

UNMIK



United Nations Mission in Kosovo

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UNMIK: Discriminatory elements of Serb laws won't be applied during fulfillment of standards (Zëri)

Zëri claims that UNMIK stated yesterday that Kosovan leaders and Belgrade officials have received the corrected text of the introduction of the document 'Standards for Kosovo', which now contains an additional sentence which says that 'discriminatory elements will not be applied in the legislation that has to do with Kosovo and which was approved after March 1989'.

Zëri quotes Mimoza Kusari, spokeswoman for Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi, as saying that the Prime Minister has agreed with the new formulation.

The document 'Standards for Kosovo', according to UNMIK is now complete, since it contains the introduction that had been removed by UNMIK chief Holkeri, in the late hours of 9 December after a meeting of UNMIK officials with Kosovo leaders where they did not agree with the mentioning of applicative laws approved after 28 March 1989. Holkeri took this step in order to announce the document on the 10 December, like it happened, and to avoid clashes with Kosovo leaders about such an important document for the future of Kosovo.

Consultations with the Kosovo Government on the reformulation of the introduction continued until last Tuesday, when DSRSG Charles Brayshaw through a letter informed the Kosovo leaders about the content of the new introduction, which now contains an additional sentence which says that 'discriminatory elements will not be applied in the legislation that has to do with Kosovo and which was approved after March 1989'. According to Brayshaw, the concerns of the leaders of Kosovo institutions and political parties have been addressed in the introduction.

None of the Kosovo leaders informed the public that they received the corrected text of the introduction on Tuesday or whether they agreed with the new formulation.

As Mechthild Henneke, an UNMIK spokesperson, said to *Zëri* yesterday, 'the text of the Introduction is no longer negotiable', adding that Brayshaw only informed Kosovo leaders with the new text, and did not ask them to come forward with new remarks.

The public opinion would not have been informed before the beginning of next year if it weren't for Covic and the so called Coordination Center for Kosovo who says that the document 'Standards for Kosovo' has now changed and that there is a clear mention of UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which defines Kosovo as an integral part of Serbia.

It was impossible, the paper says, to get hold of Kosovo officials, apart from Mimoza Kusari spokeswoman for Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi, who says that the Prime Minister has agreed with the new formulation.

Kosova Sot interview with UNMIK Strategy Coordinator Carne Ross

'The first issue is to identify the policies for achieving standards. Most of these policies have been created, but there is also a possibility of creating new policies. We are working on this together,' said UNMIK Strategy Coordinator Carne Ross in an interview for *Kosova Sot*.

Ross also said that according to the Legal Framework, UNMIK will report to the United Nations Security Council about the implementation of standards in Kosovo.

Mr. Ross, Kosovo Serbs and Belgrade have refused the plan 'Standards for Kosovo'. Can the refusal by the Serbian side be an obstacle for the implementation of the standards?

The plan has been supported by the Contact Group and the Security Council and we will go ahead with it. SRSG has made it clear he wants Serbs to involve in the process. So the door is open for their participation.

What will happen if hardliners win elections in Serbia?

We need to wait and see.

How probable is it to meet the standards the international community is asking for in 18 months?

I do not know. But I am optimistic. The SRSG is optimistic, too. However, the implementation depends on determination and consistency of Kosovo officials and Kosovo people.

What is the most difficult standard?

I do not want to prejudge, but progress should be made on all of them.

When can you expect the dialogue with Belgrade start?

The UN Security Council expects the dialogue to start soon. UNMIK is working on that. I hope that the Government of Kosovo will be ready for these meetings.

What needs to be done by 14 January by the working groups?

Working groups will meet at the beginning of January. It is the first step of making standards a reality. By then we need to define who should do what in this path.

Java interviews with Kosovar Albanian leaders

Java weekly newspaper carried interviews with Hashim Thaçi, leader of the Kosovo Democratic Party (PDK), Ramush Haradinaj, leader of the Alliance for the Future of

Kosovo (AAK) and Nekibe Kelmendi, senior official of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK).

Commenting on the work of Kosovar institutions in the past year, PDK leader Hashim Thaçi said that the Presidency of Kosovo was dealing with symbolic policy all the time, the Kosovo Assembly worked at a slow pace in filling up the legal vacuum in Kosovo, while the Kosovo Government has been more active. 'None of these institutions are close to the grade ten,' he added.

