



EUROPEAN CENTRE  
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MINORITY ISSUES



**EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MINORITY ISSUES – ECMI KOSOVO**

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## Monthly Newsletter July 2008

### **POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS**

- I. Internal and International Political Developments
- II. Additional Recognitions of Independence

### **PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

- I. Communities Consultative Council
- II. Support to the Office of the Prime Minister
- III. Support to the Decentralisation Process
- IV. Other Developments

### **POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS**

#### **I. Internal and International Political Developments**

##### **I-1a UNSG Ban Ki-moon authorizes UN mission replacement in Kosovo**

United Nations General Secretary Ban Ki-moon advised UNMIK Chief Lamberto Zannier, to begin the reconfiguration of the UN mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Despite Russia's disagreement, Mr. Ban aims to continue the plan of transferring competences from UNMIK to EULEX and to reduce UN personnel. The new realities in Kosovo, including the promulgation of the Kosovo constitution on 15 June, have fundamentally changed the UN mission and it can no longer complete its duties in an efficient manner, Mr. Ban's report concludes.

##### **I-1b UNMIK Chief's visit to Belgrade**

For the first time, UNMIK Chief Lamberto Zannier visited Belgrade on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July to meet with Serbia's Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić and Serbia's Minister for Kosovo Goran Bogdanović. Media sources reported that talks with Belgrade involved several issues of mutual interest, including Serbs involvement in Kosovo's judiciary, police, customs, transportation, infrastructure and boundaries, as well as Serbian patrimony.

Kosovo's President Fatmir Sejdiu and Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi both claimed that UNMIK Chief Lamberto Zannier does not have the mandate to negotiate with Serbia on behalf of Kosovo. Both see Zannier's role as a supporter in negotiations with Serbia and not a negotiator on status.

### **I-1c Kosovo satisfied with UNSC meeting**

Kosovo government leaders met with the UN Steering Committee in New York on the 25<sup>th</sup> July to discuss re-configuration of UNMIK. All UNSC ambassadors, with the exception of Russia and Vietnam, approved the reconfiguration plan and supported Ban Ki-Moon's decision to put trust in EULEX. Following the meeting, Kosovo's Foreign Minister, Skënder Hyseni, invited Serbian officials to direct talks on practical matters of mutual interest and stressed that Kosovo and Serbia should negotiate as two independent and sovereign states. He added that the recognition of Kosovo independence by Serbia is not necessary to begin negotiations on practical matters such as energy, and roads. Hyseni also requested that Belgrade stop all support for parallel structures in the north and instead encourage them to cooperate with Prishtina, adding that Belgrade can "rest assured that Kosovo institutions will do the impossible for the protections of all minorities, and especially Serbs".

### **I-1d EU's Kosovo Mission will Report to Brussels**

Head of EULEX, Yves de Kermabon, announced that the EU's new law and order mission would be reporting to Brussels and not to UN headquarters in New York despite the fact that under the plan devised by UNSG Ban Ki-Moon, EULEX will initially operate under the auspices of the UN Kosovo mission. It is envisaged that UNMIK will gradually clear the way for EULEX in the coming months, but there has been confusion over how the two missions will divide their responsibilities. De Kermabon added that they are in contact with UNMIK regarding future cooperation in the fields of justice and police.

### **I-2 Kosovo Donor Conference in Brussels, 11 July**

One of the most important events for Kosovo during the reporting period was the donor's conference held in Brussels on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> July. It was organized by the European Commission and the Government of Kosovo. EU member states, key international donors, international financial institutions, as well as international and UN agencies, participated in the conference. The conference aimed at gathering funds to help Kosovo on its way to full statehood. Kosovo presented its priority programs for the donors' consideration and was promised €1.2 billion in financial assistance for the coming years. The EU's executive arm has already allocated €395.1 million for Kosovo for 2007-2011 and could allocate a further €200 million for specific socio-economic needs such as roads infrastructure, education and investments for improving the overall situation of minorities in Kosovo. With substantial resources being mobilized from the EU budget, the donor conference revealed that Kosovo is essentially a European issue

### **I-3a Kosovo President and the Prime Minister met with US President Bush**

On 21 July, President Fatmir Sejdiu and Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi met with US President George W. Bush in Washington D.C. After an hour meeting behind closed doors, leaders of both nations gave a brief press conference. President Bush confirmed his commitment to an independent Kosovo and argued against any partition of Kosovo. During the meeting, issues such as economics, education and Kosovo's transatlantic aspirations to join NATO and become a member of the European Union were discussed. Bush also stressed America's support to continue to work with those nations that have not recognized an independent Kosovo to convince them to do so as quickly as possible.

### **I-3b Historic visit in the United States of America**

Kosovo leadership and analysts have described the 18-21 July visit to the United States as a historic visit. It represented the first delegation from independent Kosovo to visit Washington, which included President Sejdiu and PM Thaçi, who had several high level meetings with US officials in the capital. US State Secretary Condoleezza Rice and Defense Secretary Robert Gates received Kosovo's delegation on Friday, 18 July, culminating with the reception by US President George W. Bush at the Oval Office of the White House on 21 July.

#### **I-4 Serbia's new Government**

During July, the Serbian Parliament elected the country's new government with 127 votes in favour. Out of parliament's 250 members, 164 were present. Of which 27 voted against and 10 abstained. The ruling coalition will be composed of the DS-led ticket, the SPS-PUPS-JS coalition and ethnic minority parties. Cvetković confirmed that his government would have 24 portfolios, one minister without portfolio, one vice-premier and three deputies. Serbia's new ruling majority is composed of three coalitions that comprise 11 parties.

