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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Haradinaj urges Hahn to include Kosovo in visa liberalisation regime (*Zeri*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, met yesterday in Skopje at the margins of the Western Balkans Digital Summit the European Commissioner for Enlargement, Johannes Hahn, and urged him to include Kosovo in the visa liberalisation regime in optimal time. In a Facebook post, Haradinaj wrote that he expressed in the meeting Kosovo’s commitment to align alongside the Western Balkans countries in strengthening peace and cooperation and in speeding up European integration. “Kosovo has made progress, especially in the rule of law,” Haradinaj said.

**Haradinaj to Mogherini: Kosovo has met all visa liberalization criteria (*media*)**

Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj and his counterparts from the Western Balkans met on Wednesday with EU High Representative Federica Mogherini, most media report. According to a press release issued by Haradinaj’s office, he told Mogherini that Kosovo has met the visa liberalization criteria and that Kosovo’s citizens rightfully expect a decision on visa liberalization within weeks. “Kosovo has achieved progress in many important processes that are needed for the country’s integration in the European family and for improving the lives of its citizens. This is a lengthy process to which we as a government are fully committed, therefore it is important that this is acknowledged and for Kosovo to get visa liberalization. Kosovo has met all the criteria and rightfully expects the visa issue to be resolved within weeks,” the press release noted.

**“Kosovo has excellent relations with Montenegro,” Haradinaj says (*media*)**

Kosovo Prime Minister, Ramush Haradinaj, met on Wednesday with his Montenegrin counterpart, Dusko Markovic, most media report. “I had a friendly meeting with Montenegrin Prime Minister Dusko Markovic, which reflects the excellent relations between our two countries,” Haradinaj wrote on his Facebook profile. “Kosovo and Montenegro have shown inter-state correctness. We are committed for this cooperation to continue and to have same agenda, which will be our European path,” Haradinaj wrote. “I congratulated the Montenegrin Prime Minister on the election of Milo Djukanovic as President. We are happy that this country elected a president who has the same aspirations as our country, European family and eternal friendship with the U.S. Our vision as Kosovo is to deepen friendly, neighborly, economic and political relations with Montenegro,” Haradinaj wrote.

**“Kosovo and Macedonia, good example of cooperation” (*RTK*)**

The Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj met on Wednesday in Skopje with the Prime Minister of Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). Haradinaj stressed after the meeting that Kosovo is interested in good neighborly relations and FYROM is a good example of cooperation. They discussed regional initiatives, infrastructural projects, political and diplomatic cooperation, and economic partnership. Haradinaj congratulated FYROM for the positive EU Progress Report. He also stressed the importance on the joint integrated border management, roaming agreement, and other trade and infrastructural projects.

**Kosovo and Bosnia discuss visa-free travel (*Koha*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, met in Skopje at the sidelines of the Western Balkans Digital Summit the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denis Zvizdic, and discussed ways to strengthen economic and political cooperation. The two officials also discussed the possibility of visa-free travel from Bosnia to Kosovo and vice-versa which they agreed is a necessary step in deepening economic relations and free movement of persons.

**European Council president Tusk to visit Western Balkans (*Kosova Sot*)**

President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, is expected to pay a visit to the Western Balkans, including Kosovo, from 24 to 28 April. Speaking at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, Tusk said he will convey the message to the region that the EU continues the most trusted partner and biggest investor. Tusk’s visit to the region comes ahead of the EU-Western Balkans summit in Sofia, Bulgaria.

**Djuric: Pristina to change law and form Association/Community (*Zeri*)**

Head of the Serbian Government’s Office for Kosovo, Marko Djuric, said that Pristina authorities have no intention of forming the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities in line with the Brussels agreement. He said the statute of the Association/Community should not be drafted based on Pristina’s “internal acts and decisions” but rather in accordance to the agreement the parties reached in Brussels. “The Brussels agreement clearly states that Pristina needs to change its laws because the applicable legislation does not permit ACSMM,” Djuric said.

**Djuric to visit Kosovo on Friday (*Kallxo*)**

Head of the Serbian Government’s Office for Kosovo, Marko Djuric, is expected to visit Kosovo on Friday, reports the website adding that Kosovo’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has given consent for the visit. Foreign Minister, Behgjet Pacolli, said that Djuric will be accompanied by Nikola Selakovic, General Secretary to the Presidency of Serbia. The two Serbian officials are expected to hold a meeting at the University of Mitrovica North.

