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BiH State-related Issues

Petritsch, Beecroft, Zubak adopt Document titled Human Rights Priorities 2002

At a session on Tuesday, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, the head of the OSCE mission in BiH, Robert Beecroft, and the BiH Refugee Minister, Kresimir Zubak, reviewed and signed the document titled "Human Rights in BiH – Priorities for 2002", which was drafted by the Coordination Center for Human Rights. (Oslobodjenje and electronic media report on this item). Click here to see the OHR press release.

Constitutional Reform

High Representative will wait for the amendments until Thursday

After his meeting with the chairman of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Rafael Estrella, on Tuesday, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, stressed that he wants to see amendments and changes to the entity constitutions authorized by Thursday. "I want to see the authorized copy of amendments in my office on Thursday," said Petritsch, adding that this will be a test for BiH politicians, and in particular, for opposition parties, SDA and HDZ. Petritsch also warned that voting against amendments is tantamount to voting for discrimination, further division, preservation of the status quo and social and economic paralysis in BiH. "This is obviously what the SDA and HDZ want to do," Petritsch stressed, Oslobodjenje reports.

Chairman Estrella supported the view of High Representative that the constitutional amendments must be adopted by April 18. “The adoption of the amendments presents the key symbol of political will and determination to take over the responsibility for BiH’s future. Unless the olitical parties, that is entities, adopt the amendments by April 18, all achievement, such as BiH’s accession to Council of Europe, will no longer be considered as progress,” Estrella said after a meeting with Petritsch.

OHR urges the parties to adopt constitutional changes in line with Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement

OHR also urged political parties in BiH to adopt constitutional changes in the entities in line with the so-called Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement by Thursday afternoon, so as to leave enough time for the BiH Election Commission to announce the elections. At a press conference in Sarajevo, OHR senior spokesperson Alexandra Stiglmayer stressed that parties that have signed the Agreement have shown a “vision, statesmanship and responsibility for the future of this country.” “We expect that on Thursday, each party that shares these views, which wants to build a functioning Bosnia and Herzegovina, which wants to take the country into Europe, will vote for amendments in which the Agreement is incorporated,” Stiglmayer said. She added that the way in which votes will be taken will determine who the International Community will consider a partner in the future. “Parties who vote negatively will thereby endorse the status quo under which Bosniaks and Croats are discriminated against in the constitution of the RS, and Serbs are discriminated against in the constitution of the Federation. They will have said yes to this set up, “ Stiglmayer said, adding that parties which reject the Agreement are national and nationalist parties which by nature are not interested in normalizing the situation. “Seven years after the war, both entities are becoming multi-ethnic, which cannot but help BiH’s integration in Europe and growing

harmonization with European standards. Everybody who advocates a multi-ethnic BiH should support this," Stiglmayer stressed. News agencies, dailies and Federation TV carried the report from the press conference.

US Ambassador to BiH: Attitude of the International Community will depend on behavior of BiH authorities on constitutional changes

US Ambassador in BiH, Clifford Bond, said on Tuesday that the attitude of the International Community in BiH in the future will depend on the behavior of political parties in BiH with respect to the constitutional changes in the entities. In a telephone interview with ONASA news agency, Bond noted that some parties underestimate the readiness and decisiveness of the International Community with regard to the implementation of the Constitutional Court decision on constituent status of all peoples in BiH. He added that he, and the rest of the International Community, will closely watch the behavior of political parties in BiH in the coming days. "I think that we will, from this, draw conclusions as to which parties we can constructively work with in the future," said Bond, adding that this is not a threat, but a practical advice. He also stressed that the International Community expect local authorities to agree on constitutional changes in the entities, but if they fail, "the IC must take responsibility for it." Bond, however, refused to say whether the High Representative will impose solutions. ONASA interview was carried in full by most media, print and electronic, in the Federation.

