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BiH State-related Issues

BiH becomes 44th member of the Council of Europe

By raising the BiH flag on a mast in front of the Council of Europe's building in Strasbourg on Wednesday and striking up the national anthem, BiH became the 44th member of the oldest European institution, ONASA reports. The ceremony was attended by the three-member BiH Presidency, members of the Council of Ministers and both chambers of the parliament, and the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch. According to the protocol, the

Council of Europe General Secretary, Walter Schwimmer, first addressed the ceremony, which had started at 0915. BiH Foreign Minister Zlatko Lagumdžija signed with Schwimmer the Convention on Human Rights with corresponding protocols. He also signed a protocol on the admission with the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, Antanas Valionis and President of the Parliamentary Assembly Peter Štoder. The BiH Presidency Chairman Beriz Belkic is expected to address the plenary session of the Council's Parliamentary Assembly in the course of the day. A senior BiH delegation, including the Council of Ministers Chairman, Dragan Mikerevic, and the speakers of both chambers of the parliament, Zeljko Mirjanic and Sejfudin Tokic, will hold meetings with heads of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers. The BiH Presidency will organize tonight a reception in regard of the admission to the Council, which will be attended by ambassadors of the Council member-countries, parliamentary delegations, heads of some European groups and representatives of the city of Strasbourg.

Lagumdžija says BiH admission to the Council of Europe victory of democratic forces

The admission of BiH in the Council of Europe is a victory of democratic forces and a new beginning for the country, said Foreign Minister Zlatko Lagumdžija in Strasbourg on Wednesday. "Today we mark a new beginning, bringing BiH towards its full integration into Europe. Speaking on behalf of those who promote a non-nationalistic, reform-oriented concept of running the state, I wish to say that we are ready to face all challenges ahead of us," Lagumdžija said during a ceremony to sign the European Convention on Human Rights and the Protocol on Admission. The Council of Europe General Secretary, Walter Schwimmer, said the admission of BiH as the 44th member of the oldest European organization presents a "victory and the beginning of a new BiH." "We waited many years for this moment. BiH deserved it because the country is a symbol of multi-culture," Schwimmer said, welcoming Bosnians as friends and partners of Europe. "A road in front of BiH is long but the country will not be alone. It will surely be stable and a perspective state," he added.

The High Representative says admission of BiH to the Council of Europe a historic moment for its citizens

The admission of BiH in the Council of Europe is a historical moment for its citizens, said High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch in Strasbourg on Wednesday. "I am very happy and touched by the ceremony. This is something that seemed impossible a year ago. BiH became a member of the European family of countries and this is a historic day for its citizens," Petritsch told ONASA after the official ceremony of the BiH's admission as the 44th member of the oldest European organization in Strasbourg. "When I came to BiH in August 1999, the country was not a state in real sense of that word. Now, at the end of my mandate, I am convinced that BiH is becoming a modern, democratic state with many tolerance and with its future in Europe," Petritsch said. In a statement for Dnevni Avaz on Tuesday, Petritsch said that this was another opportunity showing how BiH was coming closer to Europe in an accelerated way. "Following the amendments to the Constitutions of the Entities in accordance with the BiH Constitutional Court's decision on the constituency of the peoples, which is a process that was completed only a few days ago, this is another historic moment for BiH. By that, it is recognized as a sovereign state. The admission of BiH into the Council of Europe is also a big triumph of the Alliance for Change," Petritsch said.

BiH Presidency congratulates the admission to the Council of Europe to the BiH citizens

On the occasion of Wednesday's official admission of BiH to the Council of Europe, the BiH Presidency on Tuesday issued a message to the BiH citizens, emphasizing what this admission means for BiH, and indicating the decisiveness of the Presidency to initiate significant reforms and other projects. Congratulating the citizens on BiH's admission to the Council, the Presidency said this act was just the first step on a long path of BiH integration into Europe. BiH will face even more comprehensive and difficult jobs on the creation of a modern and legal ambiance in all fields of life, revival of economy, defining of real social welfare, protection and improvement of human rights. "In the scope of the new possibilities, opened to us by the admission, we will much easier resolve all open issues in the future development of the country," the Presidency said in a message.

