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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Haradinaj writes to Quint, sets out conditions for lifting import tax (*dailies*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, wrote an open letter to representatives of Quint countries and the EU on Monday saying that the government would immediately suspend the tax on imports from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina once the following conditions are met: The United States of America (USA) and the European Union (EU) having taken practical steps to initiate and support an international conference (‘the Conference’) for the purpose of concluding a legally binding comprehensive agreement between Kosovo and Serbia to resolve all outstanding issues between the two countries – the conference to commence at the earliest practical date following the coming into existence of the all of the circumstances described in paragraphs 2 to 5 below, and to conclude within 14 days: The USA and the EU having given public commitments and assurances that the Conference will not countenance: Any redrawing of the current borders of Kosovo, or partition of Kosovo, or land swaps of any nature whatsoever. The granting of executive powers to any form of association of Serb Municipalities in Kosovo or any other arrangement that violates the Constitution of Kosovo. Measures of any nature based on concessions that pre-date 17th February 2008. The EU having given additional public commitments and assurances that: A visa free travel regime for citizens of the Republic of Kosovo will be in force prior to the commencement of the Conference. The Energy Agreement concluded in Brussels between Kosovo and Serbia on shall be implemented and fully operational prior to the commencement of the Conference Serbia having verifiably removed all non-tariff barriers imposed on the movement of goods from Kosovo as well as all unlawful restrictions on trade in services and movements of people from Kosovo to Serbia. The Serbian President, Prime-Minister or Foreign Minister having publicly confirmed that all policies and actions of any nature directed against the aspirations of Kosovo as a sovereign state whether applying locally, regionally or internationally have ceased permanently. The Tariff will be immediately re-imposed if the Conference does not conclude with a binding comprehensive agreement between Kosovo and Serbia which provides, inter alia, for mutual recognition and for Kosovo’s membership of the United Nations. The Tariff will be re-imposed at a later date if there is failure of implementation of a binding comprehensive agreement arising from the Conference.

**Veseli proposes 120-day suspension of import tax (*dailies*)**

Kosovo Assembly President Kadri Veseli has proposed the import tariff on Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina be suspended for a period of 120 days as a sign of Kosovo’s constructive approach to concerns expressed by the U.S. and EU. In a Facebook post following a meeting with the U.S. Ambassador, Philip Kosnett, Veseli said Kosovo does not need confrontation with the U.S. and EU and that the tax was introduced as a counter measure to Serbia and Bosnia’s aggressive political and diplomatic campaign. “It is a legitimate decision, right and adequate and imposed on our institutions who are facing this aggression and will therefore remain in force so long as these countries continue to pursue such policies against our country,” Veseli wrote. He however that the concerns raised by the international community, most recently the U.S. Embassy statement will be addressed with ‘utmost seriousness’ and will be responded to in a constructive manner. “In last week’s meeting I came up with a concrete proposal to which I stand by to the end. The customs tax should not be rescinded but suspended for 120 days during which concrete conditions for its suspension need to be put forth. If after these 120 days we have no new situation whereby the behaviour of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina would change crucially, the tax will continue as well as full reciprocity measures would be installed,” Veseli said. He said such a move would give the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia a chance: “We believe Dialogue is the most effective and necessary way to for overcoming all disagreements in the Western Balkans and as a country we need to permanently promote these values.” Nevertheless, added Veseli, Kosovo’s constructive approach to dialogue cannot be taken for granted and serve as a way for Serbia to benefit in its European integration process while citizens of Kosovo remain isolated, yet unable to freely travel to Europe.

**Leaders with differing positions toward final settlement with Serbia (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on its front page that “leaders of Kosovo’s institutions have differing positions about the road toward a final settlement with Serbia”. Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj said in an interview to ***Syri.net*** on Monday that this could be the final week of his government. Haradinaj said he does not fear new elections. “Elections are healthy and my ally [PDK] may decide to leave the ruling coalition … I don’t fear elections even if they take place soon,” he said. Haradinaj made these remarks shortly after sending a letter to the Quint countries listing five conditions for suspending the 100-percent tariff on Serb and Bosnian goods. Two of Haradinaj’s conditions involve an international conference on Kosovo that would lead to a final settlement with Serbia. Haradinaj however lacks the support of President Hashim Thaci and Assembly President Kadri Veseli for his initiative. Veseli, who is also leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), said on Monday that the language of conditions does not help Kosovo. Meanwhile, officials at the Office of Kosovo President Hashim Thaci told the paper that they are against an international conference on Kosovo. Bekim Collaku, Thaci’s most senior advisor, said:
“Kosovo is an independent and sovereign state. Therefore, I don’t think we need a classic international conference, because in such a situation, the other party, Serbia, could ask for the involvement of other international actors that are not so friendly toward Kosovo”. The paper also notes that “opposition parties have by now realized that Thaci and Veseli will leave Haradinaj in the lurch”.

**Haziri to Haradinaj: Veseli will leave you in the lurch (*Klan Kosova*)**

Deputy leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) Lutfi Haziri told Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj through a Facebook post that leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) Kadri Veseli will leave soon ‘leave you in the lurch’. “Prime Minister, I had warned you that cooperation with those that destroy bridges cannot be successful. It is obvious that PAN leader will soon leave you in the lurch, during nighttime, the way only he knows how,” Haziri wrote.

