

Main Stories 18 December 2018

* **UN Security Council holds extraordinary session on Kosovo (*media*)**
* **Vucic meets UN Secretary-General Guterres (*Klan Kosova*)**
* **Haradinaj urges EU to acknowledge Kosovo’s progress (*dailies*)**
* **EU underlines importance of Kosovo’s engagement in dialogue (*media*)**
* **Hoxhaj: EU failed to keep its promise on visa liberalization (*media*)**
* **Pacolli on meeting of Kosovo delegation with EU representatives (media)**
* **Limaj: Our end-goal in dialogue is Serbia’s recognition (*Klan Kosova*)**
* **Kurti: Draft agreement as if written by a non-recognising country (*Zeri*)**
* **Engel: EU should give visa liberalization to Kosovo right away (*media*)**
* **Serbian secret services planning to carry out attacks in Kosovo (*RTK*)**

**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**UN Security Council holds extraordinary session on Kosovo (*media*)**

One of the leading stories in today’s media is the extraordinary session of the United Nations Security Council on Kosovo on Tuesday. Serbia requested the session after the Kosovo Assembly adopted legislation initiating the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into the Kosovo Army. Kosovo President Hashim Thaci said at the session that Kosovo is a sovereign nation and that it is entitled to have its own army. “If Kosovo made a mistake it is only that it waited for five years ... to establish an army. It is belated because we waited for goodwill from those who never showed goodwill towards Kosovo”. Thaci said the Kosovo Army will bring more peace and stability and that it is not aimed against anyone. “Kosovo will respect all international agreements, including cooperation with KFOR. We will cooperate with NATO. The formation of the army will not overlap the NATO mission in Kosovo. It will be professional and multiethnic. Over ten percent are from the non-majority communities: Serbs, Turkish, Ashkali, Roma…a force which will defend each citizen of Kosovo, every child, every youth, despite the language they speak at home”. Thaci further said he hopes Kosovo’s and Serbia’s soldiers will in the future be hand in hand in peaceful missions. He also appealed for continuance of the dialogue in Brussels, in order to catch the historic momentum for a final and comprehensive agreement between Kosovo and Serbia. [President Thaci’s full address can be read at [*https://www.president-ksgov.net/en/news/speech-by-the-president-of-kosovo-mr-hashim-thaci-5639*](https://www.president-ksgov.net/en/news/speech-by-the-president-of-kosovo-mr-hashim-thaci-5639)]. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic accused Pristina of threatening peace and stability in the Balkans with its recent actions. He also said dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade could resume only after Kosovo revokes its decision on a 100-percent customs tax on Serbian goods. Rodney Hunter, political coordinator at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, said mutual recognition between Kosovo and Serbia is the future. “We encourage Kosovo and Serbia to acknowledge the value of full commitment to normalization that would bring major benefits to the people, economies and peace and security for both parties,” Hunter said. The British and Dutch ambassadors supported the formation of the Kosovo Army, saying that this does not fall in opposition to Resolution 1244 and in line with the Constitution of Kosovo. The French representative too supported the formation of the army but said it was not done at the right time and that it could aggravate dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia accused Kosovo of engaging in “lawlessness” with its decision to transform the Kosovo Security Force into an army and warned that “the situation has become explosive”. “The most serious concern is about the possibility of incursions of armed Kosovar Albanian units into the northern Serb-populated regions of Kosovo in order to establish control by force of (the Kosovo government in) Pristina over the whole territory,” he said. ***Koha Ditore*** reports that before the start of the Security Council session, Dutch Ambassador Karel van Oosterom read out a statement flanked by other EU Ambassadors: “Joint statement by Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and the UK - We, as the European Union members of the Council, would like to underline that a comprehensive and legally binding normalization agreement is crucial so that Serbia and Kosovo can advance on their respective European paths. The initiation of the process of transition of the Kosovo Security Force is Kosovo’s sovereign right. We take note of its commitment to gradually transform its security force, in close coordination with NATO and its partners. We call on the Kosovo authorities to make the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force in the next 10 years a transparent and inclusive process, associating all communities and to avoid any detrimental impact to the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. We also stress the need to maintain the existing arrangements with KFOR regarding the deployment of the Kosovo Security Force in the north of the country. Almost two decades after the adoption of resolution 1244 and ten years after Kosovo’s declaration of independence, Belgrade and Pristina still have to agree on many aspects of their future relationship within the framework of a comprehensive normalization agreement. We call on both sides to take steps to exercise restraint and to lower the tensions and create the conditions to resume as soon as possible their dialogue as facilitated by the EU High Representative. A binding agreement addressing all issues should remain the key priority”. ***Bota Sot*** reports on its front page that President Thaci “humiliated Vucic at the United Nations” by mentioning that “you have killed 13,500 Albanian women, children and elderly, and you have raped 20,000 women!”

