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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Thaci: Kosovo army, irreversible process (*media*)**

Before travelling to New York for the UN Security Council session, President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci told reporters that regardless of upcoming discussions, Kosovo army is an irreversible process. “The right of Kosovo institutions to form Kosovo Army is historic, right and in accordance with the will of the people of Kosovo, all ethnicities, and in line with the constitutional and legal mandate,” Thaci said. “Kosovo Army will produce peace and stability,” he said. Thaci also spoke about dialogue with Serbia saying that it will end in mutual recognition while the Kosovo Assembly’s recently-adopted resolution would support conclusion of the process of talks. On Twitter just before departure, Thaci wrote: “Truth be told, transformation of [#KosovoSecurityForce](https://twitter.com/hashtag/KosovoSecurityForce?src=hash) is not a reason to fear but to celebrate as it confirms [#Kosovo](https://twitter.com/hashtag/Kosovo?src=hash)’s dedication to multiethnic institutions. Focus is now on dialogue - for [#Kosovo](https://twitter.com/hashtag/Kosovo?src=hash)’s UN seat.”

**UN to discuss creation of Kosovo’s army today (*RTK*)**

The UN Security Council will meet today to discuss creation of the army of Kosovo. Kosovo will be represented by President Hashim Thaci. Prior to leaving for New York, Thaci told the media that despite the discussions at the UN Security Council, creation of the army is irreversible.

**Protest in front of UNHQ in New York on genocide and rape victims (*Bota Sot*)**

Citing an article published by ***Presheva Jone***, the paper reports that the Albanian community in the United States is mobilizing to organize a mass protest in front of United Nations Headquarters in New York on the day when the Security Council is expected to discuss the formation of the Kosovo army. Kosovo’s Ambassador to the U.S. Vlora Citaku is expected to take part in the protest. The protest will call on the UN to condemn Serbia for the genocide and 20,000 raped women during the Kosovo war.

**Government rejects EU’s call for lifting tax (*dailies*)**

The government of Kosovo has said it will not make any compromises regarding the decision to impose a 100-percent tax on imports from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina even after the EU sent a letter asking it to do so in exchange of dropping UNMIK name tag at CEFTA meetings and replacing it with Kosovo\*, ***Zeri*** reports. Halil Matoshi, advisor to Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj, said the tax will be lifted only when Serbia recognises independence of Kosovo. In a letter to Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj, the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini, Commissioner for Trade Cecilia Malstrom and Commissioner for Enlargement Johannes Hahn call on the government to “temporarily suspend” the tax as a sign of good will ahead of today’s meeting in Brussels on Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA). The EU officials said they taken note of the cases of trade practice on the part of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina which, in Kosovo’s view, present barriers in the concrete implementation of CEFTA arrangements but that the Kosovo Government’s decision to increase tariffs was a step in the wrong direction and goes against the progress achieved in regional economic integration, ***Koha*** reported. The letter states that the European Commission calls on all actors to respect the rules they jointly agreed and that to this end, the EC is ready to set up a special format for Kosovo and Serbia to urgently find solution to trade issues of concern. One of the options, said the letter, would include “the issue of replacing UNMIK with Kosovo\* and the broader issue of CEFTA’s modernization and revitalization.”

**Stabilisation-Association meeting to be held today (*media*)**

EU and Kosovo officials will hold today the third Stabilisation/Association Agreement (SAA) meeting in Brussels. This will be a possibility to assess the current situation of the relations between the EU and Kosovo, stressed the Council of the SAA. “Participants will take into consideration political and economic criteria, financial cooperation and implementation of the SAA,” was stressed in the statement. EU representatives, led by the EU High Commissioner Frederica Mogherini and Commissioner for Enlargement Johannes Hahn, will be discussing with Kosovo delegation led by Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, about the situation in Western Balkans. A joint press conference is foreseen after the meeting. Prior to the meeting, Mogherini and Hahn sent a letter to PM Haradinaj explaining EU’s position on the tariffs for Serbian goods and reiterated their appeal to remove them.

**U.S. support Kosovo Assembly’s resolution on dialogue with Serbia (*dailies*)**

The U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo, Philip Kosnett has welcomed the adoption of the Kosovo Assembly resolution on dialogue with Serbia saying the move is crucial to achieving a comprehensive agreement. “Encouraged to see political participation w/ Dialogue under EU lead w/ our support & this opening for creative solutions. We applaud the Assembly's leadership w/ inclusive state delegation--key to achieving comprehensive agreement,” Kosnett wrote on his Twitter account.