The BiH Presidency discusses personnel changes in the diplomatic-consular network, PDHR Hays' letter related to the BiH State Court

According to Oslobođenje, at a session in Sarajevo on Tuesday, the BiH Presidency discussed the information on the personnel changes in the BiH diplomatic-consular network in accordance with the adopted principles of the country's foreign policy. The discussion will be continued at the next session, which is expected to be attended by the BiH Foreign Minister, Zlatko Lagumdžija and his deputies. The Presidency also discussed a letter sent by the Principal Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays, about the creation of the conditions for the start of the BiH Court's operations. Serb member of the Presidency Zivko Radisic told journalists following the session that certain activities in this field had already been done, and that now the procedure in the BiH Parliament had to be completed.

Federation

The BiH Federation House of Representatives supports military service reduction from 12 to six months

The Federation House of Representatives on Tuesday supported the reduction of military service in the entity. The regular military services will thus be reduced from 12 to six months, and the civil service from 24 to nine months. The Federation Government was also authorized to further reduce of the service for the most 45 days. The reduction, proposed by the Bosnian Party (BOSS) representative, Mirnes Ajanovic, was supported by 102 delegates, that means all caucuses, except the Democratic Action Party (SDA). The reduction must be approved by the House of Peoples in order to become valid.

The BiH Federation Government adopts draft restitution law

Oslobođenje and Dnevni Avaz report that, at its latest session in Sarajevo, the BiH Federation Government adopted the draft law on the restitution and delivered it into the parliamentary procedure. The draft foresees that the right to restitution can be exercised both in natural form and through an adequate financial compensation.

Slobodna Dalmacija: HDZ not to take part in the elections?

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Slobodna Dalmacija says that HDZ BiH will most likely determine its position before October elections on the upcoming Friday. Three fractions, so called original HDZ (Bozo Rajic, Pero Markovic, Krunoslav Kordic, Mijo Tokic), then liberal HDZ (Mariofil Ljubic, Bozo Ljubic) and military lobby (people who came with Jelavic), should propose their candidates and solutions that will define position of the party. One fraction advocates for abstinence in the elections, asking in the same time a referendum on the forming of the political autonomy of Croats in BiH, i.e. the third entity. On the other side, other part of the party leadership does not support radical requests, marking them as a failure, not so much because of the circumstances in BiH or reactions of IC, but rather because integrity of people who are advocating radical solutions. All their previous projects ended miserably, says the article. SD adds that the result of Croatian HDZ's Convention will have a large impact on the positioning of HDZ in BiH.

Republika Srpska

Ivanic says constitutional changes not imposed but adopted by RS authorities

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

SRNA news agency quotes RS Prime Minister, Mladen Ivanic, as saying that the RS National Assembly will make a decision on amendments relating to languages in the RS and will most probably abide by its stance that the term "Bosniak language" will be used rather than Bosnian as requested by Bosniaks. "When it comes to proportionate representation in municipalities, this only amounts to a different interpretation of what has been the practice so far," Ivanic told journalists in Banja Luka. According to the RS Prime Minister, compared with the number of amendments, these two changes are technical and unimportant. "The names of languages are a matter of principle, and the RS NA – once it starts discussing a law regulating the use of languages – will abide by its position that we shall not implement imposed solutions, particularly not those which are at odds with our views," Ivanic said. He said that he did not believe that the constitutional amendments were imposed, saying that constitutional changes had been adopted by the RS authorities. "That was our decision. We decided on our own that we would implement constitutional changes and it is counterproductive to be warned by anyone about the need to implement them," Ivanic said.

Mikes comments on constitutional changes in RS

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

SRNA news agency quotes Chairman of the RS NA Constitutional Commission, Miroslav Mikes, as saying last night that the adoption of corrections to the initially adopted constitutional changes did not impair the position and the global concept of the preservation of the RS. Mikes said that all bases of the authority remained in the hands of Serb representatives and that Serbs would also have the majority in voting and decision making process, which preserved the concept of the two-entity BiH and could, by no means, lead to a "unitary" BiH. Mikes pointed out that the international community had taken the constitutional amendments as the peace verification of the RS. The President of the RS Constitutional Commission added that if the signed changes are implemented, there will be no more major pressures on the existence of the RS by any side.

