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MINORITY ISSUES



EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MINORITY ISSUES – ECMI KOSOVO

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Monthly Report

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Political Developments

I. Status Related Developments

Security Council Session over Kosovo's future status

On January 16th, the Security Council discussed on the future of the UN Mission to Kosovo, but it failed to reach any agreement. The Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Special Representative Joachim R cker told reporters after the meeting that he presented the most recent report on UNMIK to the 15-member body. During the meeting, he highlighted that recent elections "were held in a good atmosphere and were deemed to be fair and free by the international observers."

A highly significant political development of the reporting period for Kosovo was the Prime Minister's speech at the January 16th UNSC session. The Prime Minister's speech highlighted Kosovo's prospects for promoting peace and stability to the entire region. "Kosovo has established democratic and multiethnic institutions and is ready for a final decision", he said. "Kosovo will become a country of equal opportunities for all its citizens." He also expressed his intention for good neighbourly relationships with Serbia in the near future. The new Prime Minister also made public his focus on establishing a coordination cell within his office that would deal exclusively with minority communities, to make sure that their rights and interests would be authoritatively addressed at the highest political level.

Uncertainty on Kosovo's future status could lead to instability, Ban Ki-moon

The loss of momentum in making progress towards resolving Kosovo's future status could lead to instability in the greater region, even potentially endangering the UN staff, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned in a new report¹ made public on January 3rd 2008.

"The parties are urged to reaffirm and act upon their declared commitments to refrain from any actions or statements that could endanger peace, incite violence or jeopardize security in Kosovo and the region," Mr. Ban wrote in his latest report on the UN mission to Kosovo (UNMIK). In his report, Mr. Ban said that expectations in Kosovo, where Albanians outnumber Serbs and other minorities by nine to one, are still high that a solution will be reached quickly. "As such, the status quo is not likely to be sustainable", he noted. "Should the impasse continue, events on the ground could take on a momentum of their own, putting at serious risks the achievements and legacy of the United Nations in Kosovo."

Kosovo's independence in days

Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi has stated that the declaration of independence is an issue of days. "There are some procedures we need to respect and some consultations", he told reporters after meeting the EU foreign policy Chief Javier Solana in Brussels on Thursday, January 24th 2008. EU member states have asked Kosovo's leadership to wait until a civilian mission would replace UNMIK.

A police and judicial staff of about 1,800 is being prepared to be deployed, and to work in tandem with the existing NATO force and Kosovo Institutions.

II. Establishment of the new central Institutions

Following the 17th November elections, series of negotiations between two major political parties, PDK and LDK, for a government coalition took place before an agreement was reached. On Wednesday, January 9th, 2008, the new Assembly of Kosovo constituted and it elected the new Government. The newly established coalition Government, besides the two major Albanian parties, also includes the Coalition 7+, made up of all of non-Serb and non-Albanian parties, and the Coalition of four Serbian parties represented in the Assembly. This agreement gives the PDK-led coalition a sound majority in the parliament. On the other hand, the newly formed AKR (Alliance for the New Kosovo) and LDD (Democratic League of Dardania), together with AAK (Alliance for the Future of Kosovo), constitute the new opposition camp.

The PDK General Secretary, Mr Jakup Krasniqi was elected the Assembly Speaker, while its Presidency consists of: Mr Xhavit Haliti of PDK, Mr Sabri Hamiti and Mr. Eqrem Kryeziu of LDK, Mr. Ibrahim Gashi (AKR), Mr Nexhat Daci (LDD), Mr Slobodan Petrović (Independent Liberal Party – SLS), and a member of the Coalition 7+, who will be elected on rotational basis.

Both the President and the Government extended their mandate to five and four years, respectively, through a quick amendment of the Constitutional Framework by SRSG a day prior to the Assembly session. As coalition partners replied to opposition and media's objections, such extension of mandates is compatible with the new, to-be-adopted Constitution of Kosovo. Another, less significant amendment, is the extension of the size of the Assembly Presidency, to make room for the representation of AAK into this body.

¹ UN Report on Kosovo, available at http://www.b92.net/eng/news/in_focus.php?id=91

Addressing the new parliament, the new Prime Minister promised that his Government will make the dream of independence a reality very soon, and will undertake deep reforms in the economy, education, and the deeply corrupted energetic system, opening Kosovo up to foreign capital. Mr. Thaçi sent a special message to Kosovo Serbs. Speaking in Serbian, he promised: “My government will have as one of its priorities the rule of law, with special attention to minority rights. We will work for Kosovo to be a place where all citizens feel equal and secure”. PDK’s Hajredin Kuqi and LDK’s Ramë Manaj share the posts of Deputy Prime Ministers, while the 15 specific ministerial sectors are shared as follows: seven for PDK, five for LDK five, and minority communities three.

