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MINORITY ISSUES



EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MINORITY ISSUES – ECMI KOSOVO

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

I. Internal and International Political Developments

I-1 UNMIK, EULEX Sign Kosovo Memorandum

During the reporting period, on Friday, 15 August, the UN mission in Kosovo received the green light from the UN headquarters in New York to sign a technical agreement with the EU Planning Team (EUPT) of the EU mission in Kosovo. On 17 August, UNMIK Chief Lamberto Zannier and the head of the EU Planning Team Roy Reeve signed a memorandum aimed at regulating the transfer of power from the UN to the EU mission. The memorandum is a technical agreement and stipulates the shift in responsibilities in the area of law and order from the UN to the EU.

UNMIK's spokesperson has told Koha Ditore that "The memorandum is a technical agreement which implies the transfer of technical equipment and vehicles, as well as making available facilities to EULEX", denying that it was in fact a document allowing for a transfer of powers from UNMIK to EULEX.

However, there have been negative reactions to the signing of the accord between the UN and the EU. Belgrade has expressed its fear that the EU mission will seek to formalise Kosovo's independence and sees the transfer of powers as illegal and a violation of international law. Russia has also threatened to protest over the legality of the EULEX mission since the transfer of duties is taking place without a United Nations Security Council resolution.

I-2 “Conflict” reports between Zannier, Prishtina, and EU

Throughout August, UNMIK chief Lamberto Zannier has been reported to be losing popularity and entering several disputes with international and Kosovo officials. According to media reports, Lamberto Zannier has come into conflict with EU officials in Kosovo over a proposal to create a Serb customs service in the north, to bring Serb police officers under UNMIK control and to establish a dialogue with the Serbian Kosovo minister.

Prishtina printed media have also highlighted the Kosovo authorities' increasing dissatisfaction with Zannier, whom they believe risks becoming a *persona non-grata*. They believe this could be avoided if he stops making statements, which in the government's opinion, do not correspond to reality.

However, UNMIK through its spokesperson denies that there is any dispute. “That is complete nonsense. There is no dispute between UNMIK Chief Zannier and Mr. Acda on any issue. I do not know where the media gets that kind of information; they are way off the mark. Mr. Zannier has very constructive relations with the Kosovo government; he regularly submits reports, so, we have extremely good relations with the authorities here,” said UNMIK's spokesperson.

I-3 UNMIK begins scaling down

In mid-August, the UN mission in Kosovo began downsizing the number of its employees. The intention is to reduce the current number of employees by 70 percent. Those first to go have been those whose contracts expired. The reduction of staff will take several months to complete. The reconfiguration of the UN mission in Kosovo is scheduled to end by December, with staff reductions being a first part of the process. UNMIK in the mean time will continue to facilitate dialogue at local level between Kosovo and Serbia.

As the UN reconfiguration process is under way, the EULEX mission is currently working under the UN umbrella and is also expanding.

I-4 Kermabon: EULEX technical mission

Speaking to media on Thursday 21 Aug, EULEX Chief Yves de Kermabon said that Serbs in Kosovo opposed the arrival of the EU mission because of political pressure. Kermabon said that mission officials had signed a technical agreement with UNMIK, adding that it was not the forerunner to any political agreement. Kermabon, however, said that EULEX was a technical mission, and that it had nothing to do with status or political circumstances.

I-5 Kosovo appoints defence minister

During the reporting period, the Kosovo government has named Mr. Fehmi Mujota (PDK) as its new defence minister. Mujota will command the Kosovo security services, which would consist of 2,500 active members and 800 reservists. These forces are yet to receive training, but will react in crises and help protect the civilian population, according to the international plan.

I-6 Kosovo names its first Ambassadors

The Government of Kosovo has proposed the names of its first eleven ambassadors. **Avni Spahiu**, the director of Radio Kosovo will be serving in Washington, while his colleague, a veteran journalist **Sylejman Gashi** will serve in New York-USA. **Muhamedin Kullashi**, a professor of philosophy, will serve in Paris-France. The adviser to Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu, **Muhamet Hamiti** will serve in London-UK. **Bekim Sejdiu**, an adviser to the Foreign Minister, will serve in Ankara-Turkey. **Vilson Mirdita** will serve in Berlin-Germany, **Albert Prenkaj** in Rome-Italy, **Sabri Kijmari** in Vienna-Austria, **Gazmend Pula** in Tirana-Albania, **Naim Mala** in Bern-Switzerland, and **Illir Dugolli** of the Kosovo Institute for Policy Research and Development, KIPRED, will be going to Brussels-Belgium.

