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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Initiative for consensus on dialogue with Serbia diminishing (*Koha*)**

In its leading front-page story, the paper reports on what it calls diminishing attempts to find consensus among Kosovo political parties for the new phase of dialogue with Serbia. The new phase was expected to start in the second half of this month, but the round-table of political parties, which is aimed at reaching consensus on the matter, will not be organized this week. Meanwhile, initiatives at the Assembly for debates on talks with Serbia have also stopped. The Office of the President is the only institution that has stepped up actions on the issue, even though many political parties believe that the President is not the most appropriate authority to lead the Kosovo team in the final talks with Serbia. The paper quotes Bekim Baliqi, professor of political sciences at Pristina University, as saying that there are three main reasons behind the lack of seriousness among political parties to reach consensus. “There is no clear framework on the points needed for a consensus; therefore, consensus is almost impossible. The decision to withdraw the government’s platform on dialogue from the Assembly also shows there is no real seriousness on the matter. And third, if there is no broad-based agreement on who will lead the negotiations, it is also difficult to know how they will be led,” Baliqi told the paper.

**Kosovo Assembly delegation lobbying for visa liberalization in Austria (*media*)**

All media cover the visit by a Kosovo Assembly delegation, led by Assembly President Kadri Veseli, to Austria as part of a lobbying tour to persuade EU member states to grant visa liberalization to Kosovo. Veseli met his Austrian counterpart Wolfgang Sobotoka on Thursday. The latter promised Veseli that Austria would support Kosovo in the visa liberalization process if the EU finds that Pristina has met all the requirements. Veseli said:

“We need Austria’s support in our EU integration path. Kosovo has fulfilled all visa the criteria. Therefore, our citizens deserve to have freedom of movement in Europe. We expect that by the end of this year our citizens will finally be able to travel without visas in the EU Schengen area.”

**Pacolli is confident Kosovo will get visa liberalization this year (*KTV*)**

Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Behgjet Pacolli, told ***KTV*** on Thursday that he is confident Kosovo will get visa liberalization this year. Pacolli said the European Commission will publish a report in June on whether or not Kosovo authorities have met all the visa liberalization requirements. “There are indications that the European Commission’s report, which is expected to be published soon, will be positive. Certainly, every report contains some recommendations, but we expect it will enable EU member states to make a positive recommendation for Kosovo,” Pacolli said.

**EU Office condemns recent incidents in Kosovo (*Gazeta Express*)**

The European Union’s Office in Kosovo has condemned recent incidents in Kosovo. In a statement to the news website, the EU Office said: “the European Union deplores any action that would seek to intimidate or injure … We support the government, institutions, law enforcement, all opposition parties, civil society and media to work responsibly to create a Kosovo where the rights of all communities are respected,” the EU Office said.

**Gana refutes Serbia, appoints ambassador to Kosovo (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Behgjet Pacolli, said on Thursday that Gana has appointed its ambassador to Kosovo thus refuting Serbia’s claims that this country has retracted its recognition of Kosovo’s independence. “No one should fall prey to the Serbian propaganda about the retractions of recognitions of Kosovo’s independence,” Pacolli said.

**“Kosovo has good chance of joining INTERPOL this year” (*Epoka*)**

In one of its front-page stories, the paper quotes local security experts as saying that this year Kosovo has a good chance of joining INTERPOL. Nuredin Ibishi and Behar Selimi called on local institutions to continue lobbying for this membership. They argue that Kosovo’s membership would be in the interest of the member states themselves. They also said that Serbia’s attempts to obstruct Kosovo’s progress in the process are futile.

**Xhabir Zharku returns to Kosovo (*media*)**

Several media report that Xhabir Zharku, the former mayor of Kacanik municipality, who was sentenced in 2011 to three years in prison for extortion and illegal possession of weapon, has returned to Kosovo on Thursday. Zharku escaped to Sweden to evade justice after the Supreme Court of Kosovo confirmed his sentence in 2012.

**Family members of deported Turkish national seek asylum in Germany (*Zeri*)**

The paper reports on its front page that the spouse and two children of one of the deported Turkish nationals have fled Kosovo and are believed to have sought asylum in Germany. A coordinator of the school where the Turkish national was working and his defense attorney confirmed that the family members have fled Kosovo. Meanwhile, the German Embassy told the paper on Thursday that it cannot confirm the information.