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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Kosovo, Serbia Presidents meet in Brussels (*media*)**

The leading story in all media is the meeting between Kosovo and Serbia Presidents, Hashim Thaci and Aleksandar Vucic, in Brussels on Thursday. ***Koha Ditore*** reports on its front page that Serbia has conditioned its participation in dialogue with the removal of the tax on Serbian products exported to Kosovo. ***Zeri*** and ***Kosova Sot*** both note that no results were reached at the meeting. President Thaci told reporters in Brussels after the meeting: “Tonight’s meeting was not easy. There was a lot of confrontation in efforts to pave way to a legally binding agreement between Kosovo and Serbia, which implies mutual recognition and Kosovo’s membership into the UN. The topics that have been and will be put on the table are not easy. It was a meeting of the final phase and it is in the interest of both countries to reach an agreement that would offer us a European perspective. We have to see how things will develop in the future”. Thaci also called on political parties in Kosovo “to muster the courage, energy and determination to face these challenges united”. He said he has his own reservations about the process, “which will be very difficult”. “Chances are very slim, but we must work and keep moving forward”. Thaci argued that the discourse of the Serbian delegation and President Vucic was aggressive and arrogant, whereas Kosovo’s discourse was based on arguments “and a fair approach toward a balanced agreement that would include mutual recognition, Kosovo’s membership to the United Nations and a real possibility of replacing UNSC Resolution 1244”. Thaci said there is no alternative to dialogue. “Belgrade should not be afraid of dialogue, Kosovo will be responsible in the process and with its actions … Our arguments should not deter Belgrade from dialogue, our arguments are in favor of a mutually beneficial agreement,” he said. Asked if a final agreement could be reached by spring next year, Thaci said he is not in a position to talk about timelines. Asked to comment on Vucic’s remarks that Serbia will not take part in dialogue if Kosovo doesn’t show signs of implementing the agreements that have already been reached, Thaci said: “dialogue cannot be conducted with pressure and ultimatums, nor with aggressive voices. Kosovo will be responsible, correct and constructive. We are determined to reach our goal”. The Office of EU High Representative Federica Mogherini, who mediates the talks between the two presidents, issued the following statement after the meeting: “Federica Mogherini, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, hosted today a meeting of the High-Level Dialogue with President Hashim Thaci of Kosovo and President Aleksandar Vucic of Serbia. The European Union expects Serbia and Kosovo to swiftly deliver on their commitment to the Dialogue given the direct link between comprehensive normalisation of relations between them and the concrete prospects for their EU aspirations. In her discussions with the two Presidents, Federica Mogherini emphasized the need for Kosovo and Serbia to ensure an environment conducive for the Dialogue and to refrain from words, actions and measures that are contrary to the spirit of normalisation. They discussed the necessary steps for the way forward and decided to remain in constant contact in the coming days to assess the follow up of today’s meeting”. After the meeting, Serbian President Vucic told some Albanian media that “we are miles and miles away from a possible agreement”. “We are far from reaching an agreement; Serbia must know what it will win from this process,” he added. Vucic criticized the Kosovar side for failing to respect the agreements that have already been reached and said that there is no point in further talks until this approach changes. Vucic also said that Pristina – Belgrade will continue “after Pristina withdraws its illegal decisions”.

**President Thaci reveals what was discussed in Brussels (*Klan Kosova*)**

Kosovo President Hashim Thaci gave exclusive details to ***Klan Kosova*** on Thursday on the points of discussion with his Serbian counterpart Aleksandar Vucic in Brussels. “I can reconfirm that this was a meeting of the final phase for reaching a comprehensive agreement with Serbia. These are opportunities to reach an agreement, but I must say that the Serbian delegation was arrogant, but there is also mutual readiness to push the process forward. An agreement between Kosovo and Serbia, including mutual recognition, would secure Kosovo’s membership to the European Union and there won’t be a Russian veto at the UN Security Council. We also discussed the real possibility of replacing Resolution 1244,” Thaci said. “I am committed to working on a comprehensive agreement and at the same time uniting with Presevo Valley”. Thaci also said that the Kosovo delegation led by Fatmir Limaj must assume an active role. “We need to sit down and draft a state agenda so that all of us can be engaged in the decision-making process together,” he added. Thaci also said he will travel to Paris but that a meeting with Vucic there has not been scheduled. “I will meet [French President] Macron. A meeting with Vucic has not been planned, but I cannot rule it out,” he said.