**KSF transformation bill to be sent to government on 30 April (*Zeri*)**

The paper quotes officials from the Kosovo Security Force Ministry saying that the draft law on the force’s transformation will be sent to the government on 30 April and that they are currently waiting for the Ministry of Finance to give an estimated cost of the law that lays the groundwork for the formation of a Kosovo army. The government of Kosovo meanwhile said it is committed to implement the legislative agenda approved at the beginning of its mandate while at the same time intensify cooperation with international partners. Chairman of the Kosovo Assembly committee on internal affairs, security and Kosovo Security Force oversight, Haxhi Shala, said they expect the draft law on KSF transformation to reach them by the end of the month.

**Rama: Kosovo must have its armed forces (*Epoka*)**

The Kosovo Security Force (KSF) Commander, Rrahman Rama, said in an interview to the paper that every foreign official that visits Pristina says that Kosovo is entitled to have its armed forces just like any other country. Rama said he was confident that the KSF will soon transform into an army and that the matter is in the hands of politicians. “As commander of the KSF, I can say we are ready,” Rama said. He also called on Serb MPs to visit their constituencies and see the work that the KSF has done there.

**Progress Report highlights many flaws in the Assembly’s work (*Koha/Zeri*)**

The paper reports on its front page that the latest Progress Report of the European Commission on Kosovo has highlighted many flaws in the work of the Assembly. The lack of control over the government, the failure to appoint members of boards based on merits, the adoption of laws through fast procedures and without debate are among the flaws. The report also notes the frequent absence of MPs in plenary sessions, the continuous political polarization and the throwing of teargas canisters in assembly premises. “All political parties must show responsibility and resume constructive dialogue in the Assembly as the key forum for political debates,” the report notes. The European Commission has called on the ruling coalition and the opposition to urgently reach consensus on implementing the reforms agenda related to the European Union. Under the front-page headline ***Failure to implement the European agenda***, ***Zeri*** quotes the Progress Report as saying that the public administration continues to be politicized, politics has influence over the judiciary, corruption is at a high level and that human rights are not respected.

**Hoxhaj: UNMIK is an obstacle to Kosovo (*RTK*)**

Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister Enver Hoxhaj, told ***RTK*** on Wednesday that the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo will be formed in accordance with the Constitution of Kosovo. “We will not allow the creation of a Republika Srpska in Kosovo. There are 30 to 40 thousand Serbs in northern Kosovo, in total, around 60 thousand Serbs live in Kosovo.” Hoxhaj said. Speaking about the EU Progress Report, Hoxhaj said that it is a result of two year work of Kosovo institutions. “We should have in mind that we have become a state ten years ago. Kosovo is the last in the region being that we are the last to have declared our independence. We are committed to moving forward on the European integration path,” he said. Hoxhaj argued that UNMIK is a major obstacle for Kosovo. “UNMIK representatives sometimes speak on behalf of Kosovo. Not in the factual diplomatic sense. The concrete case is INTERPOL,” he said. According to him, UNMIK should transform into a UN Office in Kosovo. “Recognizing their merits, in 2018 the necessity on how long should UNMIK stay in Kosovo, should be raised,” he said. He also added that UNMIK reports are not realistic.

**Vetevendosje: Government has turned Kosovo into Serbia’s trade colony (*media*)**

Several media report that Vetevendosje criticized the Kosovo government and the organizers of the Pristina 2018 fair on Wednesday for favoring products from Serbia and for ignoring products from Albanian businesses. ***Koha Ditore*** quotes on its front page Vetevendosje parliamentary group chief, Glauk Konjufca, as saying that Kosovo’s institutions, starting with the government, have turned Kosovo into a trade colony of Serbia. Konjufca criticized all governments so far for favoring Serbian products. “This is a serious problem because we know the relations between Kosovo and Serbia. Serbia has a hostile position vis-à-vis the Republic of Kosovo, it doesn’t recognize Kosovo, it fights it on the international arena and it sabotages Kosovo through its state institutions,” he added. Pristina-based ***Indeksonline*** news website reports that Vetevendosje activists will organize a symbolic action today at 11:00 against the high participation of Serbian business at the fair.

**Ilic: Kosovo gets UN seat, Serbs get Association/Community (*Zeri*)**

New Serbia leader, Velimir Ilic, told ***Danas*** daily newspaper that according to “reliable diplomatic sources” German Chancellor Angela Merkel has told Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic that Belgrade and Pristina must sign an agreement for normalization of relations in January 2019. “After the agreement is signed, Kosovo will get visa liberalization and will become a member of international organizations, including the United Nations, while Belgrade will have to give up on Kosovo by amending the Serbian Constitution … At the same time, the Kosovo government will have to secure the integration of the Serb community and to form the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities according to the Constitution of Kosovo but with executive competencies,” Ilic was quoted as saying.

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