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Constitutional Reform

Federation House of Peoples adopts, House of Representatives fails to pass constitutional amendments

At a session held on Thursday, deputies in the Federation Parliament's House of Peoples adopted the Federation government-proposed constitutional amendments, which, according to the government, are also in line with the Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement. The 25 amendments were adopted by majority vote in the Bosniak and Croat caucuses in this chamber. All Croat deputies and representatives of "Others" voted in favor of the proposed amendments, while SDA members in the Bosniak caucus abstained.

The situation was, securing a simple majority, different in the Federation Parliament's House of Representatives, where not a single proposed amendment won the necessary two thirds of the vote. While Alliance parties voted in favor of the proposed amendments, SDA deputies, once again, abstained. Representatives of the HDZ walked out of the session before the voting took place but after they read the HDZ Declaration calling for a referendum at which the BiH citizens could state their opinion on the proposed amendments.

Most Federation media conclude that the High Representative will most likely impose the decision on constitutional amendments in the entities. (All media in BiH carry reports on the two sessions)

FTV Dileme on Constitutional Changes

Please find attached a comprehensive summary of the last night's Federation TV show Dileme, where senior officials of the leading parties in the Federation discussed the implementation of the Constitutional Court's decision on the constituent status of all peoples in BiH and commented on the voting which took place earlier in the day in the Federation

Parliament. The [summary](#) was provided by ONASA news agency.

SDA calls upon the High Representative to impose solution in the RS which is in line with the amendments drafted by the RS Constitutional Commission

In a statement for the press issued this morning, the SDA called the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, to impose amendments to the RS Constitution in line with the amendments drafted by the RS Constitutional Commission. In addition, the party explained that it believed that the Federation government-proposed amendments to the Federation Constitution were fully in line with the Constitutional Court's decision on constituent peoples in BiH, however, stressing that its deputies in the House of Representatives could not vote for them on Thursday, as this would "result in the legalization of existing conditions in the RS." Click [here for the full SDA press release](#) .

High Representative reduces Election Announcement Period

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, on Thursday issued a decision amending the BiH Election Law whereby the statutory time period for notification to be sent by the BiH Election Commission to all competent authorities is reduced from 170 days to 169 days prior to the holding of an election. This decision applies only to October 2002 Elections.

The president of the BiH Election Commission, Lidiya Korac, held a press conference late last night, informing the public that the announcement of elections, which was originally scheduled for April 18, will be postponed until tomorrow (today – April 19). AFP notes that the deadline was moved so the High Representative could "buy additional time" to persuade political leaders in BiH to make a homegrown decision on constitutional changes, instead of imposing the solution.

All media carry the [OHR press release](#) and BiH Elections Commission press conference.

RS National Assembly fails to discuss constitutional amendments

Although it was expected that the deputies in the RS National Assembly would discuss constitutional amendments at a session held last night, the discussion did not take place as the item referring to the harmonization of RS National Assembly-adopted constitutional amendments with the Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement was not included in the agenda. The speaker, Dragan Kalinic, scheduled the continuation of the session for Friday morning, when this item should be addressed.

During the last night's session, a DNS (Democratic National Alliance) representative, Jovan Mitrovic, attempted to interrupt the ongoing discussion by asking for a referendum on constitutional issues, however, his calls were effectively ignored by the speaker and all other deputies. (all media in BiH report)

RS leaders say RSNA agreed on the harmonized version of the amendments

In a late last night interview with the RTRS, the RS Prime Minister, Mladen Ivanic, said that the RS National Assembly majority agreed on the harmonized version of the amendments to the RS Constitution and forwarded this new version to the Office of the High Representative for the final approval. "The High Representative will decide as to whether he finds this version acceptable or not and will probably respond to it in the course of the night. I hope that this time there will be no objections," Ivanic said. He also addressed the RS public, saying that the RS demonstrated that it could handle this difficult issue and showed readiness to implement the Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement. He stressed, however, that the new version of amendments secured the structure in RS

institutions which reflects the pre-war state in this area, namely the predominance of the Serb people. RS National Assembly speaker, Dragan Kalinic, also confirmed that the harmonized version of amendments has been sent to the OHR, adding that, as soon as the High Representative makes his decision and puts a stamp of approval onto the amendments, they will be gazetted and will take effect accordingly.