ECMI ACTIVITIES

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

I. Support to the Office of the Prime Minister

I-1 Due to the change of the Government of Kosovo, ECMI has been focus during the reporting period on following up the transition to the new Government community affairs. In this context, several meetings with the Head of the Office on Good Governance, Mr. Habit Hajredini, and the Community Affairs Advisor, Mr. Fernando Mora, held. These meetings served two goals.

Firstly, ECMI has initiated the process of establishing contacts with the newly appointed senior political officials responsible for community affairs. This process is nevertheless still ongoing due to delays in the establishment of new governmental structures and the appointment of these officials both within the Office of the Prime Minister and relevant ministries. In the context of the first goal, ECMI has channelled its expert information and recommendations concerning community affairs policy-making, as well as the legal and institutional reforms needed to be initiated for the attainment of the goals set. These goals, in turn, are based on the last year’s consultation process with representatives of both majority and minority communities, as well as the needs assessment with minority civil society organisations, conducted by ECMI, in close partnership with all the stakeholders involved.

II. Communities Consultative Council

During the reporting period, ECMI initiated with the Department for International Development of UK (DFID), the project for institutional support to the implementation of the Communities Consultative Council for Kosovo. ECMI initiated the contacts with the Office of the President of Kosovo, under whose auspices the CCC is set to function, to agree on an implementation plan for the Council. During the reporting period, ECMI had a number of meetings with rep. of DFID to agree on details of the project and other administrative issues.

III. Other Developments

III-1 ECMI has welcomed different guests and has held a range of meetings, both internal and with relevant stakeholders, on the issues of mutual interest. Among these were meetings with the representatives for community issues of the International Civilian Office in Kosovo, OSCE and the Ministry for Communities and Returns.

III-2 The ECMI Head of Office, Mr. Adrian Zeqiri, met Mr. Boban Stanković, Minister for Returns and Communities. The meeting was focused on the Draft Law on Communities and other issues concerning minority communities in Kosovo. The meeting agreed that a Memorandum of Cooperation would be signed between ECMI Kosovo and MRC. According to this MoC, the two institutions will engage in information exchange concerning preparation, adoption and

implementation of laws and policies in the area of Human and Community rights. For that purpose, ECMI will have an advisory role within the Ministry of Returns and Communities.

III-3 On January 15, ECMI HO, and Mr Fernando Mora, Prime Minister's Advisor on Community Affairs, met Mr Mahir Yagcilar, Minister for Environment and Spatial Planning. The meeting was focused on recent activities in support to the Office of the Prime Minister and the project on reforming the CCC, as well as other issues relating to the representation of Civil Society organisations to this mechanism.

V-4 On January 29, ECMI HO and the Prime Minister's Advisor for Community Affairs Mr. Fernando Mora met Mr Nenad Rašić, Minister for Labor and Social Welfare. The meeting focused on ECMI's projects for 2008. Initially, HO gave a brief overview of ECMI's past and ongoing activities, followed by a more detailed overview of each of the projects. Henceforth, Mr. Rašić welcomed ECMI and Prime Minister's Advisor visit, explaining Ministry's objectives and activities for the upcoming period.

VI-5 On January 30, ECMI HO and the Finnish Liaison Office delegation, consisting of Ms Kaisa Rouvinen, Advisor for Development Cooperation and Ms Terhi Makynen, Political Advisor, met Mr Zenun Pajaziti, Minister of Internal Affairs. Initially, both ECMI and Finnish Office, and the Minister expressed their willingness for further cooperation on the issues of mutual interest. Furthermore, the meeting discussed the possibility of engagement in the development of a Kosovo State Strategy on Anti-trafficking issues and particularly the role of the Ministry for Internal Affairs into this process.

VII-6 During the reporting period, the work of the ECMI Office was supported by the ECMI senior expert on minority rights Ms. Zdenka Machnyikova who has given her additional inputs and suggested new proposal to be insert in the *Draft Special Law on the Promotion and Protection of Communities and the Persons belonging to Communities in Kosovo*.

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