



EUROPEAN CENTRE
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MINORITY ISSUES



EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MINORITY ISSUES – ECMI KOSOVO

Str. Rexhep Luci, No. 16/3 Prishtina, Kosovo, Tel. +381-(0) 38 224 161

Web: www.ecmikosovo.org

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

I. Internal and Int'l Political Developments

I-1 UN General Assembly adopts Serbian resolution

During the reporting period, on Wednesday 8 October, the UN General Assembly approved Serbia's resolution to seek the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion on the legality of Kosovo's independence; a move many Western states fear will slow down Kosovo's integration into the world community. While President Sejdiu and Foreign Minister Hyseni were present in New York, no representative of Kosovo attended the UNGA session during the vote on Serbia's initiative.

Belgrade said that seeking neutral judicial advice will help ease tension in the region, but Kosovo's supporters say it will encourage countries to delay decisions on whether to recognize Kosovo. The ICJ in The Hague is expected to take one to two years to issue its opinion. There were 77 votes in favor, 6-six votes against and 74 abstentions.

Following the decision, President Sejdiu read out a declaration in Prishtina that expressed Kosovo's regret. "It will not help the attempts to promote long term stability in Kosovo and in the region," he said. "The issue of the independence of Kosovo is a done deal and is irreversible." Kosovo's Foreign Minister also announced the establishment of a group of experts to deal exclusively with presenting Kosovo's case at ICJ.

International Reactions-

U.S. Envoy Rosemary DiCarlo told the assembly that the Serbian request was "unnecessary and unhelpful," adding, "Kosovo's independence is irreversible." Britain's U.N. Ambassador John Sawyers reiterated London's full support for the ICJ, but added that this did not mean it backed Belgrade's resolution, which is why Britain abstained. He said Serbia's request was primarily for political rather than legal reasons.

Serbia's Foreign Minister Jeremić rejected the suggestion that Belgrade's move was politically motivated and said ICJ advice would reduce tensions in the region.

The French Foreign Ministry announced on Wednesday, 8 October that Serbia's request to seek the opinion of the ICJ was neither useful nor appropriate, because it is not encouraging to the necessary easing of tensions and contains the inherent risk of complicating the European prospects of the western Balkans.

In Brussels, the European Commission representatives once again repeated that the recognition of Kosovo's declaration of independence is up to the EU's individual members and will accordingly not comment on the adoption of the Serbian draft resolution in the UNGA.

I-2 Kosovo Appoints Head of ICJ Team

Sir Michael Wood, a prominent British judge, will lead Kosovo's legal team at the International Court of Justice, Kosovo's Presidency reported on Wednesday, 15 October. Kosovo's leaders are optimistic that the judge's experience will benefit Kosovo. Wood represented the UK in the Dayton Peace Conference in 1995, which ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Rambouillet Peace Conference in 1999, which sought to end fighting in Kosovo. "We met Mr. Wood to discuss Kosovo's case and our performance at the ICJ. We believe that we have a strong case and aim to demonstrate that Kosovo's independence does not breach international law," a statement from Kosovo's Presidency said.

I-3 UNMIK denies Kosovo partition proposal

During the reporting period, precisely on Wednesday, 27 October, Prishtina daily Koha Ditore reported that Andrew Ladley, Head of the UN Standby Team of mediation experts on the six points of the UNMIK reconfiguration plan, suggested that an administrative division be applied to northern Kosovo. Koha Ditore further reported that Ladley had met with President Fatmir Sejdiu, Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi and Deputy Prime Minister Hajredin Kuçi to officially inform them about this proposal. The government officials, according to Kuçi, refused to allow Ladley to present the proposal or give them a written document, stating that "the meeting concluded that Kosovo functions as an independent state and we recognize only the document of Envoy Ahtisaari."

UNMIK Spokesman Alexander Ivanko denied the allegations that had appeared in Prishtina media. He told the media that the UN envoy "does not propose anything, he only transfers discussion document and it is up to Prishtina and Belgrade to agree or disagree on. We only consult with them, trying to help the dialogue, but we are not a participating side in the dialogue."

Ladley has been in Kosovo since 15 October on a mission to help the indirect dialogue between Prishtina and Belgrade on six topics - police, judiciary, customs, border, infrastructure, and protection of cultural and religious heritage in Kosovo.

Notwithstanding UNMIK's denial that the proposal existed, Kosovo Albanian representatives have rejected the idea of Kosovo's administrative division reports say. President Sejdiu and Prime Minister Thaci, according to Koha Ditore, have also rejected Belgrade's condition that EULEX's deployment in the north be dependent upon the fulfillment of the Serbs' demand for an actual division of the northern part of Kosovo.

At the same time, it was announced in Brussels on Tuesday, 14 October, that the EU Council of Ministers approved the U.S. participation in the EULEX mission in Kosovo.

I-4 Latest appointments to the government

During the reporting period, precisely on Tuesday, 7 October, Prime Minister Thaçi appointed Vlora Citaku (PDK) to the post of Deputy Foreign Minister and Memli Krasniqi (PDK) to the post of Government spokesperson.

