vucic capitulated during the negotiations on the Kosovo judiciary (*Beta*)**

The Vice President of the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) and former minister for Kosovo and Metohija Slobodan **Samardzic** has assessed that Ivica **Dacic** and Aleksandar **Vucic** have “capitulated” during the negotiations on the Kosovo judiciary in Brussels. Samardzic told ***Beta*** that Dacic and Vucic accepted the “ultimatum” of the “premier of the Kosovo government” Hashin **Thaqi** for the court in northern Kosovska Mitrovica to be in charge for seven municipalities, and not for the four municipalities with the Serb majority in northern Kosovo. According to him, three Albanian municipalities will be now joined with the municipalities of Kosovska Mitrovica, Zvecan, Zubin Potok and Leposavic, meaning that this territory will have an Albanian majority and that this will influence the work and organization of the court for northern Kosovo. “Prior to their departure for Brussels, Dacic and Vucic were saying that they ensured for this court to reflect the ethnic structure of northern Kosovo, i.e. of four Serb municipalities, but we see that they bowed quickly under pressure from Thaqi and Ashton and accepted what Thaqi insisted on,” said Samardzic.

**REGIONAL PRESS**

**OHR on possible early or special elections (*Fena*)**

Early elections can be held after dissolving a body, in the manner prescribed by the relevant constitutions and laws. Proposed changes and amendments to the B&H election law, which would enable the B&H parliament to make a decision on holding special elections, open a series of issues on the concordance of these laws with the constitutional framework in B&H. This is the response received by ***Fena*** from the Office of the High Representative to the question of how the OHR regards initiatives to resolve the current crisis in B&H with special or early elections, or how the High Representative views calls to make a decision on the elections, if the Parliamentary Assembly is unable to do so.

**Inzko meets Davutoglu (*Fena*)**

The High Representative (HR) Valentin **Inzko** has met in Sarajevo with Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet **Davutoglu** and acquainted him with the present political situation in B&H in view of the demonstrations that are held throughout country, as well as with other challenges faced by the country. He reiterated that the international community fully supports the right of citizens to protest against the present social-economic and political problems in the country, but that these demonstrations must be peaceful and in line with the law. The HR also called the competent institutions and citizens to access urgently a two-way dialogue aimed at resolving problems of citizens and the authorities regarding these issues. “Lack of investments, unemployment and high degree of corruption are common problems for all B&H citizens. These issues must be resolved urgently,” said Inzko. He thanked Turkey for its constructive engagement in B&H, as well as its active participation in the work of the Management Board of the Peace Implementation Council, the Office of the HR stated.

**Lagumdzija meets Davutoglu (*Fena*)**

“For Turkey, territorial integrity, political unity, prosperity of B&H, as well as happiness and prosperity of every B&H citizen, regardless of ethnic, religious or any other affiliation is our starting point,” Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet **Davutoglu** told the press after the meeting with the B&H Foreign Minister Zlatko **Lagumdzija**. He added that is why they needed to conduct this exchange of opinions on the occasion of the events in B&H. Deputy Presiding of the B&H Council of Ministers Zlatko Lagumdzija thanked Davutoglu for the support to all citizens and nations in B&H. “I am glad that Turkey is giving at this moment resolute support to the B&H institutions. This is a situation that demands from all of us wisdom and ability to listen to each other,” said Lagumdzija.

**Komsic meets Davutoglu (*Fena*)**

The Presiding of the B&H Presidency Zeljko **Komsic** received Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet **Davutoglu** with whom he discussed the current situation in B&H and the demonstrations. The interlocutors agreed that citizens have the right to protests and peaceful demonstrations over the difficult economic-social situation in the country. However, it was stated that nobody approves of violence, burning of buildings of state institutions. Minister Davutoglu stressed that the future of B&H and all of its citizens is the Euro-Atlantic future and opines that the EU in B&H should speak in one language. He pointed out that B&H and its institutions will always have Turkey’s unquestionable support. Komsic stressed that state institutions must function at any moment and that this is the priority task of all those who are performing public duty, the B&H Presidency stated.

**Radmanovic meets Davutoglu (*Fena*)**

Member of the B&H Presidency from the Republika Srpska (RS) Nebojsa **Radmanovic** discussed with Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmetn **Davutoglu** the current political situation in B&H caused by citizen protests in the B&H Federation and the events around them. They exchanged information and opinions on the current political situation in B&H and the ways for overcoming the new situation. Davutoglu stressed that the elected political leaders in B&H have been invited to estimate the political situation in the country and pass appropriate decisions on the steps to be undertaken in this situation. Radmanovic and Davutoglu jointly assessed that it is good that there had been no inter-ethnic conflicts in B&H and that this must be avoided in every way in the future. The two interlocutors agreed that everything should be done at this moment to preserve peace, institutions and political stability inside B&H and thus of the region so necessary activities can be undertaken towards overcoming the political crisis caused by the latest events in the Federation. Radmanovic called Davutoglu to help with his authority in calming the political situation in the Federation and overcoming inter-Bosniak confrontations among the politicians, with the goal of general stabilization of the country and democratic political outcome of the situation, the public relations service of the B&H Presidency stated.

