** United Nations Office in Belgrade**

**Daily Media Highlights**

**Monday, 14 April 2014**

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**LOCAL PRESS**

**Nikolic and Davenport discuss Pristina dialogue (*Beta*)**

Serbian President Tomislav **Nikolic** informed the Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia Michael **Davenport** that he will discuss the formation of the new government with leaders of all parliamentary parties and leave responsibility for personnel and other solutions to prime minister designate. Nikolic stated that Belgrade’s talks with Pristina should acquire a new institutional framework to be adopted by the Serbian parliament because new circumstances arose in the meantime and the Kosovo army was formed and signed an agreement with Albania, which is intolerable. Davenport assessed that relations between Serbia and the EU are excellent and enriched with new quality and intensity since the negotiations commenced on 21 January. Once the new Serbian Government is formed, all strategies and action plans for the implementation of reforms are expected, Davenport underlined. He qualified as very positive the fact that two rounds of the dialogue with Pristina were held during the government’s technical mandate.

**Dacic: I will not head negotiations on Kosovo (*Politika*)**

Outgoing Serbian Prime Minister and the leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) Ivica **Dacic** has stated that he will not head the negotiations on Kosovo after the new government is formed. “I will not head the negotiations on Kosovo because there is an agreement that this issue is on the prime minister level so that this will be done by the new Serbian prime minister Aleksandar **Vucic**,” Dacic told the press. He adds that he will take part in these negotiations as much as he can and if he is invited to help.

**No compromise on Union of Serb Municipalities (*Novosti*)**

Serb municipalities in northern Kosovo and Metohija will adopt this week the amended statute since they have received from the Kosovo Ministry of Local Self-Government objections to the initial texts. ***Novosti*** was confirmed that these documents will remain neutral in status and in line with the Brussels agreement. Most of Pristina’s objections are of technical nature and such suggestions have been accepted, while several regarded the status, so the municipalities didn’t change anything in these parts. One of the objections sent to the Kosovska Mitrovica Assembly referred to the possibility for Mitrovica to be incorporated to the Union of Serb Municipalities. However, Pristina’s request is to correct the formulation so that: a municipality may be part of a “representative association” and that municipal jurisdictions cannot be transferred to it. The Head of the Mitrovica Assembly Ksenija **Bozovic** tells ***Novosti*** that they will be flexible in amending the statute wherever this is possible, but that there is no compromise regarding the Union of Serb Municipalities: “We are not changing here anything because the Union is envisaged by the Brussels agreement. We have a deadline until 25 April and until then we will hold a session of the Assembly and adopt a new statute.” The session in Zvecan has been scheduled for next Thursday, because the 30-day deadline for this municipality to amend their document expires on this day. The Head of the Zvecan Assembly Darko **Radovanovic** tells ***Novosti*** that expert commissions have removed technical deficiencies, but he also notes that the statute will remain neutral in status: “We do not mention the republic of Kosovo or Kosovo at all in any sentence, but only our municipality. We refer to the Brussels agreement in the preamble, because the local elections were held based on this agreement.”

**NATO admitted bombing FRY without approval of UNSC (*Tanjug*)**

For the first time NATO has openly admitted that the bombing of FR Yugoslavia, i.e. Serbia, in 1999 was done without the approval of the UN Security Council. An official of the Alliance, who wished to remain anonymous, has told ***Tanjug*** that it does not change the position of NATO, but simply states an already established historical fact. Nevertheless, it was a legitimate operation, the same official added. Previously, on Friday, in a response to a letter from the Russian Foreign Ministry, which pointed that the bombing of Serbia was a violation of international law, NATO openly admitted that the bombing was undertaken without the consent of the UN Security Council.

**REGIONAL PRESS**

**Vucic gives full support to Bosic (*RTVBN*)**

“The Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) is firmly committed to preserving the Republika Srpska (RS) in line with the Dayton Accord, and only this kind of support will offer safety to anyone living on both sides of the Drina River,” the SNS vice president Nikola **Selakovic** told the assembly of the Serb Democratic Party (SDS). “We, from the SNS, just as we didn’t like it to be done in Serbia, also don’t like to interfere in other internal political scenes, including the internal politics of the RS. However, we cannot forget the time when we were an opposition party in Serbia and when our friends and brothers from the SDS were the first ones to respond to our invitations, to come to our ceremonies, and to our assemblies. Precisely because we don’t forget and we do not want to forget such things, the SNS is with you here today, with my presence,” said Selakovic. He recalled that the SNS was formed about five years ago as an independent party that knows what it wants, that fights for what Serbia and the Serb people need, and this is unity. “The SNS firmly advocates the preservation of the RS and we think that a lasting solution can be reached only with an agreement of all three nations. The SDS has its significant place in that solution,” stressed Selakovic, wishing the SDS great success in the future work.

