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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**UN Security Council holds quarterly session on Kosovo (media)**

All media cover the United Nations Security Council’s session on Kosovo on Monday. **Lajmi** reports that permanent members of the Security Council expressed different opinions about the future of the UN Mission in Kosovo. The U.S. representative Michele Sison said UNMIK must end its mission and that the Security Council should hold fewer meetings on Kosovo. Sison said normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia implies the full implementation of agreements reached in the EU-brokered dialogue. “The U.S. calls on leaders of both countries to show political readiness to resolve their disputes as soon as possible,” she said. The Russian deputy envoy to the UN, Vladimir Safronkov, said the UN will continue to play an important role in relations between Kosovo and Serbia. “The Russian position remains unchanged. Resolution 1244 is the basis for resolving the problem,” the Russian representative said. Safronkov is quoted as saying in **Kosovapress** that the situation in Kosovo is deteriorating and he criticized the arrest of Serbian senior official Marko Djuric by Kosovo Police in the northern part of Kosovo. The British representative at the Security Council said his country encourages Pristina and Belgrade to make progress towards a final settlement. “The United Kingdom supports Kosovo’s independence. The Enlargement Strategy also gives Kosovo the opportunity to advance toward the EU,” he said. He also said he believes Kosovo authorities will resolve the killing of Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanovic. The French ambassador said the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia is the only way forward for the new generations and called on both sides to refrain from provocations. The Chinese representative said Resolution 1244 is an important basis for resolving the problem and that tolerance and reconciliation are crucial for progress in Kosovo. **Indeksonline** reports that in his address to the Security Council, UNMIK chief Zahir Tanin welcomed the ratification of the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro by the Kosovo Assembly. Tanin called on leaders in Belgrade and Pristina to address outstanding issues through dialogue and to show political readiness that is needed for the full normalization of relations. **Kallxo** quotes the SRSG as saying that wider regional engagement and a renewed EU focus on Belgrade and Pristina represents a unique opportunity to move past a stalemate in relations. He said a new level of engagement was needed in order to see material shifts in the positions of the governments in Belgrade and Pristina. “There is no other viable option. However, for that to happen there is a clear need for exercising leadership to stand up to challenges even with short-term political costs. A new focus by Brussels at all levels provides a mutually beneficial opportunity for Pristina and Belgrade to leave the current difficult moment behind and to take the dialogue to the next stage of real progress,” SRSG Tanin said. Most media report that in her address, Kosovo’s Ambassador to the United States, Vlora Citaku, argued that Belgrade was preventing Kosovo Serbs from integrating in Kosovo institutions and that reconciliation cannot be built on false narratives. “We have gone through many periods, starting with the long period of oppression and systematic violation of human rights that culminated with ethnic cleansing. Despite this, we have managed to rebuild our lives from scratch … Reconciliation cannot be built on false narratives. Every time I come here I feel obliged to remind you all what happened in the heart of Europe, hundreds and thousands of people killed and massacred. This was all done by the Serbian state machinery,” she said. Citaku criticized the fact that the latest UN report on sexual violence did not include Kosovo. “Kosovo has not been included in the UN report on sexual violence during conflict. The perpetrators of these crimes during the conflict in Kosovo have never been brought to justice,” she added. Citaku also said Belgrade was putting pressure on Serb members of the Kosovo Security Force, and added that Serbia has no right of veto on the transformation of the Security Force into the Kosovo Armed Forces. ***Koha Ditore*** quotes Citaku as commenting on the arrest of Djuric saying that Kosovo will not stand idle in face of provocations and that Serbia should know that its officials need to get prior approval to enter Kosovo. “Otherwise, Kosovo will act in line with its procedures,” Citaku noted. She also condemned the recent decision of Serbian authorities to prevent Kosovo athletes from taking part in a karate championship in Novi Sad. “It is violence that needs to be stopped not sports,” she remarked.

**Thaci optimistic Kosovo will get visa liberalization this year (Klan Kosova)**

Kosovo President Hashim Thaci said in an interview to **Klan Kosova** on Monday that he is optimistic that Kosovo will get visa liberalization this year. Thaci talked about the fight against corruption and organized crime as one of the key requirements for visa liberalization. “Kosovo was fortunate that its judiciary system was led by UN authorities for a decade and then by the EU Rule of Law Mission (EULEX). I think Kosovo has achieved considerable and tangible results in the fight against organized crime and corruption and other negative phenomenon,” he said. Thaci said that in his meetings with European Commission President Juncker, European Council President Tusk, Commissioner Hahn and High Representative Mogherini, even in his meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, they said they were impressed with the work of Kosovo’s institutions in meeting this important requirement. “I believe that the recommendation for visa liberalization will be made in June and that during this year Kosovo’s citizens will be able to travel without visas,” Thaci said. “The European Union and also capitals such as Berlin know that this issue has been delayed. I believe the EU will make concrete steps in the near future. The final consultations are underway but then there is also the political decision-making. The decision does not depend on a single capital; this is rather a coordinated process between countries because all EU member states have to come up with a single decision. I see optimism in different capitals on this issue”. Thaci said in his meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel they also discussed the arrest of Serbian senior official Marko Djuric who entered Kosovo although he had no permit from authorities in Pristina. “Kosovo is a sovereign state and it has its own procedures. Kosovo did not need the incident, it was imposed on us and it was provoked by Serbia, but it got the merited response from our institutions. I told Merkel that if he [Djuric] is so keen in visiting Kosovo, we can give him Kosovar nationality. I respect the legitimate interest in Kosovo’s citizens but I also want to stress that Serbia is interested in the territory of Kosovo and not in Kosovo Serbs. What makes us different from Serbia is that we work for a better future for all citizens, whereas Serbia provokes tensions because of its territorial ambitions,” Thaci said. Thaci also said that the deportation of six Turkish nationals and his relations with Turkish President Erdogan were not discussed in his meetings in Brussels and Berlin. Thaci also ruled out the possibility of Kosovo’s division or the exchange of territories between Kosovo and Serbia.

