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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Thaci holds press conference following Brussels trip (*dailies*)**

President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, said in a press conference following his meeting with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic in Brussels under the EU facilitation and the meeting with EU High Representative Federica Mogherini that the Kosovo delegation presented the position in favour of negotiations with Serbia but at the same time also expressed commitment to close the process in mutual Kosovo-Serbia recognition. He said normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia contributes to peace and stability in the whole Western Balkans region. “Yesterday’s meeting was the briefest in the last six years and the most difficult one. It was not easy talking to Vucic who thinks Kosovo is still part of Serbia. It is not easy talking to a president who believes Kosovo is still the heart of Serbia,” Thaci said adding: “Vucic’s position is far from reality.” He emphasized that Serbia needs to come to terms with Kosovo’s independence and that Kosovo’s position in the dialogue is clear. It involves formal recognition by Serbia and Kosovo’s membership in all international organisations. “I see the coming process with even greater hurdles on the part of Serbian authorities but at the same time the hope of an agreement keeps me going. I hope the coming days will be incident-free enabling the process to move in a dynamic way.”  Speaking about the European Commission’s visa liberalisation recommendation, Thaci said this was a historic achievement for Kosovo and that its citizens deserve to move freely to Europe. “I am convinced Kosovo will successfully overcome these 3-4 months until the conclusion of the process,” he underlined. Thaci also spoke about Kosovo army saying the chance for its establishment slipped away in 2014. He said that at the time NATO and other international partners were fully on board with the idea of Kosovo having armed forces but the momentum was not seized “because of populist or electoral policies of a certain political spectrum.” However, “If we are united, if we successfully implement obligations we have taken before our citizens in line with Euro-Atlantic vision, we will make it easier for our allies to support us.”

**Thaci: Stones will have to be turned for full reconciliation with Serbia (*Klan K.*)**

President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci, Told ***Klan Kosova*** on Thursday that complete reconciliation with Serbia is very difficult due to Serbia’s crimes committed in Kosovo, but efforts need to be made in this direction. “I do not consider that Kosovo and Serbia can resolve problems on their own. We are aware of what happened in Kosovo and of massacres committed by Serbian state, Thaci said. “I am stressing that many stones and mountains of Kosovo have to be overturned to reach a complete reconciliation. But it is our obligation to work hard on this direction and invest a lot for future generations,” Thaci said.

**Haradinaj: Division for me means war (*TV Dukagjini)***

The Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj, told TV Dukagjini that he is against the idea of the Kosovo Assembly MP Lutfi Haziri for exchange of territories with Serbia. “Division for me is war, I say this without hesitation and it is dangerous to talk about division,” Haradinaj said. According to him, whoever mentions division, want to bring tragedy in Balkans. “There is no division, no exchange of territories, movement of the borders. It is dangerous, it cannot be done under these circumstances,” Haradinaj added.

**Kosovo institutional leaders taking credit for visa liberalisation (*Koha*)**

Soon after the European Commission came out with positive assessment on visa liberalisation, Kosovo institutional leaders began taking credit for brining the process to a successful conclusion, the paper reports on the front page today adding that it was precisely because of them that the process took this long in the first place. Hailing the decision of the European Commission, Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj said he believed visa liberalisation will successfully pass two more hurdles, at the European Parliament and European Council. “Europe liberated its citizens. We are Europeans,” Haradinaj told a group of foreign students visiting Kosovo yesterday. He said that while visa-free travel is a well-deserved privilege it does carry additional responsibilities for Kosovo.

**Delawie: Kosovo citizens to decide what they want out of dialogue (*Koha*)**

In an interview to ***KTV*’s** Rubikon show, US Ambassador Greg Delawie said that while the increased discussion on the future of relations with Serbia is a very positive development, it will be up to Kosovo citizens, its politicians to figure out what is the end-goal. “I would rather leave that to Kosovo citizens to decide rather than for me to figure out or to tell you what I think your position should be,” Delawie said. He however stressed the need for a “broader consultation” of political parties. “I think it’s important for everybody to be in the game,” he underlined. Asked about the timeline of the dialogue with Serbia, Delawie said there is at present energy in Brussels and in Washington DC as well as in Pristina and Belgrade. “I think it’s important to take advantage of that.”

<https://xk.usembassy.gov/ambassador-delawies-interview-for-rubikon/>

**Ahmeti: Delawie’s statement on territories, fundamental change of US policy (*Telegrafi)***

Shpend Ahmeti, leader of the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and Pristina mayor, commented the statement of the U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo Greg Delawie, who spoke for ***KTV*** about the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. According to Ambassador Delawie (Rubikon) everything in the dialogue is debatable, so also the division or exchange and every other option. This is a fundamental change of the American position.

Kosovo is entering a dangerous phase and Assembly’s interference and leadership of the dialogue by the Assembly is required more than ever. A special call for the opposition political parties to leave grudges aside and unite to control this process. If the others do not have red lines, we must set them, for the team, platform and dialogue,” Ahmeti wrote.

**Limaj: Final Kosovo-Serbia dialogue has not started yet (*Bota Sot/T7*)**

Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister, Fatmir Limaj, said the meetings between presidents of Kosovo and Serbia are of a bilateral character and do not represent dialogue between two countries. “Dialogue with Serbia has not started yet. Thaci’s meetings with Vucic are only bilateral on what has been achieved so far,” Limaj said in an interview with ***T7*** channel. He said broad involvement in the dialogue would make a final agreement more credible. “We want a dialogue between delegations to have credibility and not to be apprehensive of an agreement,” Limaj noted.

**Hoxha: Decision-making on visas, in autumn (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo’s Minister for European Integration Dhurata Hoxha, told the paper that further procedures of European Parliament and the Council of Ministers on decision-making for visa liberalization for Kosovo will take place in Autumn. She however expressed conviction that the visa liberalisation process will conclude within this year.

**Soltes: Visa liberalisation could be finalized by year’s end (*Bota Sot/BIRN*)**

European Parliament rapporteur for Kosovo, Igor Soltes, told ***BIRN*** that he hopes visa liberalisation process will be finalized by the end of the year. He said that after summer holidays, they will move swiftly with all necessary procedures and that he was hopeful the European Parliament will give green light to visa liberalisation early autumn. “It is time for the citizens of Kosovo to enjoy the same opportunities and receive same treatment as their neighbours. This should not be delayed now that there is confirmation all requirement have been met,” Soltes said.

**Pacolli: I will not go to Serbia without prior approval (*Klan Kosova*)**

In an interview with ***Klan Kosova***, Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Behgjet Pacolli said that although invited to attend an event in Novi Pazar, Serbia, he does not plan to travel there unless he gets permission from Serbian authorities. “If I don’t have permission to enter Serbia, I will not resort to become like Marko Djuric and enter through the woods,” Pacolli said. He added that he is facing pressure from Brussels not to undertake the visit.

**LDK requests early elections (*Zeri*)**

The Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) has once again requested early elections in Kosovo, due to the interruptions of the Assembly sessions for the lack of quorum. LDK’s caucus, Avdullah Hoti said at a press conference on Thursday that this kind of governing affects processes in Kosovo. “In fact, this coalition has never had majority at the Assembly, except for the day when the government established. The country cannot be government by minority coalition, which does not have legitimacy. LDK parliamentary group will not support this form of governing, where a minority has usurped state institutions,” Hoti said.

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