**Isufi: Tax to Serbia remains in power (RTK)**

Ahmet Isufi, caucus of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, said on Monday that the tariff on Serbian goods will remain in force. “We do not comment other people’s statements, but the tax remains in power because Serbia is not changing its position against Kosovo and it is acting as it did in the past, in a destructive manner,” Ahmeti wrote on his Facebook account, after the proposal of the President of the Assembly of Kosovo Kadri Veseli to suspend the tax for 120 days.

**Pal Lekaj criticizes LDK and Vetevendosje (*RTK*)**

Pal Lekaj, Minister of Infrastructure from the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), said some political parties in Kosovo are against the tax on the goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. “At the time when Kosovo is finally acting as a sovereign and independent state, it is facing an international pressure, which in fact should have been addressed to Serbia for quite a long time now, for not respecting any of the reached agreements, at the very offices of the European Union. However, it is a bigger paradox that some political parties are opposing the 100 percent tax,” he wrote. Lekaj further criticizes the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK and Vetevendosje Movement for making mediatic statements for daily consumption.

**Djuric: Haradinaj’s letter shows he does not want compromise (*Klan Kosova*)**

Head of the Serbian Government’s Office for Kosovo, Marko Djuric, commented on the letter Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj has sent to Quint countries saying the conditions set out there are a message that Haradinaj does not want to find a compromise. “Anti-civilising and unlawful actions need to be immediately annulled if they wish to resume talks and find a solution, but I fear that, unfortunately, they do not want this,” Djuric was quoted by Serbian broadcaster ***RTS***.

**Thaci wants unconditional talks with Serbia, invites Putin to Pristina (*media*)**

Kosovo President Hashim Thaci said in an interview to ***RIA Novosti*** on Monday that Kosovo is not an enemy of Russia and he invited Russian President Vladimir Putin to visit Pristina. “He should visit Kosovo. It is important that we build good relations,” Thaci was quoted as saying. Asked about the resumption of dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo, Thaci said “dialogue must continue without conditions from any of the parties” and that “Serbia should not ask for the suspension of the tariff as a condition to resume talks”. Asked about Russia’s possible involvement in the Pristina – Belgrade talks, Thaci said the European Union has a mediating role in the process of dialogue and that it will continue to have this role in the future too. Thaci also said he was greatly inspired by his direct meeting with Putin in Paris two months ago, when the Russian President told him that “if Kosovo and Serbia reach a peace settlement through dialogue, he would accept and support such a document”. “This is a new and positive step,” Thaci said.

**Limaj and Ahmeti to meet today with Mogherini’s team (*RTK*)**

The two co-heads of the Kosovo delegation for dialogue with Serbia, Fatmir Limaj and Shpend Ahmeti, will meet today in Brussels with representatives of the Office of EU High Representative, Federica Mogherini, but not with the Serbian party. They will discuss further modalities of the dialogue with Serbia. “Only Shpend Ahmeti and I will be at the meeting. We will meet with representatives of Frederica Mogherini’s office to discuss modalities of resumption with the dialogue. The meeting will discuss further modalities of dialogue,” Limaj told ***Zeri***.

**Rama: Without U.S., Kosovo would not be liberated from Belgrade (*Epoka*)**

The Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama, told Deutche Welle in Berlin that Albania supports any agreement between Belgrade and Pristina which is supported by the United States of America and the European Union. Asked about the pressure of the U.S. on Haradinaj’s government to annul the 100 percent tax on Serbian goods, Rama said America is committed to Kosovo and without the U.S. Kosovo would not have been liberated from Belgrade’s clutches, and it would not be independent today. “This dialogue should finalise with a historic agreement between Kosovo and Serbia,” Rama said.

**Pahor on border correction: I would not rule it out (*Telegrafi*)**

President of Slovenia Borut Pahor said during a visit to Belgrade where he met President of Serbia Aleksandar Vucic that the border correction option as part of the final agreement between Kosovo and Serbia requires a lot of wisdom. “The process should not produce collateral damage to other countries in the region. It is a very bold proposal, I would not rule it out, but I would be very cautious in this issue,” Pahor is quoted.

**Djuric granted clearance to visit Kosovo today (*Kallxo*)**

Head of the Serbian Government’s Office for Kosovo, Marko Djuric, is expected to visit Kosovo today after receiving permission from authorities in Pristina. He will hold a meeting today at the Student Centre in Mitrovica North and visit the Orthodox Monastery in Banjska. Djuric is scheduled to end Kosovo visit on 31 January.

**Minister Hoxha lobbies for visa liberalisation in Austria (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo’s Minister of European Integration, Dhurata Hoxha, met in Vienna the Secretary of State in the Austrian Ministry of Interior, Peter Goldgruber, and sought the country’s support for visa liberalisation for Kosovo. Hoxha spoke of Kosovo’s progress in the field of security, migration and in particular border security. Goldgruber on his part confirmed Austria’s support for Kosovo’s integration processes.

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