**Progress made – FB&H slowing down certain projects (*Srna,* by Ognjen Begovic)**

The B&H Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations Boris **Tucic** says that progress was made in foreign trade, warning that some subjects in the FB&H, for political or other reasons, are trying to halt certain projects in their starting phase. “The foreign trade last year amounted to just over KM 23.5 billion, which is almost 2% more than in 2012,” Tucic says in an interview for ***Srna***. “Imports fell 0.55% last year, while exports increased 6.64%, which led to a fall in the foreign trade deficit of 8.18%. The export/import ratio was 55.24%, which is 3.72% more than in 2012. The EU is still the most important foreign trade partner of B&H, and trade with the EU amounts to 64.68% of total foreign trade, followed by CEFTA 2006 member states at 12.80%, while the trade with the other countries, among which the most important is the Russian Federation, amounts to 22.31%. B&H has a trade surplus with Austria. It almost equalized exports with imports when it comes to some other states, such as Slovenia, and it significantly improved the export/import ratio with some other states.”  When it comes to the law on protection of domestic production, Tucic says that the major portion of B&H’s foreign trade is being realized within the framework of the Interim Agreement, i.e. the Stabilization and Association Agreement, the CEFTA 2006 Agreement, and the Agreement on Accession to EFTA, which is in the process of ratification. He warns that in all agreements, someone, on behalf of B&H, assumed various obligations, particularly sensitive being those pertaining to the dynamic of the liberalization of mutual trade. “The basic problem is in the fact that institutions at the B&H level, tasked with various aspects of foreign trade, in the previous period did not take care of all the implications of the opening of the B&H market for the real sector and domestic producers. This created an imbalance; we are ‘swamped’ with imported goods and with competition with which B&H producers can hardly deal,” Tucic said. He says that “one should not neglect a number of other problems in the B&H institutions, which to a great extent sap the strength of the serious efforts at the Entity level to improve the situation, particularly by the Republika Ruska (RS) Cabinet in agriculture.” The B&H Minister says that his Ministry is a “link in the chain” of institutions involved in the trade in arms, military equipment, or dual-use products. “It is important to say that the Ministry reviews approvals for trade in these products only after it gets the approval from a number of other institutions, including the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Security, the Security-Intelligence Agency...” Tucic says. He says the defense industry was a very important segment in the former Yugoslavia, that it has a certain importance even today in B&H, and that foreign trade in these products is clearly defined by laws. If there is information of some other, illegal, foreign trade in these products, Tucic says, the relevant bodies should thoroughly investigate them, and punish those responsible. Tucic told Srna that B&H is, formally, in the concluding phase of its accession to the World Trade Organization; several issues remain which need to be resolved in bilateral talks. However, events in connection with the Ukraine partially and temporarily prolonged B&H’s accession to the WTO. “The fact is that certain subjects in the FB&H, for political or some other reasons, are trying to halt certain projects in their starting phase. If some are trying to hamper a major project such as Southern Stream only because the RS is interested in it, then the fears that such behavior leads nowhere are justified,” Tucic says. He feels that there is no stalemate when it comes to the influx of direct foreign investments in B&H, stressing that it is enough to see the more than serious investments by the Russian Federation in the RS in the energy sector, but also in some other sectors. Tucic concludes that everyone in B&H should, in keeping with their competencies, expend efforts to ensure the best fiscal, infrastructural and other preconditions for the influx of foreign investments, and demonstrate more mutual tolerance and understanding.

**Cvijanovic receives letter Putin sent to B&H Presidency (*Oslobodjenje*)**

The RS Prime Minister Zeljka **Cvijanovic** confirmed that as one of the entity premiers, she received a letter sent by Russian Federation President Vladimir **Putin** to the B&H Presidency regarding the gas supply and crisis situation in Ukraine. “It is certain that the situation connected with Ukraine can destabilize the supply of the EU market and for other countries with gas from Russia. We are aware of this,” said Cvijanovic. When it comes to the RS, she added, the entity remains firmly committed to realizing the large gas project, building the South Stream pipeline in the RS. She recalls that the RS offered and stands by this still, that the Federation could be included in the project, in order to be able to respond to the entire B&H market, which would be supplied with gas in this way. “A year ago we launched a joint initiative for this to happen, in the meantime there has been some confusion on the Federation’s part, but we are still committed to realizing this project in the future in the RS, if there is no consensus to realize it in FB&H,” she said. She put forward the hypothesis that it would possibly be difficult to resolve the gas supply and crisis in Ukraine, because the entire European market is highly dependent when it comes to the energy source, but she stressed that this is still a “great powers game.”