**Vucic meets UN Secretary-General Guterres (*Klan Kosova*)**

President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic, met in New York the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and called for a greater involvement of the UN in resolving the Kosovo issue. Vucic thanked the SG for expressing concern over Kosovo’s decision to form an army and underlined that Pristina has threatened the regional stability with the move.

**Haradinaj urges EU to acknowledge Kosovo’s progress (*dailies*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj said at the EU-Kosovo Stabilisation and Association Council meeting yesterday in Brussels that despite ‘negligence’ and ‘lack of clarity’ on the part of the EU, Kosovo remains strongly committed to joining the EU and works relentlessly to achieve full implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA). “I stand here today as prime minister of a sovereign country. I represent my people that has suffered for its faith in freedom – and continues to suffer even today. I can say with full confidence that there is no country in Europe more committed to European Union ideals than Kosovo. Our values are your values, our hoped for our children are the same with the hopes you have for yours,” Haradinaj said in his remarks. He said that Kosovo youth does not enjoy freedoms that for the youth in EU are granted: “They cannot travel freely, cannot trade freely, cannot play freely and cannot be equal participants in the community of free nations.” Haradinaj noted that even though Kosovo implemented all visa liberalisation criteria, the response from the EU was “incomplete and hopeless.” Haradinaj called on the EU to give a clear signal of acknowledging Kosovo’s progress and demonstrate active support. Speaking about dialogue with Serbia, Haradinaj said the government he leads never questioned the importance of it as the only way forward. “However, twenty years after the war, ten years after independence and five years after the Brussels Agreement the reality is that progress towards normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia was minimal and has in fact completely derailed, particularly with the public discussion of the fatal idea for border correction and exchange of territory.” He said that the comprehensive draft agreement with Serbia which he has presented and the Assembly’s resolution on dialogue is a major step in Kosovo’s democracy and the involvement of the U.S. in leading the dialogue with the EU providing guarantees is the way forward. ***Zeri*** reports that strong words Haradinaj used against the EU led to the cancellation of a joint press conference originally scheduled to take place after the meeting while ***Koha Ditore*** quotes a European official describing yesterday’s meeting saying that it was as if two different poles were conversing. The paper also writes that disagreements between the EU and Kosovo delegations were so deep and visible that this led to the cancellation of the press conference. ***Epoka e Re*** meanwhile reports on the meeting by saying that the EU did not manage to convince Kosovo to lift the import tariffs on Serbia and that the meeting was characterized with tensions.

**EU underlines importance of Kosovo’s engagement in dialogue (*media*)**

The European Union issued a statement after the annual meeting of the EU-Kosovo Stabilisation/Association Council, held on Monday in Brussels. Below, find the complete press statement. “The Stabilisation and Association Council between the European Union and Kosovo held its third meeting on 17 December 2018 in Brussels. The Stabilisation and Association Agreement is at the core of the relationship between the EU and Kosovo. It offers Kosovo an opportunity for sustainable progress and rapprochement with the Union, in line with the European perspective of the region, and creates trade and investment opportunities. At today’s meeting recent key developments relating to the fulfilment of the political criteria, as well as the state of play concerning the economic criteria, financial cooperation and the implementation of the SAA were reviewed. The European Union underlined the importance of the continued and effective implementation of the SAA, as well as contractual obligations including in the area of trade and customs. The EU deeply regretted the government's unilateral tariff increases on imports from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as the imposition of non-tariff barriers and insisted on their immediate revocation. The introduction of these tariffs damages the economic interests of Kosovo and its people, reducing trade flows and diminishing Kosovo’s attractiveness as a place for investment and business. Any impediments to trade should be resolved within the appropriate fora and mechanisms, with the constructive participation of all sides concerned, in a spirit of regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations. The European Union underlined the relevance of Kosovo's continuous engagement in the EU-facilitated Dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade, accelerating and intensifying work in good faith on a legally binding agreement on comprehensive normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia. All Dialogue agreements agreed already need to be fully implemented without any further delay, in particular the 2015 agreement on the Association/Community of Serb majority municipalities. At today's meeting reform priorities in areas including rule of law and judicial reforms, respect for fundamental rights, public administration reform, economic development, education and employment were also discussed. The meeting acknowledged progress made in implementing the European Reform Agenda and called for the swift implementation of outstanding measures. As regards visa liberalisation, the European Commission adopted a report in July 2018 on the fulfilment of the remaining benchmarks. The decision on the Commission proposal is currently under consideration in the Council and the European Parliament. The meeting was chaired by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms Federica Mogherini. The Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Mr Johannes Hahn, represented the European Commission. The Kosovo delegation was led by the Prime Minister, Mr Ramush Haradinaj. Deputy Prime Minister Enver Hoxhaj, First Deputy Prime Minister/Minister Behgjet Pacolli, Minister Dhurata Hoxha and Minister Abelard Tahiri also participated.

