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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Demarcation session to convene today without a certain pro-vote (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo Assembly is expected to convene today at 10 to vote on the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro but according to the paper it is not certain whether the ruling parties have managed to secure sufficient votes to ratify the deal. Officials from the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) say that so far 78 pro-votes are secured of the required 80 but Kosovo Assembly President and PDK leader, Kadri Veseli, said he was convinced the agreement would be ratified today. At the same time, the U.S. ambassador, Greg Delawie, and head of the EU Office in Kosovo, Nataliya Apostolova, yesterday renewed calls for ratification of the border demarcation.

**Juncker, Mogherini and Hahn to visit Kosovo today (*Lajmi*)**

The President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, EU High Representative Frederica Mogherini and commissioner for EU enlargement, Johannes Hahn, will be visiting Kosovo today. President Juncker and EU delegation will meet Kosovo’s President, Hashim Thaci, Assembly President Kadri Veseli and the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj. Juncker, Mogherini and Hahn will also have meeting with citizens, media representatives, activists from civil society, entrepreneurs, students, professors, youth of political parties, artists, Kosovo athletes, EU programs scholarship holders, and heads of the EU missions and international community.

**Veseli: Border demarcation to pass today (*Klan Kosova*)**

Kosovo Assembly President, Kadri Veseli, said in an interview that he expects the border demarcation agreement to be ratified today at the Assembly. “We have a clear European and Western orientation. We will vote demarcation tomorrow to strengthen country’s sovereignty and to open European Union perspective. I am very certain that all fellow MPs will reflect, especially in light of tomorrow’s historic visit of senior European officials,” Veseli said. He added he expects Vetevendosje MPs to also support demarcation. “There is information that there are individuals within Vetevendosje Movement ready to support this agreement,” Veseli said.

**Kurti: We will not give land away (*Zeri*)**

Vetevendosje leader, Albin Kurti, said Kosovo would lose territory with the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro expected to be put to vote today. In a Facebook post, Kurti said: “That land always belonged to Kosovo, to Albanians, and this was widely proved by local and international documents. There were never any Serbs or Montenegrins there, except in uniforms, but even they were banished,” Kurti wrote. He said the more land Kosovo loses the richer the people at the top become. “Citizens of Kosovo deserve the right to travel freely, without visas, without having to endure this violence and humiliation. We will not give land away,” Kurti concluded.

**Limaj: NISMA will vote in favour of demarcation agreement (*Zeri*)**

Leader of the Social Democratic Initiative (NISMA), Fatmir Limaj, said his party MPs will vote in favour of the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro. “Fortunately, we have a solution for demarcation. We hope this agreement will be voted tomorrow at the Assembly and the country will be unblocked,” Limaj said yesterday at the ceremony to mark the fourth year anniversary of his party’s establishment.

**Sholtes: Ratification of demarcation, key for visa liberalization (*Koha*)**

Igor Sholtes, the European Parliament’s Rapporteur on Kosovo, told the paper on Tuesday that all eyes will be turned to the Kosovo Assembly and that its members are expected to ratify the border demarcation deal with Montenegro. “This is one of the key issues that needs to be resolved before moving toward visa-free travel for Kosovars. There is a high importance in ratifying borders and this is being stressed every step of the way. The European Commission too said in its session in Strasbourg in February that there will be no visa liberalization for Kosovo without resolving the border issue,” Sholtes said.

**PM Haradinaj’s plane makes emergency landing in Sofia (*Kosova Sot/Telegrafi*)**

The paper reports that the plane in which Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj was travelling from London to Pristina had to make an emergency landing in Sofia, Bulgaria yesterday due to deteriorated weather conditions in Kosovo. ***Telegrafi*** however reports that Haradinaj was expected to arrive to Pristina late last night after the airport reopened.

**Dialogue between presidents to resume in March (*Epoka*)**

The EU Foreign Policy Spokesperson, Maja Kocijancic, announced that technical dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia will resume next month, discussing again implementation of the agreements reached earlier in Brussels. She stressed that the meeting of political level between the Presidents is expected to resume in March. “This should happen next month. We still do not have the details,” Kocijancic said.