**INTERNATIONAL PRESS**

**Kosovo Asks EU to Set Up New Tribunal (*BIRN*, by Edona Peci, 14 April 2014)**

President Atifete Jahjaga said she would ask the EU to set up a special court outside Kosovo to deal with war crimes committed in the 1990s, having secured all-party consent.

Jahjaga said she would ask Catherine Ashton, the EU foreign policy chief, “to establish a Kosovo court located outside the country in order to address allegations [against former Kosovo Liberation Army fighters] raised in the Council of Europe report of 2010”.

In a press release issued on Friday, Jahjaga said: “The establishment of a special court reflects the engagement of Kosovo for an independent and unbiased process in dealing with these accusations in a credible manner.

“This court will be focused on individuals and individual acts and is not a judgment of the collective efforts of our people for liberty and freedom,” she added.

Her comments followed a joint meeting held with heads of political parties, which she said had reached agreement “on our achievements in the rule of law field and in the transfer of competencies to Kosovo institutions.

“We also discussed the importance for the extend of EULEX’s mandate until 2016,” Jahjaga said, referring to the EU rule-of-law mission whose mandate expires in June.

Although all main parties in Kosovo have now agreed to set up the new war crimes tribunal, some opposition leaders still said the decision was damaging.

Isa Mustafa, head of the opposition Democratic League of Kosovo, said the establishment of the tribunal was “a heavy burden for Kosovo.

“We do not consider that Kosovo deserves such a court,” he said, adding that parliament has to approve the establishment of the court in the coming weeks.

Albin Kurti, head of the nationalist Vetevendosje Movement, described the establishment of the tribunal as “a step back for Kosovo.

“Linking Kosovo to terms like crime and crimes against humanity will damage Kosovo’s reputation in the world,” he said.

The tribunal is designed to shed light on war crimes allegedly committed by former Kosovo Liberation Army members during 1998-1999.

It is still a unclear whether the tribunal will deal with organ trafficking allegations, but it is known that it will deal with the abduction and deportation of about 500 people, mostly Serbs, who went missing after conflict in Kosovo ended in July 1999.

An investigation into organ trafficking allegations contained in the report by the Council of Europe rapporteur Dick Marty report is still ongoing.

The report, published in 2010, alleged that former commanders of the Kosovo Liberation Army, from the so-called Drenica group - including the current Prime Minister, Hashim Thaci, and other Democratic Party of Kosovo MPs, including Shaip Muja, Azem Syla and Xhavit Haliti, ran organised criminal enterprises, including an ad-hoc network of detention facilities on the territory of Albania.

Haliti told BIRN that he was “ready to face justice.

“If the tribunal calls me, of course I will go,” he said.

“If the tribunal is established in line with European procedures, then it will help people who were mentioned in the [Marty] report,” he added.

However, he described the Marty accusations as “pure fabrications” and urged the need for more clarity concerning how the tribunal would deal with the allegations.

International campaign group Human Rights Watch has backed the establishment of the new tribunal, urging Kosovo's parliament to support the initititive “to show that it takes the rule of law seriously and is committed to justice for serious abuses”.

“The proposal to establish a special court and extend the EU law mission is Kosovo’s chance to advance justice and individual accountability for very serious crimes,” Lotte Leicht, EU director at Human Rights Watch, said on Friday.

**Turkey seeks to restore dialogue with Serbia with FM's visit (*Today’s Zaman*, by Deniz Arslan, 13 April 2014)**

On Monday, Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Feridun Sinirlioğlu is going to Belgrade to prepare for a possible visit to Serbia by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu.

A senior diplomat in Ankara told Sunday's Zaman that a visit by Sinirlioğlu rather than a lower-level diplomat is a sign that Turkey wants to work on improving its cool bilateral relationship with Serbia before Davutoğlu's visit. The expectation had been to receive a lower-level diplomat for talks before the Davutoğlu visit, not a high-level official.

The Turkish-Serbian relationship deteriorated following remarks by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Oct. 23 in Prizren, when he said: “Do not forget, Kosovo is Turkey and Turkey is Kosovo.” Serbian President Tomislav Nikolic demanded an apology for what he called a “scandalous” remark. Serbia does not recognize Kosovo's independence and considers Kosovo to be the cradle of Serbian culture.

Despite Davutoğlu's attempts to express his regret over the “misinterpretation” of the comments, Serbia was unsatisfied; a trilateral meeting scheduled to take place in Belgrade last December among Turkey, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina was postponed indefinitely by Serbia.

Davutoğlu made an urgent request to visit Serbia in early March to discuss the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but Serbia was busy with its parliamentary elections, which were held on March 16. Thus, the visit could not take place, according to sources who wished to remain anonymous.

“Turkey considers that the success of its Balkan policy is directly related to its relationship with Serbia. It is impossible to push for political reforms in Bosnia without Serbia [being involved],” the senior diplomatic source told Sunday's Zaman.