**EU welcomes Assembly’s resolution on dialogue (*Epoka*)**

Head of EU Office in Kosovo and Special Representative, Nataliya Apostolova, has hailed Kosovo Assembly’s adoption of the resolution for dialogue with Serbia saying Kosovo should ensure inclusive approach. “I congratulate Kosovo Assembly on today's vote on assuming responsibility for such an important process - the dialogue with Serbia. Kosovo must ensure a thoughtful and inclusive approach to this process,” Apostolova tweeted.

**Veseli: EU should have sincere approach towards Kosovo (*RTK*)**

The President of the Assembly of Kosovo Kadri Veseli, said that after the endorsement of the agreement for demarcation of the border, reforms in justice and fulfillment of all criteria for visa liberalization, Kosovo expects from the EU a closer and more sincere cooperation. He also stressed that adoption of the resolution for dialogue and negotiating team, shows Kosovo’s commitment for agreement and readiness for major decisions.

**Ymeri: No agreement without recognition (*RTK*)**

Deputy leader of the Social-Democratic Party (PSD) Visar Ymeri, defended the resolution proposed by his political party for the dialogue with Serbia, endorsed on Saturday by the Assembly of Kosovo. He responded to the accusations of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and Vetevendosje Movement that PSD have become crutches of thee government. “This process is in hands of the opposition. If Albin Kurti and Isa Mustafa read the resolution, they would clearly understand that all decision-making, procedural, political and judicial assurances are foreseen there. There is no agreement without recognition,” Ymeri wrote.

**Vetevendosje opposes resolution on dialogue (*Kosova Sot*)**

Vetevendosje has reacted to the Kosovo Assembly’s resolution on dialogue with Serbia saying in is unacceptable. “This group for dialogue with Serbia is not state delegation but a government team and as such is worthless and unacceptable,” Vetevendosje said.

**Mustafa: Dialogue team is an improvisation and without legitimacy (*media*)**

Isa Mustafa, leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), took to Facebook to write that voting at the Assembly of the resolution for the dialogue with Serbia, proposed from Social-Democratic Party, is not a solution for the dialogue, but a short-term solution of the governing coalition in order to remain in power. He added that this is not a comprehensive agreement as some international wants to deceive himself. “Kosovo needs a process of dialogue and agreement reached and supported by the majority foreseen in the Constitution. A sustainable agreement. Any other action is buying of time and a deceit,” Mustafa wrote, adding that eventual agreements by improvised and illegitimate teams are strongly objected by LDK.

**“Kosovars disappointed with EU, but don’t lose love for it” (*Koha*)**

The paper’s Brussels-based correspondent, Augustin Palokaj, writes in an opinion piece that “it is not up to Kosovo’s leaders to express outrage at the EU for the indefinite delay of visa liberalization. This right belongs only to the people of Kosovo, who are entitled to feel disappointed with their leaders, and with the European Union too”. Palokaj further notes that Kosovars are still the most pro-European people in the region. “They are disappointed with the EU, but they’re not against it. They haven’t lost their love for it and they have no other orientation or objective except for the EU … The EU is keeping the ordinary citizens of Kosovo isolated, and their only fault could be their votes for the current political structures”

**Turkey supports KSF transformation into army (*media*)**

The Turkish Embassy in Kosovo issued a statement on Sunday welcoming the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into an army. “Turkey, as a country of the Balkans and a member of NATO that contributes to KFOR and KSF, considering the laws adopted by the Kosovo Assembly on December 14 for the transformation of the KSF into an Army as a sovereign right, also considers as appropriate statements by Kosovo authorities that the transformation process, which is expected to last for years, will be done in democratic fashion and will include all Kosovo’s communities within the constitutional framework, in coordination with NATO and in a way that will maintain peace and stability in the region. In line with the importance it gives to peace and stability in the region, Turkey continues to support the continuation of dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade,” the statement noted.

**KFOR: Situation under control, provocations must be avoided (*media*)**

KFOR representatives said on Sunday that the situation throughout Kosovo is under control and that all parties must refrain from provocations or statements that can lead to escalation. In a statement to ***RTK*** in Serbian language, KFOR said it continues to monitor the situation all over Kosovo and that it is fully engaged in its mandate to provide security for all citizens. KFOR also said its troops are ready to deploy at any time in any part of Kosovo and that there is no need for increased presence in any specific region.

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