The largest among them, the Democrats (DS), who proposed Cvetković for office although he is not formally a party member, took part in the May 11 elections under the name, "For a European Serbia" and along with four other parties: G17 Plus, the League of Vojvodina Social Democrats (LSV), the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) and the Sandžak Democratic Party (SDP). The Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) had a pre-election coalition of its own, which included the Associated Pensioners Party (PUPS) and United Serbia (JS).

#### **Prishtina's reaction to new government in Belgrade**

President Sejdiu expects the new government in Belgrade to banish its prejudices regarding Kosovo. Commenting on the formation of the new ruling coalition in Serbia, Kosovo officials have been careful to distance themselves, stressing that Serbia and Kosovo are two different countries. Sejdiu said that it was in Serbia's fundamental interests to give up on the approach to the Kosovo issue that it has adopted thus far. Commenting on the Belgrade's new government, Kosovo Prime Minister Thaçi said that the future of Kosovo no longer depended on changes within the government in Belgrade.

## **II. Additional Recognitions of Independence**

### **II-1 IMF and World Bank Recognized Kosovo\_**

Since Kosovo's independence, institutional leaders had been pushing hard for IMF recognition. On 16 July 2008, the International Monetary Fund recognized Kosovo's independence and will consider its membership application in due course as a sovereign state. IMF membership would give Kosovo access to millions of euros in IMF-backed loans and legitimacy among donors and investors who have been put off by its limbo status.

The IMF's acknowledgment of Kosovo's independence is the first by a major international institution and a boost for Kosovo's legitimacy, although there is no guarantee that its membership will be approved, with Serbia and its ally Russia expected to try to block it. 43 mostly Western governments including the United States and many European countries, which have a majority voting power in the IMF, have recognized Kosovo.

Kosovo has also applied to the World Bank for membership and following the IMF's decision it also recognized Kosovo as an independent country. The membership process typically takes a minimum of six to nine months.

## **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** Following the official launch of the Communities Consultative Council (CCC) on the 27<sup>th</sup> June ECMI has drafted and discussed the initial Draft Presidential Decree. Discussions have taken place with the Office of the President and key members of the international community in Kosovo. The Draft is based on the outcomes of the meeting launching the CCC and is in compliance with the Presidents intentions to establish the CCC as a constitutional body with the full participation of all communities. The Draft Presidential Decree was submitted and discussed with the OP on 14<sup>th</sup> July.

The initial draft of the Presidential Decree was sent to relevant stakeholders and, after the consideration of their comments and/or clarifications, the report will be discussed with the OP's legal team and made public.

### **II. Support to the Office of the Prime Minister**

**II-1** ECMI has made significant progress towards the completion of its analysis of the governmental institutional framework for communities in Kosovo. This paper aims to provide a survey of the existing institutional structures that play a role in the protection of communities and to identify opportunities for institutional reform. Specifically the proposal identifies and assesses government institutions that address communities in Kosovo; identifies structural gaps and overlaps, and identifies strengths and weaknesses in government policies dealing with the position of communities in Kosovo. ECMI's review of institution that work for the protection of community rights is based on the analysis of various documents, including regulations, legislations, and operational documents, and on interviews with Ministry officials, civil servants, and other relevant staff. In addition to the use of documents and interviews, data collected from questionnaires distributed to various ministries are also being incorporated into the report.

### **III. Support to the Decentralisation Process**

**III-1** During the reporting period ECMI has continued its support to the Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA), by participating in the sub-working group on the information campaign for decentralisation. ECMI is continuing to help MLGA to ensure that all Kosovo communities are included throughout the decentralisation information campaign and that their concerns are taken into account. The sub-working group on the information campaign for decentralisation met three times in July to discuss in detail the debates to be held in September and October. The agenda for these debates and a provisional list of participants were presented by ECMI and agreed upon by the sub-working group. The working group has also signed the contract with a local media company, who will design and produce the material for the campaign such as leaflets, billboards and media spots.

### **IV. Other Developments**

**IV-1** Throughout July, 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 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. These meetings included Kaisa Rouvinen, from the Embassy of Finland, Annelies Verstichel from the International Civilian Office, Gunnel Unge from the Swedish Liaison Office, Barry Reed of EMI, Polly Grant and Kim Perlow from AED amongst others.

**IV-2** At the beginning of July, ECMI project manager Ms. Stephens and ECMI interns Arianna and Jessica attended a Conference on the Challenges and Perspectives of the implementation on Decentralisation Process in Kosovo. The Kosovo Local Government Institute organized the conference. Issues that were discussed focused on decentralisation in Kosovo, lessons learned from decentralisation processes abroad and ended with a discussion on the reality of implementing the decentralisation plan.

**IV-3** A new Technical Forum for stakeholders and practitioners working on minority/communities' rights issues has been established by the OCRM. The first monthly meeting was held on Thursday 24 July and was attended by an ECMI staff member. In its first meeting, the forum discussed the Implementation of the Law on the Use of Languages by Kosovo Municipalities. The group will again meet in August and will be attended by an ECMI representative.

**IV-4** Over the course of several evenings, ECMI staff attended a series of trainings on Project Management. Staff were trained on Project Life Cycle; Developing, Designing, Implementing and Evaluating/Monitoring a project, and on budgeting.

**IV-5** ECMI intern Ms. Jessica Eckardt has successfully finished her internship. ECMI appreciates her dedication and professionalism, as she was very helpful by supporting all ECMI staff in all the activities ECMI was involved in.

Report Ends;