RS Government says Law on PBS is against the BiH Constitution; Dragutin Ilic removed

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Glas Srpski quotes RS Minister for Traffic and Communication, Branko Dokic, as saying that the RS Government informed the BiH Council of Ministers (CoM) that it (RS Government) does not accept the adoption of the Law on Public Broadcasting Service of BiH (PBS). The paper reports that the RS Government concluded that the draft version of the Law on PBS BiH is not in accordance with the BiH Constitution and that someone is trying to get the BiH Parliamentary Assembly involved in the adoption of this law. Commenting on the Law, Dokic said that the Law defines the organization and activities of entities' televisions, while the laws on entities' televisions will only define the issues that are not defined by the Law on PBS of BiH. "The RS Government also finds unacceptable the provision on collection of subscription fee. The Law on PBS of BiH stipulates that laws on entities' televisions define the way in which subscription fee will be collected, while the House of Representatives of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly defines the amount of the collection fee. The Draft Law on PBS of BiH foresees that the PBS is above the RTRS and the BiH Federation TV, that the PBS is allowed to sell commercial program to the RTRS and BiH Federation TV, while these two TV stations would not be allowed to sell their commercial program to the PBS", Dokic said. The RS Government decided that objections, raised by Bosniak members of the RS National Assembly Constitutional Commission to the Law on RTRS and the RS Law on civil aviation, have no grounds and rejected the objections. (Please note that the article does not say what the objections are.) The RS Government decided to

remove General Manager of the RS Health Insurance Fund, Dragutin Ilic, from his current position. The paper also reports RS Minister of Health offered his resignation due to a very bad situation the RS health care system is currently in. The paper quotes General Manager of the RS Health Insurance Fund and the SPRS top official, Dragutin Ilic, as saying that he heard about his removal from the media and therefore he cannot comment on it.

RS Prime Minister's advisor for cooperation with ICTY says the RS Government is waiting for a response from the ICTY

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Glas Srpski quotes RS Prime Minister's Advisor for cooperation with the ICTY, Sinisa Djordjevic, as saying that it is a pity for the ICTY Prosecutor's Office if the ICTY Spokeswoman, Florence Hartman, has started to play the role of the investigator. Commenting on the Hartmann's yesterday's statement that '50 kilograms of material in which only few elements look like evidence is not serious evidence', Djordjevic said that Florence Hartmann is not a lawyer and therefore cannot tell if the material is good or not. Djordjevic also commented on another statement, made by the ICTY Spokeswoman, in which she said that 'pressure cannot be exerted on any democratic country, not to mention a international court': "I did not say that the RS will exert pressure on the ICTY to press charges against former Bosniak leader, Alija Izetbegovic. I only said that, after six months, we have the right to know what will happen with this case". Djordjevic said that Florence Harmann is wrong is she thinks that the ICTY is untouchable, because that approach does not contribute to better cooperation with this court.

International Community

Petritsch gives the opening remarks at a seminar in Leeds Castle in Kent organized by incoming High Representative Paddy Ashdown

On Tuesday, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, gave the opening remarks at a two-day seminar in Leeds Castle in Kent, in the United Kingdom organized by the incoming High Representative Paddy Ashdown. Lord Ashdown had also invited Principal Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays, and the heads of the main international organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to all Sarajevo dailies, the seminar is part of the preparations for a seamless and efficient hand-over. In accordance with the spirit of partnership, Alliance Leader Zlatko Lagumdžija and the Prime Ministers of the Entities, Alija Behmen and Mladen Ivanic, are invited to the second part of the seminar on Wednesday. "I spoke about my experience in BiH in the past three years and lessons learnt, which may be used by Ashdown in order to take an optimal stand at the very beginning of his mandate. I encouraged him to talk with my partners in BiH, with members of the Cabinet. We discussed all current issues and problems, which he will continue to work on following the May 27 handover," Petritsch told Dnevni Avaz. Speaking about the details of the meeting with the Cabinet members, Petritsch said that particular attention had been paid to the reform of judiciary in BiH. Petritsch expressed his satisfaction with the fact Lagundžija, Behmen and Ivanic would join the members of the Cabinet on Wednesday. "This is very important since it represents the continuation of the partnership relations with the local authorities," he emphasized.

