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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Gabriel: Situation in the north to be put under control (*Koha Ditore*)**

On his second day of visit to Kosovo, German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said in Mitrovica that the situation in the north needs to be put under control and authorities need to address the organised crime problem which he said is linked to Serbia’s political structures. Gabriel said EU integration will not be possible without solving border disputes with neighbours and efficient fight against corruption.

**The U.S. supports Germany’s statement on recognition of Kosovo by Serbia (*RTK*)**

The statement of the German Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sigmar Gabriel, that Serbia should recognize Kosovo as an independent and sovereign state, if it wants to integrate in the EU, found support of the democrats of the U.S. Committee for Foreign Affairs at the Chamber of the Representatives of Congress. “German Foreign Minister is hundred percent right,” was written in their Twitter account.

**Serbia reacts to Germany’s request to recognize Kosovo (*RTK*)**

Serbia’s Minister of Defense, Aleksandar Vulin, responded harshly to the statement of the German Foreign Minister, Zigmar Gabriel, who said that Serbia should recognize Kosovo as an independent and sovereign state, if it wants to integrate in the EU. “Minister Gabriel’s statement confirmed once again that Europe in a way is not interested to see Serbia’s progress, and the fact that Serbia is a very successful, democratic society. If membership in Europe depended on these values, we would have been part of EU long time ago, but it appears that only one thing is requested from it, and that is recognition of the independence of Kosovo and nothing more. Serbia will never recognize independence of Kosovo, it will never do this as a condition to become part of EU,” Vulin said.

**Proposals to resolve demarcation deadlock within existing deal (*Koha*)**

The paper reports that the proposals put forward regarding the border demarcation issue with Montenegro involve the model of an ‘agreement’ within the current border agreement. Sources told the paper that the likeliest option is the adoption of a joint Kosovo-Montenegro statement whereby the parties pledge to review the agreement in light of new facts. “With agreement of the parties, international arbitration could be sought for changing the agremeent’s provisions,” the current agreement already states. However, officials from the government of Kosovo have not commented on whether Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj would accept a solution within the current agreement.

**Barbados recognizes Kosovo (*Epoka*)**

Kosovo’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, Behgjet Pacolli announced that Barbados has recognized Kosovo as an independent country. “New recognition from Barbados state on the verge of the great celebration of the tenth jubilee of Kosovo’s independence. Congratulations dear Kosovo!” Pacolli wrote on his Facebook account. “The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados presents its compliments to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo and has the honor to refer to previous requests by the latter for the Government of Barbados to recognize Kosovo as an independent and sovereign state and for the establishment of the relations between Barbados and Kosovo,” is written among others in the recognition letter. Kosovo leaders hailed the recognition by Barbados, and expressed their appreciation.

**Roth: Germany categorically against reshuffling of Kosovo-Serbia border (*Koha*)**

Michael Roth, German Minister of State for Europe, said in a front-page interview to the paper that while his country supports an agreement between Kosovo and Serbia it categorically opposes the idea of border reshuffling as part of an effort to reach such an agreement. “I have faith that Kosovo and Serbia will overcome this obstacle, if there is political will for it. However, I have to express a warning: reshuffling of borders is very dangerous. We oppose this categorically,” Roth said. The German official went on to acknowledge the progress Kosovo has made during the ten years since declaring independence but noted that there are still issues that need to be addressed. “Rule of law and democracy are not consolidated to the degree we and especially the citizens in Kosovo would want. There is still deficit in the field of judiciary. Good governance and transparent economic activity are only just beginning to be visible. Corruption and organised crime are not being fought with enough determination,” Roth said. He also stressed the importance of Kosovo ratifying the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro and adhering to international obligations with regards to the specialist chambers. “Attempts to sabotage Specialist Chambers are highly damaging also for relations of Kosovo with its partners. We are not dealing here with the legitimacy of the fight for freedom but with the responsibility of individuals for criminal acts committed at that time. These criminal acts should not be silenced,” Roth noted.

**Rohan: Partition of Kosovo opens ‘Pandora’s Box’ (*Zeri*)**

In an interview to the paper, former envoy for Kosovo status Albert Rohan said partition of Kosovo has always been opposed by the international community for two reasons: if the north would be divided from the rest of Kosovo this would cause disgruntlement with Serbs living in central parts of Kosovo and second, Kosovo’s possible partition would open the ‘Pandora’s Box’ leading the Albanian community in the south of Serbia to also demand secession and the Republika Srpska to renew its efforts to leave Bosnia and Herzegovina. Asked about the situation in the north, Rohan said that “the catastrophic situation in the north is because of UNMIK and KFOR failure in 1999 to integrate that part of Kosovo and strengthen the freedom of movement beyond Iber. The north is now under Belgrade’s political influence but has also become a lawless region where criminal groups operate unpunished.”