OHR receives harmonized versions of Federation and RS amendments

In a statement for Oslobodjenje and the RTRS, the head of the OHR Press Office, Alexandra Stiglmayer, said that the High Representative has received a cleaned up version of the amendments to the RS Constitution and amendments adopted by the Federation Parliament's House of Peoples. These versions, said Stiglmayer, will now be closely examined, after which the High Representative will make a concrete decision on the matter of the implementation of the Constitutional Court's decision on constituent peoples. Stiglmayer also confirmed that the PIC (Peace Implementation Council) Steering Board ambassadors held two sessions last night and expressed their support for the High Representative's call for the full implementation of the Constitutional Court's decision on constituent statues of peoples in BiH.

OHR spokesman Oleg Milisic made a similar statement late last night on the Federation Television and Sarajevo's Oslobodjenje, Kevin Sullivan for the AFP news agency, while Mario Brkic's statement was quoted in Slobodna Dalmacija and Vecernji List.

OHR: Petritsch disappointed with the behavior of SDA and HDZ, possible sanctions?

The head of the OHR Press Office, Alexandra Stiglmayer, said that the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, is very disappointed with the behavior of the HDZ and the SDA, which

voted in line with their earlier decision not to support the Federation government – proposed amendments to the Federation constitution, during Thursday's session of the Federation Parliament's House of Representatives. In a statement for Oslobodjenje made late last night, Stiglmeier said that by refusing to vote for the said amendments, these two parties have taken over the responsibility for the fact that the entities will retain some discriminatory provisions in their constitutions. "They demonstrated clearly that they are against progress in BiH and the country's moving closer to European integration," she said, adding that the High Representative will closely follow these two parties in the coming days and consider "rigorous measures" against all those who act against the Dayton Peace Agreement. "The High Representative will examine the future behavior of the HDZ and the SDA in the coming period and we are not excluding the possibility of more rigorous measures against those parties, including the penalties in the election process if they violate the Dayton Peace Agreement," Stiglmeier said. She reiterated the positions of the High Representative and the US Ambassador in BiH, Clifford Bond, who warned earlier that the behavior of political parties in the process of adoption of constitutional changes these days will determine the future relationship between the International Community and BiH authorities. "Those who failed this time cannot be partners to the International Community, and this clearly refers to the SDA and the HDZ, if they continue behaving the same way," said Stiglmeier.

Robertson meets with High Representative, urges BiH Parliamentarians to adopt constitutional amendments in line with Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement

(statement issued immediately prior to the start of the session in the Federation Parliament)

During his visit to Sarajevo, the NATO Secretary General, George Robertson, met with the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, and discussed with him the present political situation in BiH, in particular the ongoing constitutional reform in the country. In a joint press conference with Petritsch, Robertson also urged the BiH Parliamentarians to vote on constitutional amendments which are in line with the Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement and the Constitutional Court decision on constituent peoples in BiH. "I have a very clear message for the deputies in both parliaments in BiH – this is your country, this is your choice and you have a chance to take BiH out of its war past and take it to Europe," said Robertson. He also thanked the High Representative on his efforts in stabilizing of the peace in BiH, adding that the history will bear witness that he worked for the benefit of all peoples in BiH.

After the talks, Petritsch reiterated that the BiH is on the verge of adopting a decision which would ensure equality of all citizens on the entire territory of BiH, and added that every politician in this country is aware of this important choice. "The alternative is clear – either the parliamentarians will today contribute to taking another important and dramatic step towards euroatlantic integration, or, by voting against, they will maintain the status quo which is not a desirable option for BiH at this moment," said Petritsch. (all media in the Federation report on the joint press conference, Oslobodjenje and Jutarnje Novine on its front page accompanied by a photo of Robertson and the HR)

British ambassador urges adoption of constitutional changes

(statement made prior to the start of the Parliament and RSNA sessions in the Federation and the RS respectively)

