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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Import tax dominates UN Security Council session on Kosovo (*dailies*)**

Majority of the media report that the UN Security Council held a session on Kosovo last night to discuss the latest report of the UN Secretary-General Antonio. Quoting on its headline the statement by the U.S. representative Jonathan Cohen that a Kosovo-Serbia agreement needs to be achieved in 2019, ***Koha Ditore*** further quotes Cohen as saying that Kosovo needs to beforehand lift the tax on imports from Serbia. ***Zeri*** on its cover quotes Kosovo’s Ambassador Vlora Citaku as telling the Security Council that Kosovo would not negotiate its statehood. In its coverage of the session, ***Bota Sot*** focuses almost entirely on Citaku’s speech saying it was “magnificent”. The U.S. representative also said UNMIK has completed its mandate and its presence in Kosovo needs to be reevaluated. Germany’s ambassador to the UN, Christoph Heusgen, meanwhile is said to have told Serbia that the only way to join the EU is by recognising Kosovo and that his country considers the border changes would be dangerous for the region. The UK Ambassador, Karen Pierce, spoke of the progress made by Kosovo and argued in favour of less frequent meetings at the Security Council on Kosovo and called on leaders in Kosovo and Serbia to use the opportunities offered by the Brussels dialogue. “I ask both sides to stop provocations, do not increase tensions,” she said. ***RTK*** also quotes Pierce as saying that the decision to form Kosovo army was right. Kosovo’s Ambassador to the U.S., Vlora Citaku, said in her word that UNMIK has no mandate in Kosovo and that she found it unbelievable that the discussion on Kosovo took more time than that on Syria, Yemen, or Venezuela. She said the Security Council sessions on Kosovo have turned into a theatre and a place for Serbian authorities to tell “fairytales” which they themselves don’t believe. Citaku also spoke about the Kosovo Security Force transformation saying the decision was lawful and constitutional while with regards to the import tariff on Serbia she said the decision to impose the measure was not easy but was a response towards Serbia’s brutal campaign against Kosovo. Citaku is reported to have ended her speech by stating: “It is now up to Serbia to free itself from Kosovo.” The Head of UNMIK, Zahir Tanin, said in his remarks to the Security Council that the recent period has not contributed to the improvement of atmosphere in relations between Pristina and Belgrade. He said leaders on both sides faced numerous challenges and that there were attempts to destabilise the situation. He said further that the governing coalition in Kosovo has created a critical situation in the process of dialogue with regards to the import tax. He said the two sides need to work more to pave way for an agreement. “It is important for the leaders of both sides to avoid actions that could increase tensions, rescind such decisions and find ways to continue dialogue under the facilitation of the European Union, aimed at normalisation of relations,” Tanin is quoted in ***RTK***. He also said that “Forward-looking approaches are crucial to restart political negotiations. More needs to be done for an agreement to be reached between the parties and this requires support from a wide array of stakeholders, including participation of women in dialogue.”

Serbia’s Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic said at the same time that the decision to impose tax on imports from Serbia has been condemned by all international mechanisms, including Kosovo’s allies. He said the measure was “draconic” and is aimed at making the life of the Serb community in Kosovo more difficult. “Decision on tax is politically motivated and has prevented continuation of dialogue. Serbia believes dialogue is the only way to resolve open issues,” he said. Furthermore, Dacic said calls for unification of two Mitrovica municipalities are intended to expel the Serbs from the city.

**Pacolli reacts to Dacic’s speech at the UN (*RTK*)**

Kosovo’s Principal Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Behgjet Pacolli, reacted to the Speech of Serbia’s Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic at the UN Security Council. “During the years and decades, we have seen the global debate on democratization of the United Nations system. However, when I see the deputy of the Balkans Butcher Slobodan Milosevic, today Minister at the government of Serbia, Ivica Dacic, speaking extensively without blushing, in front of the respected diplomats of the countries represented at the UN Security Council, I raise the dilemma if democratization of global instances, includes creation of space for figures with criminal and chauvinist background, such as Dacic. So, how can it be possible, at a diplomatic room, that a representative of a criminal regime, of a country responsible for several wars in Balkans, to speak in front of representatives of the countries that enable peace and stability, and rightfully supported our independence! Is this democracy or defect of this universal system?” Pacolli asked.

**Kosovo’s Interior Ministry confirms cooperation with UNMIK (*RFE/RTK*)**

Kosovo’s Ministry of Internal Affairs has confirmed cooperation with the UN mission in Kosovo in the field of security. Mentor Tahiri, chief of the cabinet and senior adviser of the Minister for Internal Affairs, Ekrem Mustafa, told Radio Free Europe that Kosovo established in 2011 the Directorate for International Cooperation in the Field of the Law Enforcement (ILECU) within which the INTERPOL section functions along the others. Through this directorate, there is also cooperation with INTERPOL. “Kosovo Police is at high level of responsibility at every international cooperation. There is communication with INTERPOL on daily bases and 40 percent of this cooperation is carried out through UNMIK. In 60 percent of other cases, Kosovo Police uses other lines of communication,” Mustafa said. Earlier, the Spokesperson of the UN mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Sanam Dolatshahi, told Radio Free Europe that all contacts and communication is not interrupted, as stated on Wednesday by the Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj. “UNMIK continues to fulfill its role as mediator with INTERPOL, in close coordination with Kosovo Police and EULEX,” Dolatshahi said. Statements of the officials from Ministry for Internal Affairs at the government of Kosovo and those of UNMIK officials are in contradiction with those of Prime Minister Haradinaj and the government of Kosovo, who claimed that they have interrupted communication and do not recognize any more the UN mission UNMIK, as a representing structure in Kosovo.

