

UNMIK



United Nations Mission in Kosovo

Division of Public Information

Media Monitoring

▶ Local Media

▶ Media Analysis

14 November

PM Rexhepi only in the working group of dialogue (*Kosova Sot*)

Kosova Sot carries an article on the government's decision to name officials to different working groups aimed at facilitating the fulfillment of standards set by the international community.

The Minister of Education, Rexhep Osmani and the Minister of Trade and Industry, Ali Jakupi are part of the working group on democratization. The Minister of Public Services, Jakup Krasniqi and the Minister of Environment, Ethem Çeku are in the working group on legislation, Ali Jakupi and a minority representative, probably the Minister of Agriculture Goran Bogdanovic, are part of the working group on economy and privatization, Ali Jakupi and the Minister of Health, Resmie Mumxhiu, are part of the working group on returns and minority rights, while PM Rexhepi, the Minister of Culture Behxhet Brajshori, and Minister of Transport and Telecommunication Zef Morina, are in the working group on the dialogue with Belgrade.

The operationalization of the standards remains the key goal of the Kosovo Government, the paper reports. A supplementary plan discussed and drafted by the Stabilization Association to form a mechanism is supposed to help transfer of more competencies from UNMIK to the local government. Both local and international officials have supported this plan.

The Kosovo Government has recently decided to form five working groups to implement the standards and UNMIK will be a partner in their implementation.

The Minister of Transport, Zef Morina said that the Government has not yet formed the working groups, but his ministry has made preparations for the technical talks.

In a special box the paper reported that the Kosovo Government will open an office on security as part of the increasing competencies. According to PM Rexhepi, this office will closely cooperate with the security forces in Kosovo: UNMIK Police, KPS and KFOR.

Who is the new staff in Prime Ministers office? (Zëri)

Zëri carries an article from the meeting of PM Bajram Rexhepi with the media, where he presented the new staff members of his cabinet. He also expressed optimism that the new staff would be able to face challenges, especially nowadays when there are dynamic political processes, like the fulfillment of benchmarks. He promised to the media that the Government and his office would continue to be transparent. .

After some replacements in his cabinet, Kosovo Prime Minister, Bajram Rexhepi, presented the new staff to the local and the international media during a lunch meeting yesterday.

Mimoza Kusari is the political advisor to PM. She has graduated in economy from the University of Pristina, and did postgraduate studies in business administration in US. She has worked for the National Public Radio in the US. The secretary is Azem Hajdari, a lawyer. He was first working for the Legal Office of the PM, and later he was a coordinator for the office. Mehmet Hajrizi left due to health problems, it was said.

The principal advisor to the PM, Ilir Dugolli, has graduated the law faculty in Pristina, and has postgraduate studies in Hungary.

Financial advisor is Behxhet Hality, graduated from the Economic Faculty.

From the 'old' staff there is the advisor Besim Beqaj, who graduated economy in Zagreb. Bekim Çollaku is a new advisor, who graduated faculty of foreign languages in Tirana, and postgraduate studies in Great Britain.

Ilir Deda is another political advisor. He finished studies in US and before coming here was working for the ICG. Another advisor Ibrahim Shala, graduated philosophy, and Abedin Çupeva, head of the protocol, has graduated in electrotechnic at the University of Pristina.

Shala: Damages deriving from clumsy organization (Zëri)

Zëri carried a front-page editorial by Blerim Shala, who wrote:

One of the good things that should come of the operationalization of standards is a better and more qualitative organization of the international administration and the local and central governments. After all, it is very difficult to find a single person who is satisfied with the way UNMIK and Kosovar authorities are organized now.

The latest example that proves such low-level organization is the incident in the village of Mushtisht, in the municipality of Suhareka, where some of the local residents reacted harshly against a visit by Serb citizens who had come to visit their properties.

It is very well known what happened in these areas during the war, especially in spring 1999. This municipality suffered some of the most terrible events. This is an

additional reason why these visits, which are the inalienable rights of every citizen of Kosovo, should be organized better.

In this respect, the Albanian officials who issued a public appeal to the Kosovo IDPs should cooperate more intensively with the international administration in organizing visits of Kosovo refugees.

We are absolutely certain that an honest meeting between our politicians and an international official with the villagers of Mushtisht would have prevented the problems that we faced this time. In fact, there is no other way to change the situation in Kosovo. The situation cannot change with appeals and declarations.