**Merkel requests from Serbia agreement with Kosovo (*media*)**

The President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic said on Tuesday after his meeting with Angela Merkel that he had “understood all messages” and would work to solve the Kosovo problem. “I told her that it is more important to love the land of one’s children than of one’s ancestors. Serbia is ready for a solution, but the solution is in both sides losing something,” he said. According to him, it may be better if nobody is satisfied, because there are many difficult solutions, while for Serbia the only difficult one is that where Serbia is the only loser. “We know what difficult tasks are ahead of Serbia, I am grateful to Merkel for the support... We believe in compromise, not in unilateral solutions, we believe that Germany's support, which will be even more powerful under Angela Merkel's leadership, will find solutions,” Vucic said. The German chancellor said that “EU accession negotiations can be successful with further reforms in the domain of the rule of law and in the light of the issue of relations with Kosovo”. “Accession negotiations can be successful if reforms develop further in the domain of the rule of law and in the light of the issue of relations with Kosovo. That is why we partly touched on how we can reach a legal framework, a contractual solution for Kosovo,” Merkel said. She added that a number of issues in the region need to be resolved, and stressed that Berlin appreciates President Vucic’s participation when it comes to cooperation among the countries of the Western Balkans.

**Pacolli to Dacic: Join the civilized world (*RTK*)**

The Principal Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Kosovo, Behgjet Pacolli, replied to the comments of his Serbian counterpart, Ivica Dacic with regards to recognitions respectively non-recognitions of Kosovo. “As a response to Dacic’s ironizing about the countries which have or have not recognized Kosovo, I can only say that it would have been a miracle if Dacic did something constructive, that would be of service to someone,” Pacolli wrote on his Facebook profile. “It appears that he does not have what to do and brags with his destructiveness. Dacic should know that Kosovo has declared its independence, it has become a factor as a state and two thirds of the world recognize this reality. I call on Dacic to join the civilized and constructive world,” Pacolli wrote.

**Kosovo’s three biggest problems (*Koha*)**

The paper covers in one of its front-page stories the latest report by the USAID office in Pristina titled “Kosovo political economy analysis”. The report notes that in the second decade of its independence, Kosovo is faced with three key challenges: “lack of economic development, a weak investment climate, insufficient supply of electricity, political favoritism in allocation of economic opportunity, and an inadequately skilled workforce deter investment and impede the development of a competitive private sector”. Another challenge is elite impunity. “Widespread abuse of power is no secret in Kosovo. Recent leaks of recorded telephone conversations among high-ranking elected and party officials

confirmed the worst fears of many. While voters are voicing their anger by casting their ballots against the party that allegedly has most benefited from elite impunity and informal networks of power, the Partia Demokratike e Kosovës (Democratic Party of Kosovo or PDK), Kosovo’s judicial system has not yet been able to hold elites accountable because many key enforcement institutions, such as the Office of the State Prosecutor, are politically compromised,” the report notes. Another key challenge is identity. The report notes: “Kosovo is a multi-ethnic state with a history of ethnic tensions, especially between the country’s Albanian and Serb communities. Kosovo’s ethnic minorities live in their own communities and many Kosovo Serbs retain loyalty to Serbia, due to a combination of ethnic solidarity, material benefits the Government of Serbia provides to Serb communities, and coercion. This divide is especially pronounced in northern Kosovo, which is effectively isolated from the rest of the country. While Kosovo’s Constitution defines the country as a multi-ethnic state, the concept of a distinct Kosovo identity is elusive to many and is emerging only slowly among the post-independence generation. Many Albanian youth in Kosovo find that Islam provides a sense of identity as the only aspect unaltered by the shift from an ethnic Albanian identity under Yugoslavia into the constitutionally constructed (but still unrealized) Kosovo civic identity. Religion also helps provide a sense of meaning to many of the country’s youth, who are disillusioned with the status quo described above”. Link to the full report: *http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\_docs/PA00N87P.pdf*.

**Sefaj: Kosovo to renew Interpol membership bid in November (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo’s Minister of Internal Affairs, Flamur Sefaj, told the members of the Assembly’s foreign affairs committee that Kosovo plans to renew its Interpol membership bid this November. Sefaj spoke of the reasons that led Kosovo government withdraw Interpol application last year saying they could not risk a no vote as they had no reliable information on how many countries would support Kosovo joining the organization.

**Petition on victims of sexual violence not submitted to UN (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on page five that the organizational board of the initiative seeking international justice for women raped during the Kosovo conflict failed to submit the petition to the United Nations. The organizers were told in a reply from the office of former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon that they should submit the petition to the UN Mission in Pristina, but the organizational board refused to do so saying that they wanted to submit the signatures to the UN. Edita Tahiri, chairperson of the board and former Minister for Dialogue, told the paper on Tuesday: “UNMIK’s mandate in Kosovo has expired and UNMIK is not a UN body that deals with the issue of women raped in conflict … They [the UN] refused to accept the petition and there was an attempt to give competencies to UNMIK. Our position is that UNMIK has concluded its mission in Kosovo regardless that it has an office without competencies. My impression was that they wanted to dodge the issue”.

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