**INTERNATIONAL PRESS**

**Turkish FM Davutoglu visits the capital city of Sarajevo to meet his Bosnian counterpart Zlatko Lagumdzija (*World Bulletin*, 14 February 2014)**

Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has urged the international community to back Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Davutoglu visited the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo to meet his counterpart Zlatko Lagumdzija.

Davutoglu said stability and the territorial integrity of the country should be preserved and political reforms should be launched with the help of immediate economic assistances.

The Turkish minister said that holding a protest is a democratic right "unless it spoils political stability and public order."

"Reoccurrence of political and religious civil tension in Bosnia will bring risk to the region, Europe and the international community," Davutoglu said.

Bosnian minister, Zlatko Lagumdzija, said: "Now, it is time for citizens to talk and for politicians to listen in silence. We should create a dialogue environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina."

**Bosnia unrest ‘a wake-up call' (*European Voice*, by Andrew Gardner, 13 February 2014)**

The most extensive social and political unrest in Bosnia since the country's civil war of 1992-95 is setting alarm bells ringing across the European Union.

The protests, which began last week (5 February) among workers laid off from previously state-owned factories in Tuzla, have spread across the half of the country that is home to ethnic Bosniaks (Muslims) and Croats, and has also prompted small demonstrations of support among the Serb community.

Governments in four of the country's ten Muslim-Croat cantons have resigned, and protesters are calling for the resignation of the state-level government and early elections.

At a meeting of EU foreign ministers on Monday (10 February), William Hague, the UK's foreign minister, described the protests as a “wake-up call”, while a diplomat from another member state said that the main message conveyed by his foreign minister was: “take this bloody seriously”.

The protests, which have led to the torching of a number of government buildings, forced itself late onto the agenda of EU foreign ministers. The result, diplomats and officials say, was a short but “substantive” debate about the economic, political and security challenges.

The protests, which appear to have been spontaneous, have not acquired an ethnic character. Florian Bieber of Graz University said that they reflect broad disappointment with the political class. Officials, though, fear that any ill-judged step by police in mixed areas could inject an ethnic dynamic into the protests.

Diplomats from some EU member states took the unrest as vindication of the continuing presence of an EU military mission, although they said that because of its diminished strength of 600 soldiers, Operation Althea would be unable to deal with any serious security challenge.

**Financial help**

Some of the foreign ministers' debate was devoted to the possibility of securing additional international financial support for Bosnia. This could, however, send clashing signals to the state-level authorities, whose inability to agree on the implementation of a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights prompted the European Commission last October to cut half of Bosnia's pre-accession funding.

Turkey, a major influence in the country, has already sent its foreign minister, Ahmet Davutog?lu, to Bosnia. Štefan Füle, the European commissioner for enlargement, is expected to visit in the coming days.

Despite Bosnia's persistent problems, diplomats say that for the EU it had become a matter of routine business. The unrest has already changed that, with a wider debate now expected at a future meeting of ministers.

One diplomat said that Bosnia was a much harder case for the EU than the post-war difficulties between Kosovo and Serbia, which have dominated EU diplomacy in the Balkans over the past year. Bosnia has also proved resistant to the recent regional momentum towards closer integration with the EU. Croatia joined the EU in July, and Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo have all begun talks with the EU in the past 20 months, while Albania hopes to gain candidate status in June.

Edward Joseph, an American academic, has called for a “concerted EU-US effort to launch a new concept designed specifically to address Bosnia's unique challenges”, arguing for a tailor-made European integration process because “Bosnia-Herzegovina lacks the minimal level of internal administrative and political integration to implement even pre-accession EU criteria”.

**Lord Ashdown on Bosnia protests: I have to blame the EU (*CNN*, 12 February 2014)**

Could it be the Ukraine effect?

After months of protesters clashing in the streets of Kiev, Bosnia and Herzegovina is seeing some of its worst violence and unrest since the war two decades ago.

Across the country, including its capital Sarajevo, demonstrators have taken to the streets, setting fire to government buildings, trashing libraries and torching vehicles; all this in protest of high unemployment, unpaid wages and government corruption and incompetence.

Few people know Bosnia better than Lord Paddy Ashdown, who served as High Representative and Europe’s Special Envoy to the country from May 2002 until January 2006.

In an interview with CNN’s Christiane Amanpour, Lord Ashdown says the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina is “highly fragile” and that the European Union needs to do more to help build Bosnians build a functional state that can serve its citizens.

Speaking of the Dayton Accord that ended the war, he says it was an ideal solution to bring about peace, but that it is the “wrong basis to build a sustainable state”.

The good news, Ashdown told Amanpour, is that the protests are “non-ethnic” and that protesters are “turning against a political clique who have governed the country”, who are “deep in corruption”.

But there is bad news too: “At the moment its citizens are complaining about poverty and lack of movement and dysfunctionality of the state and corruptions amongst politicians”, but he says it “could move to something far worse very quickly”.

“The international community has to act now. If they don’t act now, I greatly fear that a situation where secessionism will take hold could easily become unstoppable as we approach elections…”

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