Editorial: President Marovic apologizes only to Bosniaks (*Kosova Sot*)

Kosova Sot carries a front-page editorial on the recent apology of the president of the Union of Serbia and Montenegro, Svetozar Marovic, to Bosnians in Sarajevo, saying that is a good thing.

This act is to be greeted, the editorial goes on, but you cannot help remembering that the Belgrade authorities have never apologized to the Albanians for the massacres. President Marovic apologized only to the Bosnians without even mentioning the Albanians. And a public apology would ease feelings and tensions between Kosovo and Serbia.

So, can we expect that Serbs will apologize to the Albanians? The probable answer is no. Perhaps, one would say, it is not that important that they do that since they will never change when it comes to relations with the Albanians.

But that is not so. Apologizing publicly, they would take a step forward to reconciliation and stability in the region.

The apology in Sarajevo shows that the Belgrade authorities can do it and that they are very biased. Bosnians are Slavs and expressing apologies to them is not a big thing to their people. While apologizing to the people of Kosovo would be detrimental to the Serbian leaders and they could be hurt by that act.

From this point of view, we can say that the Serb side, with whom the Albanians will have to sit on the same table, has not shown any signs of willingness for reconciliation and cooperation. On the contrary, what you can notice in the actions and politics of Belgrade makes you think that the current regime has not changed much from the previous one. It can be said that only the means of war have changed, though the governing structure there is the same. In Kosovo's case, the Serbs remain the same: an extremely destabilizing factor and an obstacle to any initiative for dialogue and reconciliation.

Biserko: Persistence that Kosovo should be part of Serbia is unacceptable (Epoka e Re)

Epoka e Re carried a report from the roundtable that was held in Belgrade about standards in Kosovo and its status.

The chairman of the Serbian Helsinki Committee, Sonja Biserko, said that the international community's position is that Belgrade should choose between Kosovo and the integration in the EU.

This fact is approved by the offer of the American and French diplomats, Richard Holbrooke and Bernard Kouchner, during their last visit to Belgrade and Prishtina. 'Holbrooke was more than explicit when he said that Serbs are in a historical crossroad, that they should choose between Kosovo and Europe, because if they get oriented towards Kosovo will lose both,' Biserko was quoted as saying in a round table 'Kosovo: benchmarks and status' that was organized in Belgrade.

She added that Serbia is 'showing resistance' to the European orientation and that there is no 'consensus' to work for getting closer to the EU.

'Without the presence of the international community, Serbia would slide in chaos and such fact would be expanded in the EU through organized crime, trafficking, and terrorism, she further said.

'The persistence that Kosovo should be part of Serbia is fully unacceptable, considering that Serbia has lost its legitimacy with its behavior in that part of the territory,' Biserko concluded.

Refugee returns – a stone hanging on Kosovo's neck (Zëri)

Zëri carried the eleventh report of a series of articles headlined **Kosovo in 2004: Preparations for final status.**

'It is time for you to return to your home'. This was the message of leading Kosovan politicians addressed on July 2nd to Kosovan citizens who fled to Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia after the war. 'We want to send a simple public message to you: it is time for you to return to your homes, because Kosovo is your homeland as much as it is ours,' it was said in the invitation that leading Kosovan politicians sent to IDPs calling on them to return.

Designated by UNMIK as one of the eight standards, the issue of IDP returns is perceived by Kosovans as one of the most difficult standards, even more so if the resolution of Kosovo's political status is linked with the fulfillment of this standard.

Nonetheless, Kosovan institutions and local politicians have voiced their willingness to support returns as a basic right and have promised that they would commit themselves to create proper conditions for returnees. They voiced this willingness even at the Kosovo Assembly in June 10th this year, where assembly members adopted a resolution and recommendations supporting the process of returns.

In a symbolic gesture, Kosovo President Ibrahim Rugova, PDK leader Hashim Thaçi and the former head of the US Office in Prishtina, Reno Harnish, visited some areas inhabited by minorities in Ferizaj, where they repeated that all those who consider Kosovo as their homeland should return.

‘This is a historic moment, the President of Kosovo (Rugova) and the leader of the second biggest political party (Thaçi) have made powerful statements calling on Serb IDPs to return. This is highly appreciated by the US and all the countries of the international community,’ said Reno Harnish.