On Feb. 12, during a visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina following protests across the country against corruption and unemployment, Davutoğlu said a resurgence of political and religious tensions in Bosnia and Herzegovina would pose a risk both for Europe and the international community. “Everyone should stand together with Bosnia without hesitation over the country's security, stability and territorial integrity. It is gratifying that the demonstrations did not turn into an ethnic or religious clash,” he said, adding, “Turkey is and will remain to be on the side of our Bosnian brothers with regard to stability, peace, politics and territorial integrity."

Thousands of Bosnians have been rallying in several towns, demanding the resignation of the regional government and continuing to protest against corruption and unemployment that have plunged the country into crisis. Nermin Niksic -- the prime minister of the Bosniak-Croat Federation, which, together with the Republika Srpska, makes up post-war Bosnia -- dismissed the demands made in the protests but proposed early polls. The peaceful protests had been restricted to the Muslim Bosniak-dominated parts of the country's autonomous Bosniak-Croat Federation, but are slowly spreading to other parts as well.

Turkey supports Bosnia and Herzegovina's NATO and European Union membership, believing that the country being a member of such international organizations would contribute to regional stability.

With Sinirlioğlu's visit to Belgrade, all the issues between Turkey and Serbia are expected to be discussed, including the trilateral mechanism. “The importance of Davutoğlu's visit is to restore dialogue and build confidence,” said the senior diplomat to Sunday's Zaman.

Turkey is very interested in revitalizing the trilateral mechanism. According to the senior diplomat, Serbs are keen on tripartite meetings also, but at this point they are only interested in the economic, cultural and educational side of it, not political matters.

**Ivanov Takes Lead in Macedonia Polls (*BIRN*, by Sinisa Jakov Marusic, 13 April 2014)**

Incumbent President Gjorge Ivanov is leading the presidential vote count ahead of his main rival Stevo Pendarovski, preliminary results show.

Preliminary results from Sunday’s first round of presidential election in Macedonia suggest that Ivanov, who is running for a second five-year term for the ruling VMRO DPMNE party, is leading the count, ahead of his main rival, Stevo Pendarovski who is running for the opposition Social Democrats.

The State Electoral Commission, said that more than 99 per cent of the votes have been counted so far.
Ivanov won 448,776 and Pendarovski 326,090 votes, the preliminary unofficial results of the State Electoral Commission show.
Ivanov leads over Pendarovski in almost all Macedonian towns and in the capital Skopje.
At a press conference this evening, VMRO DPMNE declared victory of their candidate in the first round.
“VMRO DPMNE and Gjorge Ivanov had won. These numbers guarantee a much more decisive victory than our previous prediction... We are counting on even greater support in the second round [in two weeks]” said Vlatko Gjorcev of the ruling party.

Ivanov addressed the public insisting that the elections were peaceful fair and democratic.
“Today the citizens opted for our concept of permanent reforms... of honesty and patriotism”, Ivanov said noting that general elections will take place alongside the second round of the presidential poll.
Prime Minister and VMRO DPMNE head Nikola Gruevski said his party reached a convincing victory.
“This gives us strength for achieving our ultimate goal in the second round - wining 62 seats [in the 123] parliament,” Gruevski said.

At a press conference the Social Democrats accused of foul play.
“Under these conditions of constant blackmails and pressures”, Pendarovski said that his result may be considered a “bravery” on the part of the people.
 “The fight is not over. I will fight till the last day for the concept, the ideas and values that I believe in” he said.
SDSM head Zoran Zaev accused VMRO DPMNE of  “systematic theft of votes” that “prevented the will of the people”.
The other two presidential candidates, Iljaz Halimi from the Democratic Party of Albanians, DPA, and Zoran Popovski, running for a new opposition party, Civil Option for Macedonia, GROM are likely to drop out of the race in the second round that takes place in two weeks’ time, on April 27.
According to the State Electoral Commission, Halimi won 38,965 votes while Popovski won 31,363.
Observers say one of the first challenges for the future President will be to ensure a better European Commission report on the country and to lobby for Macedonian admission to NATO ahead of the NATO summit in September in Wales.
Macedonia has made no significant progress towards NATO and EU membership in recent years because of the dispute with Greece over its name.
The dilemma is either to reach an unpopular deal with Greece that would end the blockade, or risk a longer stalemate that could damage the country’s economic and political future.
The second election round of voting in two weeks is deemed more important because, along with the presidential run-off, an early general election will also take place.
In the parliamentary election, the main battle is again expected to be between the candidates of the main ruling VMRO DPMNE and the opposition Social Democrats, SDSM.
The official results from the first round of voting are expected to arrive tomorrow.

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