I-5 Kosovo signed a Financial Agreement with European Commission

During the reporting period, Kosovo Government and institutions signed a financial agreement with the European Commission (EC), earmarking €122.7mn for social-economic development in accordance with an annual program of EC called the Instrument for pre-membership 2008. Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn said, after signing the deal with Kosovo's Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi, that he came to Prishtina in order to show how much attention the EC was attaching to Kosovo's European future.

II. Additional Recognitions of Independence

During the reporting period 5 countries recognized the independence of Kosovo. Portugal, on 7 October, became the 22 European Union member state to recognize Kosovo, with Cyprus, Slovakia, Spain, Greece and Romania remaining. Kosovo neighbors Montenegro and Macedonia announced their recognition on 9 October. With these recognitions, Kosovo has now been recognized by all its neighbors, except for Serbia, thus significantly contributing to Kosovo's regional position. On 14 October the United Arab Emirates (UAE) recognized Kosovo's independence. The UAE is the first Arab country to recognize Kosovo and is an influential state, with several other Gulf States already stating their official support for Kosovo independence, which should be formally addressed on their own timelines. Finally, Malaysia recognized the Republic of Kosovo as an independent and sovereign country on Thursday, 30 October. With this latest recognition, Kosovo has now been recognized by 52 UN member states

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 To date, ECMI has conducted separate workshops with the Bosniak, Turkish and RAE representatives. These workshops had two aims: first, to inform communities on the role and functions of the CCC, in particular on the nomination procedure for community representatives; and, second, to assist community members in establishing their own processes for selecting candidates for the CCC. Information leaflets on the CCC and on the Law on Communities were developed by ECMI and handed out in the workshops to help inform community members.

The workshops were chaired by a representative of the Office of the President of Kosovo and the ECMI Kosovo Head of Office. The workshops were divided into two parts. In the first half of the workshops the chairs gave informational speeches on the role and functions of the CCC, including the selection procedure, and answered questions posed by community members. The second half of the workshops were used by the community members decide on how to elect their candidates for the CCC and, if possible, come up with concrete proposals for candidates. The workshops were productive and positive; the community representatives showed a cautious optimism about the potential of the CCC and the Turkish, the Roma and the Egyptian communities reached a consensus on their candidates, while the Bosniak and the Ashkali communities requested additional workshops to be held in order to give them more consultation time. In November the Serb and Gorani communities will hold their respective meetings, while the Bosniak and Ashkali community will have second and final workshops. Furthermore, ECMI identified active NGOs within Croat and

Montenegrin communities and will conduct informal consultative meetings with these communities during the second week on November. By 15 November the President of Kosovo will take the final decision in the community representatives to the CCC.

II. Support to the Office of the Prime Minister

II-1 During the reporting period, ECMI's field researchers continued to gather information for the Ethno-political Map of Kosovo, which will provide a comprehensive overview of all issues faced by communities in Kosovo. Up to now the following municipalities have been covered: Zveqan/Zveçane; Zubin Potok/Zubin Potok; Vushtrri/Vučitrn; Obiliq/Obilić; Lipjan/Lipljan; Mitrovicë/ Mitrovica; Fushë Kosova/Kosovo Polje; Gjakova/Đakovica; Dragash/Dragaš; Deqan/Dečani. The rest of the municipalities are expected to be covered within the next month. Moreover, progress was made in the development of the website on which all data will become publicly available.

III. Support to the Decentralisation Process

III-1 The sub working group for the information campaign on decentralisation has now contracted TV21 to produce three TV debates which will provide an opportunity to publicly discuss decentralisation. Radio and TV slots have now been allocated for commercials about the decentralisation process and what it brings to citizens. The commercials are now being aired in Serbian and Albanian languages.

III-2 During October, Head of Office Adrian Zeqiri and Project Manager Virginia Stephens met with decentralisation expert Mr. Besnik Tahiri. The aim of the meetings was to discuss potential work together. Ms. Stephens and Mr. Tahiri went out to three municipalities (Novobërdë/NovoBrdo, Viti/Vitina and Kamenicë/Kamenica) to speak to Mayors about the problems they face regarding the decentralisation process. The mayors highlighted issues concerning the lack of communication between central and local government.

IV. Education

IV-1 ECMI has developed a project in support to minority education in the Kosovo education system. The aim of the project is to contribute to UNICEF's Social Inclusion Project in Kosovo schools. The project will be a pilot project that will provide support to local municipal authorities and civil society organisations in Peja/Peć, Ferizaj/Uroševac and Prizren/Prizren to ensure that vulnerable community groups are included within the education system. The project will start in November.

V. Other Developments

V-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 minorities in Kosovo.

V-2 ECMI has signed a MoU with the Swiss agency Syni. Syni supports Swiss professionals to obtain extra valuable professional experience for a period of six months and ECMI has agreed to cooperate with Syni. Head of Office Adrian Zeqiri and Project Manager Virginia Stephens selected and interviewed candidates for the post of Project Officer. The vacancy has now been filled and the new member of staff will start in November. She will be working on the project supporting the Office of the Prime Minister.

Report Ends;