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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Kosovo’s negotiating team with eight supporting mechanisms (*Koha*)**

In its leading front-page story, the paper claims to have secured a copy of a confidential document on the structure of Kosovo’s negotiating team for the final phase of talks with Serbia. The team reportedly consists of a high-level team and eight special groups. At the head of the structure is “Kosovo’s negotiating team” which will include heads of institutions and leaders of parliamentary parties. It is followed by “The Strategic Group”, which will consist of heads of parliamentary groups or their representatives and also representatives of civil society. The team will also include seven professional groups and the number can vary according to developments of the new phase of talks. The professional groups include: the group on legal affairs, the group on financial and economic affairs, the group on demarcation, group on demarcation, group on reconciliation, group on missing persons, group on public information and the group for the implementation of agreements. The paper further notes that the structure of the team has already been presented to heads of institutions, and according to a source close to the process, it was proposed by internationals.

**Hoxhaj: Recognition from EU five this year very unlikely (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo's Deputy Prime Minister, Enver Hoxhaj, said that it is very unlikely the five EU member states that have not recognised Kosovo will decide to do so in the course of this year. In his remarks at a conference organised by the Pristina Institute for Political Studies yesterday, Hoxhaj said non-recognition of Kosovo by five EU member states is a major blow to its state-building process. "If there are two blows Kosovo received, these would include non-membership in the UN and non-recognition by five EU states," Hoxhaj said adding that as a result of this many countries still hesitate to recognise Kosovo as an independent country. He said the reasons behind the five EU countries hesitation to recognise Kosovo include their lack of involvement in the Kosovo issue during the 1990s. "During the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, some of these pursued not only a pro-Serb but perhaps even a pro-Milosevic policy," Hoxhaj said. In addition, according to Hoxhaj, the five EU states had reservations towards the Martti Ahtisaari-led status proposal process fearing implications in their own internal situation with minority communities.

**Hoxha: EC to give positive recommendation for visa liberalisation (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo’s Minister of European Integration, Dhurata Hoxha, said before the meeting of the Assembly committee on European integration that she was convinced the European Commission would come out with a positive assessment on implementation of visa liberalisation criteria by Kosovo institutions but did not give a timeframe as to when the EC is expected to make its position known. “It was said it would be announced right after the meeting of the Council which was last Thursday and Friday,” Hoxha said. She stressed that Kosovo has fulfilled all the necessary criteria for visa-free travel and “if there is readiness on the part of EU countries, it would be realistic to expect people to be able to travel freely by the end of the year,” Hoxha noted.

**Government: Association/Community in line with Constitution of Kosovo (*Zeri*)**

The government of Kosovo has reiterated that the statute for the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities will not breach the Constitution of Kosovo. In a written response to the paper, the government of Kosovo said it was waiting for the translation of the documents prepared by the Managing Team tasked with preparing the draft statute for ACSMM but underlined that the statute has to be in line with the Constitution of Kosovo as it will be sent to the Constitutional Court for review.

**Managing Team: ACSMM to have president and assembly (*media*)**

Managing team of the Association/Community of the Serb-majority Municipalities (ACSMM), discussed yesterday with mayors of Serb-majority municipalities the process of compiling the draft-statute of the ACSMM. They discussed the future organising structure of the ACSMM, which will be arranged based on the general principals approved in Brussels. According to this document, the Association of Serb-majority Municipalities will have these bodies: the assembly, the president, council, board, administration and the office for appeals. Interlocutors stressed that it is essential for the competencies of the ACSMM to remain as set in the initial Brussels agreement.

**PSD: Thaci has no credibility to lead dialogue with Serbia (*Telegrafi/Zeri*)**

Visar Ymeri, MP from the Social Democratic Party (PSD), said at a press conference that President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, has no credibility to lead the dialogue for normalisation of relations with Serbia and that this duty should be entrusted to the Assembly of Kosovo. “Assembly should be involved in the process of dialogue from beginning to end,” he said. He also warned of consequences of not having any red lines towards Serbia saying that there are some issues that Kosovo can never put on the table of talks such as its status, territorial integrity, unified character and internal order. At the same time, MP Dukagjin Gorani, said President Thaci has no legitimacy to lead the process of talks and that the Assembly should have the right to appoint or dismiss negotiators.  He suggested the establishment of a special parliamentary committee that would monitor the entire process of dialogue.

**KSF deputy minister: KSF is home to all (*Indeksonline*)**

Kosovo Security Force (KSF) deputy minister, Burim Ramadani, reacted to news that eight Serbs members of the KSF have submitted their resignation citing pressure from authorities in Belgrade. Ramadani took to Facebook to say that KSF is home to all communities in Kosovo and that its Serb members have a professional and certain career in the force. “Serbia’s pressure on Kosovo Serbs is totally unacceptable. The Serb community in Kosovo is increasingly trusting Kosovo’s security institutions, including the KSF. Meanwhile, Serbia is stepping up the pressure on Kosovo Serbs. The KSF is home to all communities. Serb members too have a professional and certain career in the force,” Ramadani wrote. In an interview to ***Klan Kosova***, Ramadani said he expects the Serb members of the KSF to soon resume their duties.

**“Ukraine will not recognise Kosovo” (*RTK/Epoka e Re*)**

Petro Porosenko, President of Ukraine, said his country respects Serbia’s territorial integrity. “I want to make it clear that we respect Serbia’s territorial integrity. We have not recognized Kosovo and our position is seeking a solution to this problem through a compromise, by respecting interests of Serbia,” Porosenko said at a joint press conference with Serbia’s President Aleksandar Vucic.

**Poll: Growing dissatisfaction, 38% of citizens ready to protest (*media*)**

Most online media cover the latest Public Pulse Analysis, prepared by the UNDP in Kosovo, highlighting the growing rate of dissatisfaction among the people with the work of institutions and noting that 38 percent of the respondents said they were ready to protest. Around 40 percent of respondents said they were satisfied with the work of the President. Respondents highlighted that unemployment, corruption and poverty are the top three issues that impact their social well-being. Over 50 percent of respondents said elections in Kosovo are democratic; over 50 percent said their municipalities work in line with the priorities of the citizens and 53 percent said the laws and Constitution are democratic. Respondents said the courts are most affected by corruption, followed by the Kosovo Power Corporation and the central ministration, and the least corrupt is the police force.

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