Javier Solana urges political leaders to be progressive and adopt constitutional changes in the entities

After his meeting with the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, the EU High Representative for Common and Security Policy, Javier Solana, urged political leaders in BiH to

demonstrate that they are progressive and European-oriented and adopt constitutional amendments which reflect the Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement. “We want you to come as close a possible to the EU, however, in order to achieve this, this country must move forward. Party leaders and members of the parliaments will have a chance in the coming hours to demonstrate this by voting on constitutional changes,” said Solana. He also commended the High Representative for all his efforts and in particular his role in brokering the Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement. “The right direction for BiH is the one suggested by the Wolfgang Petritsch – a multiethnic country with functional government,” said Solana, urging political leaders to support amendments spelled out in the Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement.

The High Representative stressed that things are now in hands of the SDA and HDZ. “They can get serious about this and vote in favor of the amendments which mean so much for BiH,” said Petritsch. ONASA news agency carries a report on this item.

ICG calls the High Representative to impose constitutional changes if entity parliaments fail to agree

The International Crisis Group (ICG) called on Tuesday the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, to impose constitutional solutions in the entities if the RS National Assembly and the Federation Parliament fail to adopt the proposed constitutional changes in line with the so-called Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement. “The High Representative in Bosnia, and the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) to which he is accountable, should not allow themselves to be deterred by Serb and Croat extremists into accepting half-baked or unjust amendments. If the two entities fail to provide equal protection for their ‘constituent peoples’, the High Representative should exercise his authority to impose a solution. Without international insistence on these changes, Bosnia will remain a dysfunctional and resentful Western

dependency," ICG stressed. (News agencies carry the ICG press release) Also, for the new ICG report on the Implementation of the CC decision on constituent peoples, visit the ICG web page at http://www.intl-crisis-group.org/

Paddy Ashdown congratulates Petritsch on Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement

In a private letter, the future High Representative in BiH, Paddy Ashdown, commended the efforts of Wolfgang Petritsch, who he will succeed by the end of May, in brokering the so-called Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement." This is your personal success, which is, I know now, a result of an exceptional personal courage and determination. This simply could not have happened without you," Ashdown is quoted by Dnevni Avaz.

Sarovic and Cavic with Contact Group Ambassadors

Both Banja Luka dailies report on yesterday's meeting between the RS President, Mirko Sarovic, and the RS Vice President, Dragan Cavic, with the Contact Group Ambassadors. The UK Ambassador to BiH, Ian Cliff, stated after the meeting that the agreement reached by the leading RS and Federation parties on 27th March in Sarajevo has to be implemented. Glas srpski quotes Cliff as saying that significant progress with regards to the constitutional changes has been made in the RS and what is left has to be completed by 18th April. "We have not come here to negotiate, nor are we a party in negotiations, as this is about constitutional changes in the RS. If BiH sees its future in Europe, and that is something we want as well, the reached agreement will meet European standards. Our role is to ensure that what is agreed is implemented. We have also told the parties in the Federation that, including those which refused to sign the Agreement reached on March 27, that it (the Agreement) must be implemented in full." RS President, Mirko Sarovic, said after the meeting that the RS made a great step in changing the RS Constitution according to the ruling of the BiH Constitutional Court and that only an additional,

small step was necessary to complete the job.

RS Vice President, Dragan Cavic, sends open letter to High Representative

Glas srpski reports, on its cover page that the RS Vice President, Dragan Cavic, addressed an open letter to the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, in which he warned that the proposed amendments to the BiH Federation Constitution are unacceptable and that the adoption of those amendment would prevent the implementation of the Sarajevo Agreement: “If such amendments are passed in any way – either by adoption or imposition, there would be serious doubts about the balance of the constitutional changes in RS and the Federation, which might cause a political and institutional crisis in BiH.” According to Cavic, after the adoption of the proposed amendments, the Federation Constitution would “keep discriminatory provisions in the authorities left to the Cantons.”

Branko Morait, member of RS Constitutional Commission: technical issues disputable

A member of the RS Constitutional Commission, Branko Morait, stated for Nezavisne novine that, at the meeting of the RS Constitutional Commission members with the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, held on Monday in Sarajevo, two sets of issues about the amendments adopted by the RS National Assembly, were raised. According to Morait, on set is comprised of the technical and legal issues and the other is political. Morait explained: “Technical and legal issues can be corrected, but it is more difficult with political issues related to the political decisions, such as the issue of language or the mandate of the delegates.”