**Haradinaj commends deputy ministers for their performance (*Koha/Zeri*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, said in a meeting with 78 deputy ministers that judging from the work reports he received, he observed concrete efforts and understanding of constitutional responsibilities. “This is an indication that you all know the weight of responsibility,” Haradinaj told the deputy ministers. Haradinaj is scheduled to meet the deputy ministers in six months’ time again and measure their progress. Both ***Koha Ditore*** and ***Zeri*** highlight that Haradinaj did not make available to the public the reports that deputy ministers submitted on their work. Civil society association, Democracy for Development (D4D) said the ministers’ reports should be made public. “This would set a good practice of increasing transparency abs would also help us see their work,” said Rasim Alija from D4D.

**Haradinaj to report on three motions (*Epoka e Re*)**

The Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj is expected to appear at the Assembly of Kosovo on 23 May, to report on three filed motions. The Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), has called for a motion on the decision of the government to allocate one million euros to KOSTT, to cover the expenses for electric power supply in four northern municipalities of Kosovo. The Social Democratic Party (PSD), has called the Prime Minister for a motion with regard to the signing of the commercial agreement between “Contour Global” company and the government of Kosovo on “Kosova e Re” power plant. Another motion was filed by Vetevendosje Movement, will oblige Haradinaj to give account on corruption and organized crime at institutions and senior officials.

**Matoshi: No specific date for debate on KSF transformation bill (*Zeri*)**

Halil Matoshi, advisor to Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, told the paper that there is no specific time slated for the government’s deliberation on the Kosovo Security Force transformation bill. Matoshi said decisions on when a certain bill will be discussed by the government are of political nature but “it is believed this will happen in optimal time.”

**Veseli urges Israel to recognise independence of Kosovo (*Telegrafi/EO*)**

Head of the Kosovo Assembly, Kadri Veseli, said at a ceremony organised by the Jewish community in Kosovo to mark the 70th anniversary of Israel’s independence that he believed Israel will manage to overcome the barriers and recognise independence of Kosovo. He said the Jewish people have many similarities with Albanians as both people faced “total extinction” and yet managed to declare independence. “I hope the 71st anniversary of Israel’s independence will find us with established diplomatic relations and mutual recognitions,” Veseli added.

**Hoxha: No progress possible without fighting corruption (*Zeri*)**

Minister of European Integration, Dhurata Hoxha, said at a meeting with Austrian Secretary of State in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Karoline Edtstadler, in Vienna that Kosovo is in the process of implementing the European Reform Agenda and that fight against corruption and organised crime is one of the top priorities for Kosovo institutions. “Fight of corruption does not stop here because a country cannot move forward without determinedly fighting this ugly phenomenon,” Hoxha said. Apart from support for the visa liberalisation process, Hoxha also urged Austria to support Kosovo in its Interpol membership bid.

**Hoxhaj in Brussels for visas and dialogue with Serbia (*Lajmi*)**

Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo, Enver Hoxhaj, has traveled on Monday to Brussels, where he is expected to have as priority lobbying for visa liberalization. Lajmi.net reports that during his visit in Brussels, Hoxhaj is expected to hold meetings with senior EU officials, to discuss visa liberalization, fulfillment of the criteria by Kosovo and the next required steps that should be undertaken by the European Commission and EU member states. Hoxhaj is expected to meet EU Commissioners Johannes Hah and Dimitris Avramopoulos, the Rapporteur for Kosovo at the European Parliament Igor Soltes, and other EU officials.

**2nd UN Youth Assembly underway in Kosovo (*RTK*)**

A two-day edition of the UN Youth Assembly in Kosovo titled “Youth Power: Building Peace and Security Together” and organised by UNMIK, UNICEF and UNDP is taking part in Pristina. The event gathers around 180 youth from different ethnic backgrounds and well as representatives of Kosovo institutions, including Deputy Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, Rexhep Hoti. He said the youth assembly is an extremely important event for Kosovo and that his ministry remains open and committed to provide opportunities for the young people enabling their empowerment. “I hope representatvies of the United Nations in Kosovo understand and support Republic of Kosovo in its democratic development and in an even more open society between all communities,” Hoti said.

**Vucic: Division of Kosovo would be dangerous (*AFP*, *RTK*)**

Serbia’s President, Aleksandar Vucic, told AFP that Kosovo remains the major "hurdle" blocking Serbia's path to European Union membership. "After all it's all about Kosovo, whether we'll be able to do that or not," Vucic said. "And of course it's more about Serbs but it's also about the other side and they have to get a very strong message from the EU and from the West that they need to make some concessions as well," he said referring to the Kosovo leaders. "They think that it is about time that Serbia recognised the full independence of Kosovo and that's it. They need to do nothing about Serbs, about Serbia, and they just need to wait. I'm not ready to speak in concrete terms but they need to make some concessions in the real term of the word. If they are ready we can reach something, if they are not ready that'll be very bad news for all of us," Vucic said. According to Vucic, division of Kosovo would have been dangerous, because it could lead to a frozen conflict.

<https://www.afp.com/en/news/826/kosovo-main-hurdle-serbias-path-eu-president-vucic-doc-14w94q1>

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