**PM Haradinaj wants dialogue to be conditioned with visa liberalization (*media*)**

Several media report that Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj and Deputy PM Enver Hoxhaj have mentioned the possibility of Kosovo withdrawing from the EU-brokered dialogue with Serbia if the EU Council of Ministers doesn’t include in its December agenda the visa liberalization for Kosovo. ***Epoka e Re*** reports that Haradinaj and Hoxhaj said it is not fair to apply pressure on Kosovo for dialogue with Serbia and at the same time to deny freedom of movement for its citizens in the Schengen zone. ***Koha Ditore*** quotes Haradinaj as saying that President Thaci should reconsider his participation in the Brussels talks if Kosovo does not get visa liberalization. “It would be very bad if one party in dialogue, in this case Kosovo and Thaci, are told you should take part in dialogue, but your citizens cannot get visa liberalization. It would be good if he [Thaci] sees for himself if he should attend these meetings and if he should agree that every agenda of our country is dictated by the mood of a neighboring country,” Haradinaj said.

**Government does not back down from 10 percent tax increase (*Koha*)**

Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj indicated on Thursday that his government could further increase the tax on products from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina that are exported to Kosovo, the paper reports on page two. Haradinaj said his government would not back down from its decision even if faced with pressure from Brussels. “Serbia threatens the families of our country. We have written statements by Serbian citizens threatening our families and we were forced to make this decision. This is the first measure, it can be increased further, and other measures could follow. Until they change their approach, we will not change our actions,” Haradinaj said.

**Hoxhaj calls on Kosovo citizens to boycott Serbian products (*RTK*)**

Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister, Enver Hoxhaj, said in an interview to ***RTK*** on Thursday, that the government’s decision to increase the tax on Serbian products is a response to Serbia’s diplomatic aggression against Kosovo. Hoxhaj denied that Pristina is under pressure from the international community to reconsider the tax increase and called on Kosovo’s citizens to boycott Serbia products. “Our decision was a reaction aimed at making it clear that when a country like Serbia engages in a diplomatic aggression against Kosovo, we will respond with economic measures. Our decision will remain in force. I have discussed the issue on several occasions with Prime Minister Haradinaj. I call on Kosovo citizens to boycott Serbian products because Kosovo has its own qualitative products that meet European standards,” he added.

**Vetevendosje: Thaci should be arrested upon his return from Brussels (*media*)**

Most media report that the Vetevendosje Movement criticized on Thursday the meeting between Kosovo and Serbia Presidents, Thaci and Vucic, in Brussels. Vetevendosje parliamentary group chief, Glauk Konjufca, told a press conference in Pristina that Thaci should be arrested upon his return from Brussels “because he is violating the Constitution of Kosovo with his idea for border correction”. Konjufca also criticized the way in which the meeting between the two presidents was announced. “The meeting was announced only 24 hours before it happened. This is a new practice and it is not coincidental because now they are applying the strategy of announcing the meetings only several hours before they take place. The first reason is that they want to avoid a parliamentary session and the second reason is to prevent a reaction from the people,” Konjufca said.

**France has no red lines on Kosovo-Serbia dialogue outcome (*Koha*)**

In an interview with KTV, the French Ambassador to Kosovo Didier Chabert said his government has no red lines when it comes to the final agreement between Kosovo and Serbia and that it is up to the two sides to decide on what the deal will look like. “It is up to you, but our responsibility is to ensure the agreement will meet all stability and security requirements,” Chabert said. He added that the outcome should be legally binding and lead towards full mutual recognition of Kosovo and Serbia.

**Analysts say Brussels agenda going as planned (*Telegrafi*)**

In a debate aired on RTV Dukagjini following the meeting of Kosovo President Hashim Thaci and Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, political analysts say that despite recent developments, the EU-facilitated dialogue could be intensified in the coming period as both Thaci and Vucic are interested to reach a final agreement during their mandates. Astrit Gashi said the Serbian side expressed outrage at the recent decision of Kosovo institutions to impose a ten percent import tax on Serbian goods and the Kosovo Security Force transformation but at the same time expressed suspicion that this reaction from Belgrade could all be part of spectacle. Ilir Mirena at the same time pointed out that remarks made by Thaci and Vucic after the meeting do not necessarily translate into genuine tension and that he believed the dialogue was proceeding based on an agenda.