Blair meets with Ashdown, members of the High Representative's cabinet

Dnevni Avaz learns from the Office of the incoming High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, that, on Tuesday in London, Ashdown met with the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair. The meeting lasted 50 minutes, out of which Ashdown and Blair spent 25 minutes in one-on-one talks, while the rest of the meeting was also attended by the members of the High Representative Cabinet, including the Principal Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays,

the Head of the UN Mission in BiH, Jacques Paul Klein, SFOR Commander John Sylvester and other top international officials in BiH. The officials discussed the post-war changes in BiH. Ashdown told Blair that BiH deserved recognition for the positive results achieved during the period, but that this did not mean it had already been established as a normal state, meaning that it had to accelerate reforms. In the second part of the meeting involving the Cabinet members, Blair was informed about the European Union's activities in the country, particularly those related to the reform and reconstruction of the police. Blair wished Ashdown good luck and much success in the new duty. Ashdown expressed his hope that, in the future, the BiH politicians would be more turned towards the improvement of the lives of the citizens rather than to their own good.

PLIP agencies join in condemning the politically motivated attempts to postpone legal evictions

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, OSCE Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Robert Beecroft, UNHCR Chief of Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Werner Blatter, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, Jacques Paul Klein, and Executive Officer of the Commission for Real Property Claims of Displaced Persons and Refugees, Steven Segal, join in condemning the politically motivated attempts of war veterans and of similar groups to postpone legal evictions, which is undermining the rule of law throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to Dnevni Avaz, Oslobođenje and news agencies. "Numerous political pressure groups, particularly war veterans and certain displaced persons associations, are violating the property laws by demanding to remain illegally in homes belonging to others, to be given free land and to be built apartments. In fact, many of these persons have already repossessed their own pre-war homes or had them reconstructed with international funds. Nevertheless, many public officials give into these demands or, worse, actively encourage them. When their demands are not met, these groups threaten and physically attack housing officials, who are trying to carry out their legal duties. Public officials throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina have failed to not only condemn these outrages, but also to prosecute the perpetrators. Property law implementation is a crucial test of Bosnia and Herzegovina's ability to uphold the Rule of Law," the OSCE spokesperson, Urdur Gunnarsdottir, told a press conference in Sarajevo on Tuesday.

Construction banned on 65 plots in Kotorsko

Oslobođenje report that, on Tuesday, the Office of the High Representative delivered to the Doboj Municipal Assembly a decision banning the construction of houses at 65 parcels in the village of Kotorsko, until the ownership over the land is determined, an unnamed local official told ONASA.

Reuters: Six Serb suspects ready to face U.N. tribunal

Six Serbian war crimes suspects, including two senior allies of ousted leader Slobodan Milosevic, will give themselves up to the United Nations court in The Hague, the Yugoslav government announced on Tuesday. Their surrender will mark the biggest catch of Serbian indictees for the war crimes tribunal since Milosevic was forcibly extradited in June 2001 to the Dutch-based court, which has often chided Belgrade for lack of cooperation. "It would be significant and from our point of view very welcome," U.N. deputy war crimes prosecutor Graham Blewitt said. It was not immediately clear, however, whether the move would be enough for the United States to unblock around \$40 million in sorely needed aid that was frozen when Belgrade missed a March 31 deadline to ship suspects to the tribunal. "These people are definitely the most important indictees who are believed to be on Yugoslav territory and their surrender should be seen as proof of Yugoslavia's full cooperation with The Hague tribunal," Interior Minister Zoran Zivkovic said. Still at large, however, are two of the world's most wanted men — wartime Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and his military commander Ratko Mladic. Both Banja Luka dailies carries a press release, issued by the FRY Government Press Bureau, which confirms that six persons, indicted for war crimes by the ICTY, decided to voluntarily turn themselves in to the ICTY. These six persons are: Dragoljub Ojdanic, Nikola Sainovic, Milan Martic, Mile Mrksic, Vladimir Kovacevic and Momcilo Gruban. "They are obliged to show up before the ICTY within the agreed deadline, after which the FRY Government will give guarantees for them to be temporarily released. If they fail to show up within the agreed deadline, the FRY law on cooperation with the ICTY will be applied", states the press release.

