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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Thaci, Vucic agree to step up talks during summer (*media*)**

All media cover the meeting between Kosovo and Serbia Presidents, Hashim Thaci and Aleksandar Vucic, in Brussels on Sunday. The two presidents first had separate meetings with EU High Representative Federica Mogherini to proceed then with a joint meeting. ***Koha Ditore*** reports on its front page that according to some information, Thaci and Vucic met eye to eye without anyone else present. Mogherini’s office issued a statement after the meeting saying that the three leaders had intensive and productive discussion on the framework of an agreement on comprehensive normalization of relations between the two sides. “They agreed to intensify the work in the coming weeks,” the statement added. Thaci told reporters that the meeting was more difficult than expected. “We agreed that the process should have a new dynamic and must be intensified in the coming weeks. We also concluded that reaching an agreement on full normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia serves the interests of both countries and also peace and stability in the region. So, a winning agreement for both sides, this solution is an agreement of European standards and criteria for both Kosovo and Serbia,” Thaci said. ***Radio Free Europe*** quotes Thaci as saying, “I am afraid that if we don’t reach an agreement we will [both] lose a lot. The EU will accept neither Kosovo nor Serbia as long as we have problems between each other”. Thaci also said that “even if a final agreement is not reached, we need to work on mutual respect, peace and stability, and not provoke one another but focus on common interests”. President Vucic said after the meeting: “we agreed that all problems need to be resolved in peace and with respect for one another. We want to safeguard our national interests but also our people so that what happened to our citizens in the 1990s never happens again. This is why we are trying to find a compromise solution. I will address the nation in the future after we find out if a compromise solution is possible. I will not sign anything, I will only address the nation … A compromise solution will certainly be important for us, because now we have nothing, because we got this ‘nothing’ in 1999, 2004, 2008 and 2010. What we want is something, not ‘nothing’ … If we reach a compromise, both the Serb and the Albanian people will have to agree”. ***RTK*** reported that Kosovo’s Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Behgjet Pacolli, attended the meeting between Thaci and Vucic.

**VV: Thaci lacks legitimacy to lead dialogue with Serbia (*media*)**

Vetevendosje Movement officials held a press conference in Pristina on Sunday claiming that President Hashim Thaci lacks both the legitimacy and authority to lead dialogue with Serbia. VV officials said all agreements reached so far need to be reviewed before proceeding to the final part of the process. Vetevendosje deputy leader, Fatmire Mullhaxha-Kollcaku, argued that through negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia Presidents there are attempts to change the Constitution and adapt it to the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities. “The process is being led by a person who is not a consensual president. He signed one of the most damaging agreements for the formation of the Association which violated 23 articles of the Constitution of Kosovo … Now they are trying to amend the constitution, instead of assuming responsibility for what has been done so far. Serbia is the only one that benefits from this dialogue,” she added. ***Epoka e Re*** quotes Vetevendosje MP Albulena Haxhiu as saying that dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade was built on wrong premises and that the whole process must be reviewed before proceeding further.

**Limaj: I do not believe in dialogue where Assembly is not involved (*Zeri*)**

The leader of the Social-Democratic Initiative, Fatmir Limaj, said his political party is ready to engage and take over responsibility with regard to the dialogue with Serbia. “We do not believe in a dialogue with individuals, we do not believe in dialogue where the Parliament of Kosovo is not involved, and we do not believe in a dialogue that does not represent the will of the majority of Kosovo citizens. The time of the trafficking of major subjects in Kosovo is over and dialogue discussions cannot be trafficked either, as it was the case in the past. It is the prime time for all to unite and take over responsibility that belong to us, that were given to us by the citizens of Kosovo,” during the second convention of his political party.

**Heldt: Kosovo’s division destabilizes the region (*Zeri*)**

Christian Heldt, German Ambassador to Kosovo, told the paper that division of Kosovo would create potential for a destabilizing impact in the region and wider, therefore, his state is categorically against division. “No one could give me a convincing answer on the question what problems would such division resolve. Would it bring any kind of improvement for Kosovo Serbs who live in the southern part of River Iber. Would it improve the situation of the historical and religious centers, such as Serb Orthodox monasteries? Would it perhaps strengthen representation of Serb community within Kosovo society? No,” Heldt said. He said that instead of the division the aim should be focus on living conditions of Serb population in general, in Kosovo and not only that of some privileged circles.