**Hoxhaj: EU failed to keep its promise on visa liberalization (*media*)**

Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister Enver Hoxhaj said after Tuesday’s meeting of the Stabilization/Association Council that Brussels failed to keep its promise on visa liberalization. “At the third meeting of the Stabilization and Association Council, emphasized that 2018 will be remembered for Kosovars as the year EU failed to fulfill its promise on visa liberalization. Kosovo remains the only isolated state from Ukraine to Greece!” Hoxhaj tweeted.

**Pacolli on meeting of Kosovo delegation with EU representatives (media)**

Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo Behgjet Pacolli was part of the Kosovo delegation at the annual meeting with the EU representatives at the Council of Stabilisation Association Agreement, held in Brussels on Monday. He took to Facebook to write about his discussion at the meeting. “During my speech at the SAA meeting in Brussels, as in many other explanations that I made to the EU in the past, I stressed that no one reacted when Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina violated CEFTA, that Serbia’s abuse of the dialogue and its obstructions against the Republic of Kosovo should be stopped by the EU. The time of asymmetric approach and double standards towards the Republic of Kosovo is over. This is time for correctness and penalization of Serbia by EU, I insisted,” Pacolli wrote.

**Limaj: Our end-goal in dialogue is Serbia’s recognition (*Klan Kosova*)**

Leader of the Social Democratic Initiative (NISMA) and co-chief of the Kosovo negotiating team, Fatmir Limaj, said Kosovo’s end-goal in the dialogue is Serbia’s recognition. “There are some issues that interest us. What is important in dialogue is recognition. If there is no recognition, there is no need for dialogue,” he said. Speaking about crimes committed during the 1998-99 conflict in Kosovo, Limaj said; “It should be clear to everyone, we will not stop without seeking justice for what Serbs did in Kosovo. It is wrong for anyone to think that these can be erased with a stroke of a pen. Sources from Belgrade suggest they know exactly where they buried the people, we still consider missing. They have hidden the files,” Limaj said.

**Kurti: Draft agreement as if written by a non-recognising country (*Zeri*)**

Vetevendosje leader Albin Kurti said the Government’s draft agreement between Kosovo and Serbia is in violation to the Constitution and that the approach in the document is as if it was written by a country that does not recognise independence of Kosovo. Kurti said the 30-page document was sent to them in the English version and that nowhere does it mention the term ‘reciprocity’. “If I would have read the document without knowing who wrote it, I would have thought it was written by a country that does not recognise Kosovo,” Kurti said in a press conference. He further said that the report only talks of Kosovo joining a seat at the UN at the end of the dialogue process but not about Serbia’s recognition of Kosovo as an independent country.

**Engel: EU should give visa liberalization to Kosovo right away (*media*)**

U.S. Congressman Elliot Engel said in an interview to ***RTV21on*** Tuesday that many good things have happened in Kosovo this week, especially with the decision on the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into an army. “I always dedicate love and energy to the people of Kosovo and Albania. A lot of good things have happened this week, especially in Kosovo. After many years, they were able to form their army in Kosovo. I think this is an important and very good step forward. I think every country should have its army and Kosovo is no different in this regard,” he said. Engel said he supports the Kosovo government’s decision to introduce a 100-percent tax on goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. “There were also some difficulties this week, including the tax on Serbia. I support Kosovo’s right to set such a tax, the Prime Minister’s right to set this tax, because I don’t believe Serbia is meeting its obligations. I am very upset by the fact that every time Kosovo tries to join an international organization, Serbia tries to block it. This happened with INTERPOL and with other organizations,” he said. Engel also said the European Union should give visa liberalization to Kosovo right away, “not next year, not in 2020”.

**Serbian secret services planning to carry out attacks in Kosovo (*RTK*)**

***RTK*** reports that the Office for the Coordination of Serbia’s Security Services held a meeting on November 15 where it made several decisions on Kosovo. The meeting was attended by representatives of the civil secret services, military services and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Tasks were designated for members of the Serbian Secret Service. This was revealed from a communication that a member of Serbian security structures had with his family in Kosovo, advising them to stay at home and to avoid public spaces because of attacks that will be carried out in the southern part of Kosovo with the aim of blaming Albanians. ***RTK*** recalls Kosovo’s security institutions recently managed to confiscate 15 kilograms of explosive in Gazimestan near Pristina.

**Disclaimer**

This media summary consists of selected local media articles for the information of UN personnel. The public distribution of this media summary is a courtesy service extended by UNMIK on the understanding that the choice of articles translated is exclusive, and the contents do not represent anything other than a selection of articles likely to be of interest to a United Nations readership. The inclusion of articles in this summary does not imply endorsement by UNMIK.