The Kosovo President Fatimi Sejdiu has officially approved the nominees afterwards. This is the first time Kosovo is sending its people to serve abroad. Earlier the Government allocated the money (25mln€) to obtain premises in the ten countries.

II. Additional Recognitions of Independence

II-1 Belize officially recognizes Kosovo independence

On Thursday, 7 August, the President of the Republic of Kosovo, Dr. Fatmir Sejdiu, received a letter from the government of Belize, which notified him that Belize recognizes Kosovo as an independent and sovereign state.

II-2 Colombia officially recognizes independent Kosovo

Colombia announced that it has officially recognized the sovereignty of the Republic of Kosovo. Colombia is the third South American to recognize independent Kosovo.

II-3 Malta Recognises Kosovo Independence

Malta became the 21st European Union country that has officially recognised Kosovo's independence. The news in Valletta was issued by the Department of Information at the island state's Foreign Ministry on Thursday 21 August.

Spain, Romania, Slovakia, Greece and Cyprus are the EU states that have spoken out against Kosovo's independence while Portugal says it intends to recognise Kosovo's independence.

ECMI PROJECT ACTIVITIES

During the reporting period, ECMI was engaged in advancing activities in three principal areas of its work in Kosovo.

I. Communities Consultative Council

I-1 Throughout the reporting period, ECMI conducted several meetings with the Office of the President (OP). The principle aim of these meetings was to discuss the next steps on finalising the Presidential Decree, which has been in drafting stages. In addition, ECMI circulated the Presidential Decree for substantive comments. Several meetings were held between ECMI and different stakeholders. The comments were reviewed and discussed in a multi-party meeting held at ECMI premises. Following, comments and feedback received from different organisations, ECMI advanced the draft of the Decree. The decree is expected to be issued first as a preliminary version to allow for one week from comments by community organisations, and then is expected to be issued by the President no later than 15 September.

II. Support to the Office of the Prime Minister

II-1 During the reporting period, ECMI Head of Office Adrian Zeqiri, met with the Prime Ministers' coordinator for the Office for Communities Affairs (OCA) Mr. Bashkim Ibishi. During the meeting ECMI expressed its readiness to continue its excellent cooperation with the OCA. The discussion focused on the responsibilities relating to the OCA and on preventing the potential cross-over of competencies between the OCA and other governmental mechanisms dealing with communities' issues in Kosovo. The OCA expressed a willingness to further strengthen the relations between communities and governmental institutions and to coordinate the activities of several agencies, secretariats and directorates of the Government of Kosovo whose key responsibilities are related to communities' issues. In addition to its regular tasks, the OCA has the responsibility to implement the state agenda on minority communities, a comprehensive programme of institutional reforms, with

regard to the mechanisms dealing with minority issues, which the Government of Kosovo has established as its medium term priority.

III. Support to the Decentralisation Process

III-1 ECMI has continued to work within Working Group for Information Campaign on Decentralisation. During this period of time, it was more focused at least at three aspects: designing further the process of information campaign on decentralisation; assisting in developing concepts for public presentation on decentralisation; and drafting the calendar of activities foreseen in these information efforts

The sub-working group on the information campaign for decentralisation met twice during the reporting period. A media company has now been contracted for designing and producing the advertising messages and materials for the campaign due to start at the end of September. These will include posters, leaflets and billboards. ECMI will review the messages that the organisation designs in order to ensure that these messages are sensitive to minority communities in Kosovo and cause no offence or provocations. A timetable of activities for the sub-working group has also been produced and activities will commence in September.

IV. Other Developments

IV-1 During the reporting period, ECMI has welcomed different guests and has held a range of meetings, both internal and with relevant stakeholders, on issues of mutual interest. ECMI met with various key actors and community representatives to establish initial contact, open discussions on possible future co-operation, discuss the status of approved legislation and needs to move forward with projects, and to obtain general background information on current issues relating to minority communities in Kosovo.

IV-2 Throughout August, ECMI widened its civil society contact base and established new contacts with Belgrade-based NGOs working on Serb minority issues in Kosovo. The NGOs that were approached included Fractal, the Forum for inter-ethnic relations and the research unit of the Belgrade School of Security Studies (BSSS). The NGOs and think tanks that were approached deal with inter-ethnic relations of the Serb community in Kosovo and on security issues in the region. Project manager Ms. Stephens met with Mr. Srdan Popović and Ms. Ana Ranović from the Belgrade based NGO Fractal, Mr. Dušan Janjić of Forum for ethnic relations and Sonja Stojanović of BSSS. The aim of the meetings was to discuss projects, possible means of working together in the future and to widen ECMI's network for potential projects with the Serb community in Kosovo.

Report Ends;