Commenting on the deadline (April 18) for the adoption of constitutional amendments in the entity parliaments set by the

High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, the British ambassador in BiH, Ian Cliff, said that this date is a true historic moment and urged BiH Parliamentarian to adopt constitutional changes in line with the Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement. "Talking about the adoption of political decisions, it is often said with exaggeration that these are historic moments, but I truly believe that today is a historic moment," Cliff said. In an interview with the FENA news agency, Cliff urged political leaders to vote for the amendments which are in line with the Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement and stressed that the parties which decide to vote against the proposed amendments will effectively vote against BiH's Europeanization. "I think that the side which will vote against amendments should take into account that this is a vote against Europe and European standards in BiH, and it should be aware of the consequences stemming from it. I am not threatening with sanctions but I think we in the International Community should act in line with this," Cliff said. [Click here for the full interview.](#)

Republika Srpska

RTRS Law is of the national interest

The draft Law on RTRS was withdrawn from the agenda of the RS National Assembly session, because of the objection of the Bosniak members to the RS Constitutional Commission that it (the law) endangers their vital national interests. Media report that the law has been forwarded to the High Representative for an assessment. According to, Krstan Simic, a Serb member of the RS Constitutional Commission, the draft RTRS Law does not jeopardize Bosniak vital interest. Simic also said that the RS Prime Minister shares his view and supports the law forwarded to the RS National Assembly by the RS Government. Nezavisne Novine quote Simic as saying: "It is up to the High Representative to assess whether Bosniak vital

interests were endangered. Even though they did not say precisely why their vital interests are endangered, I believe that Bosniaks were dissatisfied with the personnel representation." Simic added that the draft law on RTRS cannot be forwarded to the NA procedure before the assessment of the High Representative.

Privatization of disputed apartments

Glas Srpski and Nezavisne Novine report that, after four months, the High Representative lifted the freeze on privatization of some 15 000 apartments in the RS, contracts for which were concluded after 1st April 1992. The decision will be effective immediately after it is publicized in the RS Official Gazette. The Assistant to the RS Minister for Refugees and Displaced Persons, Drago Vuleta, stated that Commissions in charged for revalidation of contracts were established in all municipalities and that they will start working as soon as Petritsch's decision becomes effective. The RS Ministry for Urbanism believes that it would happen within the next seven days. Click [here for the OHR press release.](#)

International Community

NATO ambassadors, Robertson visit BiH

Ambassadors from the 19 NATO nations, led by the alliance's Secretary General George Robertson, arrived in Sarajevo on Thursday for two days of meetings with BiH and international officials. Upon arrival, Robertson reiterated NATO's commitment to the country, but warned the time had come for BiH citizens "to take control of their future." After meeting with the members of BiH Presidency on Thursday afternoon, Robertson said 18,500 SFOR troops in the country might face reduction later this year but added the alliance was "not going away." "NATO will remain in big enough numbers, with sufficient flexibility to be strong enough and robust enough

to make sure that the violence that started and continued in the 1990s does not start again," Robertson said. "Nobody should think that any reduction in numbers would imply any reduction in the effectiveness of the fighting forces who are here to maintain stability and safety for the people," he added. (all Federation media report prominently on Robertson's visit)

Yugoslavia, RS pressed to arrest Karadzic, Mladic

Yugoslavia and the RS came under renewed international pressure on Thursday to arrest the most wanted war crimes suspects in BiH, the Serb wartime leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, charged with genocide and war crimes in BiH. The ICTY chief prosecutor, Carla Del Ponte visited Belgrade yesterday to demand that the Yugoslav government hand over Mladic while a senior US envoy told RS officials in Banja Luka to turn over the wanted men. Del Ponte, who says Mladic is hiding in Belgrade under military protection, discussed the fate of the general with Yugoslav Justice Minister Savo Markovic. She declined to give details of the talks, telling reporters: "Let's have him transferred to The Hague and then we will discuss it."