**Serbia lobbies for Kosovo division to be part of dialogue agenda (*Zeri*)**

The paper reports that Serbia is continuing with its lobbying to enter division of Kosovo in the agenda of the final phase of the dialogue with Kosovo. Furthermore, there are some member of parliament from the friendly countries who support this idea. However, despite change of the position of these individuals, friendly countries continue to reject the idea of division of Kosovo. The U.S. Embassy in a reply to the paper hailed resumption of the dialogue, stressing that it is an essential matter for Kosovo to unite in preparation of this important step in order to guarantee its prosperity in the future, as well as stability and economic network. Further the U.S. Embassy assesses that both parties should engage to find a solution which opens way to membership in the EU. “Parties should seek solution, that could be accepted by both parties and which opens way toward EU for both countries,” was stressed in the reply.

**US: Kosovo independence and sovereignty is permanent (*media*)**

The United States House Committee on Foreign Affairs tweeted on Sunday that “Serbia’s fraudulent claims that countries are turning their backs on Kosovo is false and causing increasing anger around the world. Serbia should stop this and get back to normalization with its neighbor. Kosovo’s independence and sovereignty is permanent,” ***Epoka e Re*** reports on page three. ***Kosova Sot*** covers the tweet under the headline ***US slams Serbia’s anti-Kosovo campaign***.

**Avramopoulos: More work on final visa liberalization criteria (*Indeksonlione*)**

The European Commission is expected to publish the report on visa liberalisation for Kosovo this week. In a response to ***Indeksonline***, officials from the European Commission that assessment of the war against corruption and organized crime is still going on. “Kosovo has fulfilled the crucial conditions such as demarcation however there is still work to be done on the war against corruption. We are monitoring and it is an ongoing process. The visa issue will very soon end for the entire Western Balkans region,” said Dimitris Avramopoulos, European commissioner for migration and home affairs.

**First indictments by special court in September? (*Bota Sot*)**

The paper reports on its front page that the special court, which will address war crimes allegations in Kosovo, could file its first indictments in September. According to the paper, the court has already begun its work on the ground by interviewing several witnesses. Based on unconfirmed reports, prosecutors have interviewed a witness in Belgium over a post-war killing in Kosovo, but the Office of the Specialized Prosecutor gave no information on the matter.

**Thaci congratulates Erdogan, expects continued cooperation (*RTK*)**

The President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci, has congratulated Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the occasion of the results of the elections in Turkey. “Congratulations to President of Turkey Recep Tayyip\_Erdogan - Takbir ederiz! Looking forward to our continued good cooperation between Kosovo and Turkey. Two countries are strategic allies in all spheres,” Thaci wrote on his Twitter account. Kosovo’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, Behgjet Pacolli also took to Facebook to congratulate Erdogan. “News from Turkey claim that President Erdogan has won the elections. I congratulate our friend and Turkey’s population. Kosovo and Turkey remain good partners,” Pacolli wrote.

**Kosovo Police interview Serb reporter over “Ivanovic case” findings (*Koha*)**

Pristina-based ***KTV*** reported on Sunday evening that Kosovo Police interviewed Serb reporter, Stefan Cvetkovic, who was kidnapped 10 days ago in the town of Bela Crkva, Serbia. Cvetkovic, who is inquiring into the killing of Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanovic, told the TV station that there are ongoing investigations into his abduction. He added that if investigations continue indefinitely, he will have to reveal what he knows about his abduction and who could be behind it. “I don’t rule out the possibility that everything could be related to my inquiries into the assassination of Oliver Ivanovic. I also cannot rule out that this could be linked to my investigations about dangerous warehouses in Serbia or other issues that caused millions of losses to many enterprises in Serbia,” he said. Sources in Kosovo Police told ***KTV*** that Cvetkovic came under tremendous pressure from Serbian authorities to give up on inquiries into the Ivanovic assassination. In another interview to ***Klan Kosova***, Cvetkovic claimed that his inquiries into the Ivanovic assassination indicate that mafia in the north of Kosovo is to be blamed. “This involves strong criminal structures based on the large amount of money they make and the resources they have. Their contacts show that they have corrupt people who feed them with information including people who should investigate them”. Cvetkovic further claimed that some Kosovo Police officers working in the north are linked with the mafia. “There are some people who are suspected of their links with the assassination of Ivanovic … The same people are in the most wanted list of Serbia. They walk freely from one place to the other. The same people live freely in Mitrovica North.”

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