‘We cannot forget the past, and we must look toward the future and we must offer guarantees for communities in Kosovo, because Kosovo is the country of all those that wish to live here,’ said President Ibrahim Rugova.

Calling on Albanians to support returns, Hashim Thaçi said that success in IDP returns doesn’t imply the division or the biased solution of Kosovo’s political status.

Kosovo Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi has also called on Serbs and other IDPs to return to Kosovo. ‘The Government is working in returning all Serbs who were residents of Kosovo and who have voiced their willingness to return,’ said Rexhepi. He also called on the international community to offer bigger financial assistance, with the aim of implementing the project of returns as efficiently as possible.

Returns can (not) keep hostage the status of Kosovo

Four years after the war and several months after leading Kosovan politicians called on IDPs to return home, this issue is again surfacing and it is in fact being designated as one of the main topics in the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia on practical issues. Although both majority and minority leaders in Kosovo share the willingness to welcome IDP returns, the question on when and how this process is going to be implemented and its impact on Kosovo’s final status is described in different statements.

‘Returns are one of the standards because if a government - in this case the coalition government of Kosovo - doesn’t respect the right of IDPs to return, then it certainly doesn’t meet the standards to become a member of the European Union. This is the essence of standards and not someone’s malice,’ said Milorad Todorovic, coordinator for returns at the Kosovo Government.

After concluding that for the time being there is no multiethnic and democratic society in Kosovo, Todorovic said that Kosovo would not be able to move forward without meeting conditions such as the rule of law, human rights, market economy, respect for local, regional and world agreements.

Comparing the pace of IDP returns in Bosnia and Kosovo, Todorovic was quoted as saying, ‘There was stagnation in Bosnia for five-six years, and then there was swift development when interethnic relations softened or were somewhat relaxed... Here we have much more obstacles than in Bosnia, where the war lasted longer and

involved more bloodshed; however there are no language barriers and in the end the Dayton Agreement clarified everything. In Kosovo, the process of return becomes even more complicated with the fact that Serb IDPs want to know where they are returning’.

‘Based on the meetings with IDPs,’ he added, ‘I know very well that returns and independence don’t go together. What they are thinking about is the place where they are going to return and what is going to happen in a couple of years’.

Todorovic said that the issue of returns is a reserved power and that in the beginning he found it logical, ‘but nonetheless this has its negative parts because if this issue is reserved only for UNMIK, then the Kosovo Government must play in this case a superficial role.’

Ramush Tahiri, advisor to Kosovo Assembly speaker Nexhat Daci said that Kosovan institution have not conditioned the process of returns. ‘However, at the same time,’ added Tahiri, ‘Kosovo cannot remain a hostage of this process, because this process is going to continue even after independence. Kosovo has had and is going to have international obligation’.

Tahiri also said that the key to a successful project of returns was close cooperation with municipal structures, because he claimed that the municipalities know best who lived in Kosovo and at what time. ‘The municipalities have the official documents on everyone, where they lived, the properties and the structures they had before the war,’ he added.

Muhamet Hamiti, spokesperson for Kosovo President Ibrahim Rugova said that ‘this standard is going to be fulfilled with the fact that Kosovo has made the offer for IDP returns on an individual basis, for all those that want to return and have their properties where they can return’.

Zëri added that in the meantime, there were numerous concrete steps on the issue of returns.

The paper also claims that according to the UNHCR over 7,000 IDPs have so far returned to Kosovo, most of them Serbs. UNCHR also reported that some 770 Roma and over 1,960 Ashkali community members have returned this August, mainly to the municipalities of Lipjan, Obilic, Fushë Kosovë and also to Prishtina (the neighborhood in Vranjevc).

Winning bidders: We are going to sue the Kosovo Trust Agency (Zëri)

Zëri reported about the criticisms that the KTA and UNMIK are facing recently because of delaying the privatization process.

Owners [*sic*] of 23 enterprises that were privatized in the third round of the process have decided to file a lawsuit against the Kosovo Trust Agency, due to the delays in signing the contracts of ownership.

Purchasers of the SOEs said that delays of signing the contracts have caused lots of harms. The paper also reports that the chairman of the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce, Ismail Kastrati, had stated that the KTA is unserious and irresponsible.