SNS: Constitutional changes completed

The Serb People’s Alliance (SNS) sees the constitutional changes completed due to the fact that they were already

adopted by the RS National Assembly, said SNS's Vinko Lolic, at a press conference held in Banja Luka. Glas srpski quotes Lolic as saying that RS leaders, Dragan Kalinic and Mladen Ivanic should be asked which amendments need additional discussion, upon the request of the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch.

DNS: No changes – RS NA did its job

The Vice President of the Democratic People's Alliance, Jovan Mitrovic, stated at a press conference yesterday thathe expected the item referring to the harmonization of RS amendments with the Sarajevo Agreement to be imposed on the agenda of the upcoming session of the RS National Assembly. Glas srpski quotes Mitrovic as saying that the position of his party on constitutional changes was absolutely clear: "The decision (amendments to the RS Constitution) adopted by the RS National Assembly should not be changed, as the adopted amendments guarantee equality of all three peoples in the RS." He also warned that if the harmonization should take place, DNS delegates in the RS NA would leave the session in a sign of protest, as they "no longer want to participate in a farce organized by the officials of the current authorities."

Ivan Madunic, HDZ MP in House of Representative in Federation Parliament: We will propose borders of Croat Republic in BiH on Friday (Provided by OHR Mostar)

Dnevni List announces a session of the House of Representatives of the Federation Parliament for Friday which is to discuss amendments to the Federation Constitution and quotes Ivan Madunic, an HDZ MP in the said chamber, as saying that the Alliance would probably manage to acquire enough votes (71) for the proposed constitutional changes to be adopted. When asked as to what the HDZ is going to propose, Madunic said that the party would propose amendments which are far more progressive and democratic than the Federation

government-proposed amendments. He stressed that the party will request parity, rotation and consensus for issues pertaining to the Federation President and two Vice Presidents and the Federation Prime Minister. Furthermore, it will propose that the Federation President and Prime Minister be confirmed by both Federation Parliament's chambers, that there are three national caucuses in the House of Peoples and that there is a House of Peoples in the RS instead of the Council of Peoples.

When asked as to how those proposals would define national interest, Madunic said that the vital national interests should not be precisely defined because this is a category that changes. "Today, it is education, tomorrow it is highways, in two days it will be healthcare, in two years it could be something else", said Madunic, adding the HDZ would propose that each caucus in the House of Peoples could define a vital national interest with a simple majority.

Commenting on the next steps to be taken by the HDZ if the amendments are adopted, Madunic said that parties gathered around the HNS (Croat National Assembly) would not sit in the Parliament when the farce on constitutional changes takes place. He said that their requests would go in direction of finding a solution for the future of BiH and added that a pre-requisite for this is a "space where one people could be sovereign, as is the RS for the Serbs, as it has been proposed that the Federation be the sovereign space for the Bosniaks." "Similarly, the Croats have a right to request a space for themselves." Madunic reiterated his previous stance on cantonization of BiH i.e. BiH without entities and on BiH with entities. "In the second instance, there should be three instead of two entities. "That's our option and we will not give it up", said Madunic.

Vecernji List: Key is in HDZ and SDA hands

(provided by OHR Mostar)

Vecernji List notes that, in order to adopt the proposed constitutional amendments, 93 of 140 deputies in the BiH Parliament would have to vote in favor. The Alliance has only 71 votes, which means that it would "just make it" if it 'only' wins support of the HDZ or the SDA.

Although Sulejman Tihic, the SDA President, has stressed in public a few times that his party will not give support to the amendments, he 'softened' his attitude yesterday and stated 'that if there were no satisfactory amendments to the RS Constitution, SDA will not vote for the amendments to the Federation Constitution', and this is a great change compared with the fact that, so far, he has been resolutely refusing the Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement. Also, an easy attitude of Zlatko Lagumdzija, who does not doubt at all that he will get two-thirds majority in the Parliament, also substantiates the thesis that it has been counted on the SDA support. Mirnes Ajanovic, the leader of BOSS, stated that he is afraid that they (SDA) show their duplicity again and added that he would not be surprised if they support such amendments. Ajanovic said that they will not vote for the Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement, which supports apartheid, segregation and genocide and which does not give a minimum of equality and symmetry. Stjepan Kljujic from the Republican Party stressed that they have not decided yet as to how their representative will behave. HDZ has already stated rather clearly that it will not vote. The article says that SDA might play a crucial role in a way that they let their representatives to choose by themselves as to how they will behave during the voting. Barisa Colak, a Vice President of HDZ, says: 'SDA might succumb if, at least, minimal changes to the RS Constitution take place. However, the difference between our and their displeasure is in basic principles of these amendments. Namely, SDA wants the Bosniaks in the Federation to have the same position that Serbs have in the RS, and basically they