**Scott, Kosnett: 2019 to be year of agreement between Kosovo and Serbia (*Zeri*)**

In a joint op-ed published in ***Zeri***, the U.S. Ambassador to Serbia, Kyle Scott, and the U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo, Philip Kosnett, said that the courage and creativity of leaders in Athens and Skopje to resolve decades-long dispute should serve as inspiration for all other leaders in the region and that it is time for Kosovo and Serbia to also respond constructively, end provocations, return to EU-facilitated dialogue and “boldly embrace peace.” “If you do this, we are optimistic that you can reach a historic agreement on normalisation in 2019,” the two ambassadors write. They say that the U.S. fully supports achievement and implementation of a comprehensive agreement and recalled the U.S. President Donald Trumps appeal to leaders in Kosovo and Serbia to use this momentum and reach decisions that take into account interests of both countries. “The United States do not and will not determine how the solution should look like but we believe it needs to be implementable in Kosovo and in Serbia and should contribute to the long-term stability of the region,” Scott and Kosnett said.

**Thaci receives U.S. support for Kosovo-Serbia agreement (*Epoka*)**

The President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci met on Thursday in Washington with the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. “As always, an extraordinary pleasure to meet to discuss with the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Today at Prayer Breakfast we also discussed developments in Kosovo and the Western Balkans region. The full support for the reach of a comprehensive and final agreement of peace between Kosovo and Serbia, was confirmed once again,” Thaci wrote on his Facebook account.

**Thaci meets with Nancy Pelosi (*media*)**

The President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci met on Thursday in Washington with the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi. “Nancy Pelosi is an old friend of Kosovo and I expressed my gratitude for this at the Prayer Breakfast. When Kosovo is concerned, all in Washington speak in one voice in support of the peaceful agreement,” Thaci wrote on his Facebook account.

**Haradinaj: Neither I nor Thaci are owners of Kosovo (*T7, RTK*)**

The Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj said that neither him nor the President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci are proprietors of Kosovo. Haradinaj made this comment when asked about the idea of change of the border between Kosovo and Serbia. “There are two million people. There is the act of declaration of independence. If someone dares to negotiate the territory of Kosovo, then he is against the Constitution,” Haradinaj said. He added that if the issue of the change of the borders was not opened, agreement with Serbia would have been much easier. Haradinaj said that the issue of the change of the border, has caused clashes among Kosovo’s friends as well.

**Pressure on Kosovo Government to lift tax increases (*Koha Ditore*)**

The paper reports on the front page that the pressure on the government of Kosovo to rescind the import tariff on Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina is increasing, most recently with the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini calling for its withdrawal. However, officials from the government of Kosovo said the tax will not be lifted until conditions set out by Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj are not met. Government spokesperson Donjeta Gashi reiterated Haradinaj’s position that “the tax will remain in power until the recognition” and that “tax should not be linked to dialogue.”

**EU neither denies nor confirms Trepca’s involvement in dialogue (*Koha*)**

EU officials in Brussels are reported to have been surprised at the outcry in Kosovo over a statement made by European Commission spokesperson Maja Kocijancic regarding Trepca mine. EU unnamed officials said Trepca was not mentioned specifically in an answer Kocijancic gave to Serbian media but that her statement was interpreted as such. Kocijancic is said to have noted that the parties decide on the discussion topics but the EU officials could not confirm Trepca would not be discussed in the dialogue simply because Kosovo objects to it. The paper writes that this makes the EU position on the matter unclear.

**These are AAK’s three points for the dialogue (*RTK*)**

The Steering Committee and leadership of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), reconfirmed at a meeting held on Thursday the three basic principles of this political entity in relation with the dialogue with Serbia. The most senior AAK forums expressed determination to: 1. Respect the Constitution of Kosovo and 17 February Declaration of Independence; 2. Unconditioned dialogue with Serbia; and 3. Tax on the products from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to remain until mutual recognition.

**Radojcic hires a lawyer in Kosovo (*Klan Kosova*)**

Deputy leader of the Serbian List Milan Radojcic, who is suspected for the case of the murder of politician Oliver Ivanovic, will be defended by lawyer Zivojin Jokanovic. The lawyer, whose office is in downtown Pristina, was hired by Radojcic’s spouse. Jokanovic, who is an experienced lawyer said that he supports any plan for Radojcic’s surrender, if he is ensured the status of the protected witness on Ivanovic’s case.

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