They sent a letter to the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the European Commission, SRSB Harri Holkeri, as well as leaders of the Kosovo institutions and informed them about the damages that the KTA caused by halting the privatization process. The chairman of the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce Ismajl Kastrati also signed this letter.

‘The winners of the tenders have respond to the terms and obligations towards KTA by doing the payment, according to the regulations set by the operational policies,’ said the letter that was published by Kosovo Chamber of Commerce officials.

‘With the aim of completing investments, the winners of tenders found internal and external stockholders, [now] bringing them and also themselves into a very difficult situation. The loss that the privatized enterprises, the banks, the stockholders as well as the economy of Kosovo are facing should be calculated. An uncertain juridical situation is created, which will discourage foreign and domestic investors to establish businesses in Kosovo,’ the secretary of the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce Basri Jupolli said. He added that ‘there is a violation of the sacred rights of private ownership as special values of all democratic societies, which are especially important for Kosovo’s society to successfully fulfill the transition’.

All 23 purchasers of 18 SOEs were announced as winning bidders on the basis of the higher price that they offered, which was the prime condition for purchasing an enterprise. The purchasers (23) claimed that the delays caused their businesses lots of damages. Zylbehar Hasallari, purchaser of the Kosovaplast Company, said that shareholders of his company, apart from their own capital, took a loan from the Kasabank in order to achieve the required amounts. He was due to pay two rates of € 66,000 but still had no access to the enterprise, *Zëri* reported.

‘We ask UNMIK, the KTA, the government and UNMIK Pillar IV, what they have achieved through their campaign,’ Kastrati said. ‘The answer is nothing, apart from freezing €25 million in the KTA account,’ he said.

Kastrati further said that all investments for making the privatization process popular were lost; the consequences were very big, while nobody was to hold accountable. ‘The KTA and its board seem to be unserious and irresponsible vis-a-vis the importance of this problem’, said firmly Kastrati.

He also accused Kosovar ministers, members of the KTA Board. ‘What position are Kosovo ministers, members of the KTA Board, taking,’ Kastrati asked.

Union leader (BSPK) Bahri Shabani supported the demands of the 23 purchasers and said that filing charges against the KTA was the right decision.

‘Privatization in Kosovo is ceased by some internationals who want to scare possible investors,’ he concluded.

Managers: Assets in the banks are clear (Koha Ditore)

Koha Ditore carried a report whether or not moneys in the bank are unclear.

As an additional reason for halting the privatization process the KTA mentioned the possibility of money laundering, the paper reported.

The KTA secretary Paul Cseszar said in a recent board meeting that dirty money was possibly involved in this process. All payments, around €24 millions were made through commercial banks. The bank's managers are fully convinced that they have appropriate filters to prevent the insertion of suspicious money in the market. Apart from the bank's proprietors that praised their businesses, UNMIK officials also had good words.

When the SRSGs delivered their speeches for the New Year or when they finished their mission, they always mentioned the building of Kosovo's banking system, which is now under the KTA's dispute, *Koha Ditore* reported.

'Our bank is built under three main principles: security, confidence and profit,' said the general manager of BPB Bank, Islam Zeka and added that the bank itself had also a particular department whose task was just to review the assets.

'We have our particular department that deals with the origin of money. We also know our clients and we know what kind of business they are doing. We do not have problems with them at all,' he said. Zeka further added that particular attention is paid to unknown clients who want to deposit certain amounts of cash.

The board director of the BPB bank Nazmi Mustafa said that international auditors always check the commercial banks.

'Money that are currently here are safe then in other European banks,' said Board Director of the BRK bank, Nebih Zariqi.

However, the chain of control is connected with the Bank and Payment Authority (BPA), which gives instructions and also update commercial banks with new skills against money laundering, paper further reported.

For unknown reasons, Bank and Payment Authority officials had no comment regarding this issue.

UNMIK Pillar IV spokeswoman Monique De Groot claimed that all this work was being done in order to eliminate the eventual doubts.

'In order to fulfill a clear and transparent privatization process and our actions to be in compliance with the law, we should be vigilant regarding the origin of the money,' she said. She added that procedures of verifying the money were under way and hoped that this process would be finished very soon.

'We believe that the bank's filters have worked properly,' De Groot concluded.