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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Assembly unlikely to adopt platform on dialogue (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on its front page that the Kosovo government has drafted a nine-point platform for the final phase of talks with Serbia, but it has not clarified the topics that will be addressed or the basic principles of the process. The platform foresees an internationally legally-binding agreement that will enable the full normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. The document notes that the Kosovo Assembly supports the facilitating role of the European Union and the support of the United States of America in the process of reaching the international agreement and its implementation, which is foreseen to enable Kosovo’s membership of the United Nations. The document also notes that the President of Kosovo to lead the negotiations. The paper recalls that in order to enter into force, at least 61 members of parliament must vote in favor of the document. Opposition representatives meanwhile argue that the platform can be adopted by the Assembly only after consensus is reached both on the content and for the head of the negotiations team. Ilir Deda, an MP from the opposition, told the paper on Thursday: “The so-called platform of the Government of Kosovo for dialogue with the Republic of Serbia is neither a platform nor consensual, but a sneaky attempt by the government trying to secure 80 votes and give the negotiating mandate to President Hashim Thaci”.

**Hoxhaj: Dialogue platform aims to achieve binding agreement (*Epoka e Re*)**

Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister, Enver Hoxhaj, said in an interview to the paper that the recently-endorsed platform for dialogue with Serbia aims to lead to a legally binding agreement for the parties which, according to him, implies mutual recognition and enables Kosovo to join UN, EU, and NATO. “The platform also foresees the creation of a mechanism by the Assembly to represent Kosovo in the dialogue but the process itself will be led by the President,” Hoxhaj explained. He said the platform will also try to build unity amongst political parties in Kosovo being that “the foreign policy is an issue that should unite not divide us.”

**President Thaci not afraid of special court (*Gazeta Express*)**

Kosovo President, Hashim Thaci, told ***T7*** on Thursday that he is not afraid of the specialist chambers that will address war crimes allegedly committed by members of the former Kosovo Liberation Army. Thaci said they have nothing to hide from the international tribunal. Asked if he expects an indictment to be filed against him, Thaci said “we have nothing to hide from the specialist chambers”. “I was not afraid during the war and I am not afraid now. I survived the war and I believe I will survive this too,” Thaci said. During the interview, Thaci denied reports in some media according to which he held secret meetings with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic to discuss possible compromises over Kosovo.

**Thaci: Kosovo needs neither Erdogan nor Gulen supporters (*RTK/T7*)**

President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, said in an interview to ***T7*** channel that Kosovo neither needs supporters of the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan nor of the exiled Turkish cleric Fethullah Gulen. He said that there will be an inquiry into the arrest and subsequent deportation of the six Turkish nationals wanted by Turkey for alleged links to Gulen. “President Erdogan called me on the telephone. We discussed bilateral relations and that there was no need for tensions. Kosovo belongs neither to Erdogan or Gulen spirit,” Thaci said. He also said he had no prior knowledge of the arrest operation of Turkish nationals. “The whole thing should not have happened in the first place. It is an isolated act. Relevant mechanisms need to reveal in detail what happened and based on the results, the country should come up with a position,” Thaci noted.

**Serbian List returns to government over Association/Community (*Koha*)**

Kosovo Serb representatives and politicians in Belgrade have softened their position on the ultimatum for the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities, the paper reports on page three. Serbs said they would unilaterally form the Association if Pristina failed to do that by April 20. But one day before their deadline expired, representatives of the Serbian List and the Serbian Government said they have given up on the ultimatum. Serbian List MP, Goran Simic, said on Thursday that his party remains open for talks and solutions for the Association/Community. “We waited for five years, so we can wait for another three and a half months,” Simic said after a meeting in Zvecan. Memebrs of the managerial team that will draft the statute of the Association also attended the meeting. Unnamed sources told the paper that as a result of the ongoing work on forming the Association/Community, the Serbian List will return to the government.

**Visa liberalisation assessment team to visit Kosovo in May (*Zeri*)**

The paper reports on the cover that a European Commission delegation is expected to visit Kosovo in May to assess the implementation of the visa liberalisation criteria. According to the paper, Kosovo will at this time have a clearer picture on where it stands with regards to implementation of the last condition, fight against corruption and organised crime. Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj said Kosovo has managed to meet the average required by the visa liberalisation roadmap and that a positive decision will be reached in the coming weeks.

**Hoxha: Visa liberalisation for Kosovo, this year (*Epoka e Re*)**

Kosovo’s Minister of European Integration, Dhurata Hoxha, said yesterday before the members of the Assembly committee on European integration that Kosovo will receive visa liberalisation by the year’s end. She said the recent European Commission report contains positive assessment on Kosovo’s progress but at the same time also identifies challenges ahead.

**Deda: No motion of confidence until visa-free travel is granted (*Zeri*)**

Alternativa co-founder and MP, Ilir Deda, said they would not be initiating a no-confidence motion against the government of Kosovo until there is a positive decision on visa liberalisation. Deda, whose party has a pre-election coalition deal with the opposition Democratic League of Kosovo, said at the meeting of the Assembly committee on European integration that 99 percent of the visa liberalisation criteria have been fulfilled by Kosovo institutions.

**Kosovo Assembly to discuss progress report today (*Bota Sot*)**

Kosovo Assembly is to hold a session today to discuss the recent European Commission report on Kosovo. Member of the Assembly presidency from Vetevendosje, Albulena Haxhiu, said the report highlights serious problems which deserve to the addressed by MPs. Memli Krasniqi from the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) meanwhile proposed for the session to be postponed saying the report has not yet been translated from English.

**“Higher awareness at UN about sexual violence during Kosovo conflict” (*Epoka*)**

Head of the petition demanding justice for victims of sexual violence during conflict in Kosovo, Edita Tahiri, said the UN is becoming increasingly aware of this category of persons in Kosovo. She said this was evident in the latest Security Council session where several member states raised this issue. “In the debate that took place at the Security Council this week, several countries spoke of the need for the issue of sexual violence victims in Kosovo to be addressed and receive UN attention,” Tahiri told the paper. She said the petition calls on the UN Secretary-General to draft report on the victims of sexual violence in Kosovo and Croatia. “We will continue diplomatic efforts in the coming period and I am convinced that the UN cannot ignore this issue indefinitely,” Tahiri added.

**PM Haradinaj appoints two more deputy ministers (*Zeri*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, has appointed two more deputy ministers, Bekim Jupa from the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) to the Ministry of Trade and Industry and Mevludin Kransiqi (PDK) to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development. The number of deputy ministers has now almost reached a record of 80, the paper notes.

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