US ambassador at large for war crimes Pierre-Richard Prosper also stepped up efforts to capture Karadzic and Mladic, saying Washington will work with NATO forces in BiH to arrest them. "The US will work hard in its efforts with NATO to apprehend these individuals," said Prosper after meeting with the members of the BiH Presidency in Sarajevo. He said the United States would continue to offer cash rewards of up to five million dollars for information leading to the arrest of war crimes suspects. The US envoy also warned there could be no progress in the RS as long as war crimes indictees remained at large. "The people of Republika Srpska will continue to suffer as long as there is lack of cooperation" with the UN war crimes tribunal, he said after meeting with the RS leaders in Banja Luka (RS President, Mirko Sarovic, RS NA Speaker,

Dragan Kalinic, and the RS Prime Minister, Mladen Ivanic).
(all media in Federation and the RS carry this report)

PDHR, Donald Hays: Good work of Tax Administration officials in RS

Nezavisne novine reports that the Principal Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays, expressed on Thursday support to the actions undertaken by the RS Tax Administration and assessed that this action was a turning point for the RS. Hays said that RS citizens should support the work of the RS Tax Administration Director, Milica Bisic, who decided to deal with those who refuse to pay taxes. During his two day visit to Banja Luka, the PDHR Hays will meet with the RS tax Administration Director, Milica Bisic, the RS Prime Minister, Mladen Ivanic, the RS Minister for Refugees and Displaced Persons, Mico Micic, the RS Justice Minister, Biljana Maric and the Speaker of the RS National Assembly, Dragan Kalinic.

Editorials

Slobodna Dalmacija: How General Silvester and international officials create a new Bosnian nation- Foreigner + bait = Bosnian

By Petar Milos (provided by OHR Mostar)

Petar Milos comments on the statement given by General John Silvester, the SFOR Commander, saying that he met Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks but he has never met someone who would say that he is a proud Bosnian. Milos says that a total historical illiteracy of the International Community, which is trying to arbitrate in BiH in order to create a Bosnian nation, can be seen from the Silvester's statement. Milos also brings a chronology of events during the last century, and says that in spite of the fact that after the annexing of BiH, Austria also tried to create a Bosnian nation but failed because Serbs felt

like Serbs, Croats like Croats and Muslims could chose nationality, or remain ethnically uncommitted. He says that the war in BiH resulted in the Dayton Peace Agreement by which BiH has been divided and the Great of Serbia aggression was awarded with a state within the state, that is, the RS, which is ethnically cleansed. Milos concludes that the IC has destroyed BiH and says that Sylvester should have been aware of this before he stated his thesis on the creation of the Bosnian nation. Milos also says that it would be difficult to make Herzegovinians to declare themselves as the Bosnians. Milos says that even if we suppose that the Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks wake up some day and feel as the Bosnians it is not clear to him what they should be proud of. Milos wonders whether the General thinks that they should be proud of him and Mr. Petritsch the way they used to be proud of Tito and King Peter.

Headlines

Oslobodjenje

- Federation House of Representatives rejects the amendments
- Robertson and Petritsch: NATO asks for lower military expenditures

Dnevni Avaz

- Petritsch takes additional 24 hours

Jutarnje Novine

- Robertson: It is scandalous that BIH spends 10% of its revenues on its armies

Dnevni List

- Faruk Balijagic, a lawyer: Bakir Alispahic, former Head of AID, was planing my murder
- According to the figures of international organizations: About 1200

evictions were carried out on the territory of Drvar Municipality during the last year

Vecernji List

- Historical session of the BiH Federation and RS Parliaments: Petritsch ordered constitutional changes
- Americans promised help to Carla Del Ponte 'in the final strategy': First step is arrest of Karadzic and Mladic
- Terrorism in Herzegovina: Police on the trace of bombers

Glas srpski

- RS National Assembly: Constitution – not even under any other issue (item of the agenda)
- Privatization of disputed apartments: Up to the Commissions now

Nezavisne Novine

- RS National Assembly and BiH Federation Parliament discussed constitutional changes: Amendments divided delegates
- George Robertson in Sarajevo: BiH is not ready for Partnership for Peace
- US Envoy for war crime issues, Pierre Prosper: Extradition conditions cooperation