Asked whether he would candidate for the post of the President of Kosovo in the next elections, Thaçi was quoted as saying, 'Such a possibility is part of democracy.'

Commenting on the initiative of his party to declare the independence of Kosovo, an idea which was backed by 44 assembly members and then ignored by the Kosovo Assembly, Haradinaj said: 'This was a victory for the political spectrum in Kosovo. It is true that we have played a crucial role in this. We don't think it was a failure. On the contrary, we believe it was a very important initiative. This is going to happen very soon. The Kosovo Assembly will confirm the political will of the people of Kosovo for a sovereign and independent country.'

LDK senior official Nekibe Kelmendi said that after 2004 elections, 'The Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) will win enough votes and will be able to form the government on its own, so that coalitions will no longer be needed'.

UNMIK aggravates economic crisis in Kosovo (*Kosova Sot*)

Kosova Sot quotes officials of the Ministry of Economy and Finances (MEF) as saying that UNMIK will not change its fiscal policy in 2004, despite the insistence of the Kosovo Government.

Agim Krasniqi, director of the Kosovo Budget, was quoted as saying, 'There aren't going to be any changes in the fiscal policy in 2004'.

Economy expert Musa Limani said that with its actions, UNMIK Pillar IV was not only failing to develop the local economy, but was also ruining it.

Muhamet Sadiku, deputy chairman of Riinvest, an institute for development studies, told *Kosova Sot* that the current fiscal policy is going to 'strangle' the local economy. 'The customs taxes and the value added tax which is taken at the border, where it reaches 26.5 percent, before the businesses start the planned investments have put the manufacturing sector in an inconvenient position and disloyal competition,' added Sadiku.

Kosova Sot added that local economy experts believe that if there were better cooperation between UNMIK and local institutions, 'things would have been different'.

Mustafa Ibrahim, deputy chairman of the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce (OEK), said that in the beginning maybe it was wise to apply the current fiscal policy, 'but later on it started strangling the economy of Kosovo'.

Ibrahimi said that the regulations which determine this fiscal policy in most cases impede the economic development of Kosovo. 'On the other hand, the failure to allow a united customs area in Kosovo, certain preferences toward Macedonia and open borders for Serbia and Montenegro, strangle the local economy in Kosovo,' he added.

Ibrahimi also said that most alarming was the fact of very low excises for 'powerful' products, such as coffee and tobacco. 'In a way, Kosovo has turned into a transit-territory, because other countries that have higher excises are using Kosovo to transit the abovementioned products,' Ibrahimi concluded.

Editorial: Kosovans in KTA should resign (Kosova Sot)

A front-page editorial by Kosova Sot claims that the head of Kosovo's economy, Nikolaus Lambsdorff, has broken his promise that he would announce the third tender of privatization by the end of this year.

The author of the article also suggests that Kosovan members of the Kosovo Trust Agency (KTA) should hand in their resignations. 'There are many reasons to hand in a unanimous resignation. First of all, none of the requests of the Kosovo Government have been taken into account by the leadership of the Kosovo Trust Agency; second, the announcement of the third round has been postponed to an indefinite date, and third, there are plans to change the operational policies of the Kosovo Trust Agency without consulting Kosovar experts and officials,' it was added.

Shala: Complications in Montenegro (Zëri)

Zëri runs a front-page editorial piece by its editor Blerim Shala, who says that the results of the census in Montenegro announced recently will be closely analyzed by the western capitals, because 'there will be no long-term stability in this part of Europe without knowing the final status of Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia', he says.

'According to this census Montenegro is the second unit of the former Federation of Yugoslavia that does not have a majority population. Montenegrins represent 40 % of the population, Serbians around 30 % and minorities the rest 30 %, including 7 % Albanians.

In this respect we can foresee only two possible scenarios at a time when the validity of Union of Serbia and Montenegro expires, Shala writes.

The first scenario is for minorities and the Montenegrins to vote for independence, and the second is to define a multiethnic state, which would be very complicated.

The Kosovo case in this respect is the clearest of three. The other two haven't yet clarified their status.'