**Kocijancic: EU will very soon invite parties to new round of talks (*media*)**

Maja Kocijancic, spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, told ***Arbresh.info*** news website that EU High Representative Federica Mogherini is cooperating with Kosovo and Serbian Presidents to normalize the overall situation in the process of talks. “Both Presidents have shown constructive engagement,” she said. Kocijancic said the European Union will soon invite the parties to the second round of technical talks in Brussels.

**Markovic: We are ready to help Kosovo on its Euro-Atlantic path (*media*)**

Kosovo Assembly President, Kadri Veseli, met in Pristina yesterday with Montenegro’s Prime Minister Dusko Markovic and discussed cooperation between the two countries, most online media report. Veseli and Markovic said Kosovo and Montenegro are friendly countries that are helping one another on the road toward Euro-Atlantic integration. The two leaders expressed readiness to resolve all issues, including the border demarcation, through dialogue. Veseli said the agreement must be ratified by the Kosovo Assembly and that the two countries should focus on strengthening economic cooperation. He added that the Albanian community living in Montenegro and the Montenegrin community in Kosovo must serve as strong bridges to further advance relations between the two countries. Veseli highlighted the importance of building the Decan-Plave road which he said will facilitate the movement of people and have a positive impact on trade exchange. Markovic said Montenegro and Kosovo have very friendly relations and added that Montenegro is committed to helping Kosovo on its path toward Euro-Atlantic integration.

**Russia continues lobbying against Kosovo’s independence (*RTK*)**

Russia is continuously lobbying to present Kosovo as “a half state” in the international arena. Marija Zakharova, spokesperson of the Russian Foreign Ministry, issued during the day several statements against Kosovo and its allies, calling NATO a factor which forcefully divided former Yugoslavia. “February 17 is the 10th anniversary of Kosovo's so-called statehood. This is a reason to closely review the infamous outcome of Pristina supporters’ course for post factum legitimisation of NATO aggression in 1999 and Yugoslavia’s forced dismemberment,” Zakharova wrote on her Twitter account. “Unilateral secession in 2008, in violation of fundamental principles of international law, did not resolve the Kosovo matter, the prospects of which remain vague. Kosovo’s “benefactors” turned it into a black hole with a disputable status,” says another tweet by her. “NATO used the chaos in Kosovo to set up infrastructure on its territory under the cover of UNSC Resolution 1244, i.e. the Camp Bondsteel US military base, in order to project the alliance’s influence in the Balkans and manipulate processes in the region,” Zakharova also wrote.

**Specialist prosecutor Schwendiman announces departure (*Epoka e Re*)**

Specialist chambers chief prosecutor, David Schwendiman, has announced he is stepping down from the post at the end of March but emphasized that he was neither resigning nor being dismissed. In a statement, Schwendiman said he was leaving as his appointment as a Senior Foreign Service Officer in the US State Department was due to expire. “This must happen because the US administration is unable to overlook my status as a retiree called back into service – something the law won’t let me change regardless how much I might want to stay,” Schwendiman said in a statement.

See the statement: <https://www.scp-ks.org/en/specialist-prosecutor-explains-imminent-departure>

**Thaci on Ivanovic’s murder: It will be painful for some (*RTK*)**

The President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci, told N1 that Oliver Ivanovic’s committers of murder will be found and the truth will be painful for some. He said motives behind the murder were criminal. “Investigations on Oliver Ivanovic’s murder are ongoing, so far there are no indications for a politically motivated case, information suggest criminal Mafiosi motives,” Thaci said. “We will cooperate with Serb authorities, in order to receive required information,” he added. “I cannot say more, relevant institutions will come up with their results. However, it could have to do with criminal structures connected with certain political circles,” Thaci said.

**Former US VP Biden congratulates Thaci on independence anniversary (*dailies*)**

Former US Vice President Joe Biden has congratulated President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci and the people of Kosovo on the tenth anniversary of independence. In a letter, Biden said he has always believed in the promise of the people of Kosovo to establish a country rooted in the core values of justice and equality. “In one brief decade, you have mounted a determined struggle for independence, been welcomed into the community of nations, established a representative democracy where free and fair elections are the norm, and codified human rights into law. You have now laid the strong foundations of a democratic state. Non-governmental organizations are active, citizens freely debate the issues of the day, and acts of tolerance and reconciliation dot the landscape,” Biden said adding that Kosovo and its people were firmly fixed in the hearts of the entire Biden family.

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