Belgrade-based weekly magazine published Karadzic's letter to Cavoski

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Glas Srpski carries excerpts from the letter that former RS president, Radovan Karadzic, sent to the head of the International Committee for truth about Radovan Karadzic, Kosta Cavoski. The letter was originally published in the Belgrade-based weekly "Nedeljni telegraf" and Glas srpski only carries the highlights. In the letter, Karadzic said that persons, indicted for war crimes by the ICTY, should not respond to the FRY Government's appeal to surrender to the ICTY, and added that the ICTY was established in an illegal way and that the Western world will be ashamed of it. Karadzic also protested at SFOR General John Sylvester's decision to blackmail and threaten the Karadzic's friends and family members. "The family of the Al-Qaeda leader has never been threatened and that is fine, but my friends and family members have been threatened despite the fact that I have never been an enemy of the country where John Sylvester comes from", Karadzic states in the latter. Commenting on the ICTY, the former RS president said that any Serb can be taken to the ICTY regardless of his responsibility and guilt. "The ICTY was not only set up in an illegal way. It will also become something that the decent part of the Western world will be ashamed of. I would like to ask General Sylvester what kind of court that is, and this particularly pertains to the ICTY Prosecutor's Office, given that it first arrests and then starts collecting evidence", Karadzic said. He accused SFOR and General Sylvester of violating his mandate and told him it would be better the two of them never meet.

Editorial

Vecernji List: Six official languages in BiH

Written by Frano Vukoja

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

The editorial says that none has anything against the fact that everybody can name one's language the way he wants, however, opponents of the theory to name the language of Bosniaks the Bosnian language argument their stand by the fact that Bosnia belongs to Croats and Serbs, as much as it belongs to the Bosniaks. They say that it is incorrect from the Bosniaks to name their language after Bosnia. Vukoja says that in his opinion the Charter on Bosnian language is a response to a categorical refusing of the RS Authority to incorporate the Bosnian language as one of three official languages in the RS. According to the HR decisions, official languages of the RS are the language of Serb people, language of Croat people and language of Bosniak people. Vukoja says that in spite of this fact, the Sarajevo media published that the Bosnian language was proclaimed to be an official language in the Serb entity. Official languages in the BiH Federation are Croatian, Bosnian and Serb, while in the RS it is the language of the Croat, Serb and Bosniak peoples, and thus it can be concluded that there are 6 official languages in BiH, that is, their official names. Vukoja also says that the Serbs and Croats are afraid that in future the Bosnian language, that is, the language of Bosniaks, might impose itself as the standard language in the BiH Federation and BiH. Vukoja concludes that the language vicious circle in BiH continues as well as the struggle for the preservation of the Croatian language as the most valuable symbol of the Croat national identity in BiH.

Headlines

Oslobodjenje

- The BiH Federation House of Representatives: Six-month military service

Dnevni Avaz

- BiH today officially becomes a full Council of Europe member: triumph of the Alliance

Jutarnje Novine

- BiH today enrolls in the land register of Europe

Dnevni List

- Zlatko Lagumdžija directly from Strassbourg: Today in Strassbourg BiH gets birth certificate
- Terrorists from Pogorelica camp in BiH were preparing: Assassination on Muhamed Filipovic and Fikret Abdic
- Stjepan Kljujic, President of Republican Party: Current Authority is wiretapping my phone

Vecernji List

- From today: BiH flag among European flags
- Political-linguistic vicious circle: Six official languages in BiH
- Tomislav Limov, Police Deputy Minister: Explosions have political background

Glas Srpski

- Belgrade-based weekly magazine carries Karadzic's letter to Cavoski;
- Belgrade: Six persons to voluntarily turn themselves in to the ICTY;

Nezavisne Novine

- Disgruntled Tuzla workers held protest rally in front of the Tuzla Canton Parliament – Workers dispersed MPs;
- BiH is becoming permanent member of the Council of Europe today;