might adopt these amendments, which honestly are the most damaging for the Croats. For this reason, I am certain that none from HDZ will vote for it in the Parliament.'

International Community

Dutch government resigns over Srebrenica report

Dutch government offered a collective resignation on Monday less than a week after the Dutch Institute for War Documentation released a report holding senior country's officials responsible for failing to protect Bosniak civilians in the UN "safe zone" of Srebrenica, which was overran by Bosnian Serb forces in 1995. The fall of the Dutch government was preceded by the resignation of Jan Pronk, the Minister for Development and Humanitarian Aid, and Frank de Grave, the Defense Minister, both of whom said that the resignation is the only proper and moral act at this time. Media note that, despite the fact that the fall of the Dutch government will not cause any major political or operational crisis in the country (Netherlands is awaiting elections next month), the collective resignation has a significant moral value.

In a statement for the press, the BiH Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that this resignation represents a "moral and internal Dutch question". "Willingness of authorities and public to face the facts and investigate the flaws by Dutch troops and command structures in defense of the UN safe zone of Srebrenica could be a inspiration for revealing the role of the International Community in BiH in the period 1992-95," said the Ministry in a statement, adding that both local and international authorities must do all in their power to show responsibility for Srebrenica massacre. (All media reported on this issue)

Carla Del Ponte to visit Sarajevo

BiH Radio 1 reported this morning that the Chief ICTY Prosecutor, Carla Del Ponte, will arrive in Sarajevo today to meet with the BiH Foreign Minister, Zlatko Lagumdzija, and the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch. Del Ponte is visiting the BiH capital as a part of her tour of the region, during which she will also travel to Belgrade and Pristina.

EU security chief, Solana, visiting BiH

EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, arrived in Sarajevo on Tuesday as a part of his two day trip to BiH and Kosovo. During his stay in the BiH capital today, Solana will meet with the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in BiH, Jacques Paul Klein, to discuss the hand-over of the police mission in BiH from IPTF to EU.

Javier Solana: BiH is a candidate for membership in the EU

The EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, said that BiH is very important for the European Union, which has put a great deal of effort of steering BiH in direction of stabilization, progress and integration in Europe. “We have started the process of stabilization and association which paves the way for closer relations with the EU, and we stressed that BiH is a potential candidate for membership in the EU,” Solana said n an interview with Dnevni Avaz. He also urged entity leaders to adopt constitutional changes in line with the Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement by Thursday, April 18.

Council of Europe, OHR and OSCE: No need for the immediate creation of institution of the BiH Human Rights Ombudsman

In a joint statement for the press, the Council of Europe, the

OHR, and the OSCE noted that there is no need for unification of Entity and State Ombudsman but reiterate that the International Community remains committed to their eventual merger. Electronic media in the Federation carry the joint press release.

Headlines

Oslobodjenje

- Dutch government resigns over Srebrenica report
- Alispahic, Mujezinovic and Ljevakovic trained future terrorists

Dnevni Avaz

- Will Alispahic, Ljevakovic and Mujezinovic be arrested?
- Ashdown praises Petritsch for brokering Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement

Jutarnje Novine

- Dutch government resigns over Srebrenica

Glas srpski

- Dragan Cavic's letter to High Representative: Fuss about RS and the Cantons…..
- Pale: Helicopters fly during night

Nezavisne novine

- BiH Council of Ministers and RS Government boycott the ceremony: the bridge in Samac opened
- After pressing criminal charges against former officials of MUP and AID: Supreme Court of BiH Federation to decide about detention of Alispahic, Ljevakovic and Mujezinovic