**Ahmeti reacts to Vucic’s statement on import tax (*Zeri*)**

Leader of the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and Mayor of Pristina, Shpend Ahmeti, reacted to the Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic conditioning dialogue with the government of Kosovo lifting the ten percent tax on Serb products. “In this case, we should say that dialogue can only continue once Serbia stops lobbying for revocation of recognitions and other attacks it makes on daily basis,” Ahmeti wrote on Facebook.

**CDHRF calls for a 50 percent increase of tax on Serbian products (*Epoka*)**

The Pristina-based Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms (CDHRF) called on the Kosovo government on Thursday to increase by 50 percent the tax on products from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. “The CDHRF proposes for this tax to be increased by 50 percent and to implement 100% reciprocity toward Serbia. The government will have the support of Kosovo in this respect, regardless of the price that they have to pay,” a CDHRF statement noted.

**Haradinaj: Kosovo Army will be formed this month (*Klan Kosova*)**

Kosovo Prime Minister, Ramush Haradinaj, told ***Klan Kosova*** on Thursday that the Kosovo Army will be formed this month. “The Army of Kosovo will be like every other army in the world. It will have three infantry regiments. One regiment will be located in Gjilan, another one in the southern part and a third one will be located toward the north,” Haradinaj was quoted as saying.

**NATO official in Belgrade: We are not against the army of Kosovo (*Zeri*)**

Robert Pszczel, NATO’s Public Diplomacy Division senior officer for Russia and the Western Balkans, said during a press conference in Belgrade on Thursday that NATO is not against the formation of the Kosovo Army but that the process should be in line with eh Constitution of Kosovo. Pszczel said the Kosovo government has the right to transformation the Kosovo Security Force. “If we would deny them this right, we know what the situation there is like and the implications this could have,” he added.

**Pacolli to Dacic: You should be ashamed (*Epoka*)**

Kosovo’s Principal Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Behgjet Pacolli, has reacted to a statement by his Serbian counterpart, Ivica Dacic, who said that Interpol will be filled with arrest warrants for Kosovo’s leaders. Pacolli took to Facebook to say that Dacic should be ashamed about the Serbian genocide in Kosovo. “The people of Kosovo defended themselves from genocide and we will never be ashamed of our actions. Those that committed genocide should be ashamed,” Pacolli wrote.

**EU Enlargement Commissioner Hahn to visit Kosovo in December (*Zeri*)**

The EU Enlargement Commissioner, Johannes Hahn, will visit Kosovo in December to get up-close information on the implementation of the European Reforms Agenda, the paper reports on page two. The news was announced by Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj after the meeting of the Ministerial Council for European Integration on Thursday.

**British Ambassador confirms withdrawal of recognitions (*media*)**

British Ambassador to Kosovo, Ruairi O’Connell, in discussions with citizens on Facebook, confirmed that some countries have withdrawn their recognitions of Kosovo’s independence. “Unfortunately, some countries have retracted their recognitions. We think there is no excuse for such actions. Kosovo meets all the criteria to be an independent state, we have recognized Kosovo as an independent and sovereign state,” O’Connell commented.

**Marty indicates arrest of “big fish” (*Kosova Sot/Presheva Jone*)**

Former prosecutor Dick Marty told ***Presheva Jone*** news agency that he has faith in the specialist chambers that will address war crimes allegations committed by former KLA members. “I am optimistic that this tribunal will soon arrest people in Kosovo who are known as ‘big fish’ in the eyes of the people and the international community,” he said. Marty added that he fears that witnesses could be killed if they are not protected by Kosovo Police and EULEX. He also added that Kosovo cannot have a bright political and economic future if the country is led by corrupt people with ties to the mafia.

**Austrian diplomat admits working for Serbian government-funded firm (Kallxo)**

Wolfgang Petritsch, former EU envoy in Kosovo peace talks in Rambouillet, who supports the idea of territorial exchange between Kosovo and Serbia admitted in an interview with Jeta ne Kosove that he is employed by a legal firm that is funded by the government of Serbia. However, he said that he is emotionally attached to Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina and does not get paid to speak to people, hold lectures, or give interviews.

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