BiH Media Round up, 21/2/2002

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Constitutional Reform

Ruling parties' leaders meet in Sarajevo, discuss constitutional changes

Leaders of eight ruling parties in Federation and Republika Srpska met on Wednesday in Sarajevo to discuss, for the third time, the ongoing constitutional changes in the Entities in an attempt to reach a compromise which would be acceptable for all sides. Following the meeting, participants told media that there is about an "80 percent agreement about the ways to protect the vital national interests of peoples and others." Sulejman Tihic, the president of the SDA, said that some issues and concepts (e.g., vital national interest) still need to be defined. "All constituent peoples are left a possibility to claim the vital national interest (clause) on any issue, but this has to be agreed upon by the two-thirds majority," Tihic explained.

SDPs' Zlatko Lagumdzija, NHI's Kresimir Zubak and PDP' Mladen Ivanic also expressed their satisfaction with yesterday's meeting, claiming that the positions of Federation and RS parties on several issues still differ, however, as they said, "these were mere details and nuances," rather then the essence of the problem.

According to Oslobodjenje and the Federation Television, the most contested issue was, once again, the introduction of the House of Peoples in the RS. As RS leaders still strongly object to introduction of a bi-cameral parliament in their Entity, in an attempt to reach a compromise, Federation leaders proposed essential empowering of the House of Peoples on the state level thereby making it responsible for protecting vital national interest in the Entities, as well as in the state.

Although the final agreement on this issue was not reached during yesterday's session, the participant were hopeful that

all outstanding issues will be resolved and agreed upon by Monday, when representatives of eight ruling parties are to meet with the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch. The Wednesday meeting was attended by Zlatko Lagumdzija and Ivo Komsic (SDP), Safet Halilovic (Party for BiH), Sulejman Tihic (SDA) Kesimir Zubak (NHI), Niko Lozancic and Mariofil Ljubic (HDZ), Mladen Ivanic (PDP), Dragan Kalinic (SDS) and Nebojsa Radmanovic (SNSD).

SDP: If RS fails to adopt symmetrical solutions, Federation will not adopt the proposed constitutional amendments

Fena news agency reports that the SDP will insist on the coordinated adoption of constitutional amendments in the two Entities and symmetrical solutions for the protection of vital national interest of constituent peoples. At a press conference in Sarajevo, the vice president of the SDP, Ivo Komsic, stressed that if the RS fails to agree on constitutional changes which would guarantee equal representation of constituent peoples, the Federation will not adopt the proposed constitutional amendments. Komsic added that his party does not want to be accused of creating a multiethnic Federation, while the "RS will continue cherishing ethnic inequality of non-Serb peoples."

RS Constitutional Commission: Proposed amendments to RS Constitution on before National Assembly on March 15

The president of RS National Assembly's Constitutional Commission, Miroslav Mikes, said on Wednesday that the proposed amendments to the RS Constitution might be before the Assembly by March 15 this year, which is in accordance with the deadline set by the High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch. Mikes said that three issues remain disputable: mechanism of protection of vital interests, language and the issue of participation in the authorities.

New roundtable discussion on constitutional changes

A roundtable discussion on the ”Constituent status of peoples and future of Bosnia and Herzegovina” started on Wednesday in Banja Luka as a follow-up to the similar gathering held on February 4 this year in Sarajevo. The roundtable was organized by the German Foundation Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Organizing and Program Committee of the Project ”BiH – possibilities and perspectives of development” and is attended by representatives of the constitutional courts of BiH, the Republika Srpska and Federation, representatives of the Entity constitutional commissions, the international community, political parties and public figures.

Vecernji List: HDZ’s Niko Lozancic: It is pointless to continue with fruitless meetings

(provided by OHR Mostar)

According to analysts, the third meeting of representatives of 8 most influential political parties from BiH, which was held in Sarajevo on Wednesday, might be the last one if it does not bring the stands on the forthcoming constitutional changes closer together. Niko Lozancic, a member of the HDZ Presidency, said that it is, indeed, possible that this would be the last meeting. “Simply, it does not make any sense to continue talks if the parties cannot agree on basic issues,” he insists.

A day after the meeting in Stup, Ilija Simic, the President of HSS BiH, concluded that he does not support the stands on the House of Peoples and its decision-making on all vital issues. Have you reached a Croat agreement in Stup?

First of all, there is an issue of credibility of Mr. Simic and his side. I can tell you that in Stup we have reached a full agreement among all Croat political parties and that HSS supported principles, that were presented afterwards. With

regard to all other things you have to turn to Mr. Simic.

On Tuesday, the Federation Government has determined Amendments to Constitution, which were drafted by Petritsch's Constitutional-Legal Commission. Is there any difference between yours and the proposals of that Commission, but also the proposals coming from the RS?

I have to admit that I have not received that material. So far, the differences were big. The principles that all Croat parties determined at the meeting in Stup and the ones of the Constitutional-Legal Commission differ because by some proposals only cosmetic changes will be made. It is unnecessary to talk about the amendments to the Constitution of the RS. It is unacceptable to have the Federation House of Peoples in which national minorities would be presented as the fourth Caucus of Peoples.

Is, in this way, a camouflaged Bosniak majority being created in that House?

This could be sees in this way. The fact is that this opens the way for manipulation with the fourth people and they want to weaken the meaning of the House of Peoples. The very title of the House of Peoples says that it is not the House of National Minorities. We believe that a legitimate right of legitimate representatives of each constituent people is to judge, at a specific moment, as to what the vital national interest is.

The assumption, that HDZ BiH has a problem because it cannot register itself since Ante Jelavic, an unrecognized HDZ President, who was sanctioned by the HR is the HDZ President, has been circulating in the public?!

I have to disappoint everybody and say that HDZ does not have such problems. I have to direct all those, who believe that we have any kind of problems regarding the regularity of the party's registration, to Law on Political Parties, according

to which HDZ and all other parties are being registered. We should ask them whether there are special laws for the registration of HDZ and for the registration of all other political parties. Singling out of HDZ is an indication that we have a special treatment of the HR.

President Ante Jelavic did not exclude the possibility to abandon political life. Apart from Colak and Merdzo, your name is also being mentioned as the name of a possible Jelavic's successor. Has an inter-party struggle for the winning of votes started?

For me personally, Ante Jelavic is the HDZ President and everything else are speculations. I do not see a single reason for Jelavic's withdrawal from the position of the HDZ President. Also, in my opinion, at this moment, there is no need to speculate about his possible successor, under condition that HDZ has the same status as other political parties. I do not see the reason to impose suitable presidents to HDZ, while on the other hand, none disputes that the persons, suspected of war crimes, present other political parties.

Federation

Slobodna Dalmacija: OHR is already preparing mass removals?

Head of the OHR South, Jean-Pierre Bercot, said at the press conference that the OHR and he personally find the situation in bodies of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton extremely serious, pointing out that he would not give a tacit support to the current *status quo* and "scandalous behaviour of the Cantonal officials". Bercot said that he requested Cantonal Prime Minister (Miroslav Coric) and Deputy PM (Omer Macic) to submit data on number of ministries and people employed in the

ministries and on the pay rolls adding that the information have been submitted but separately. “In other words, the Deputy Prime Minister provided information from the Bosniak element of the Government, and the Prime Minister from the Croat element”, said Bercot assessing that the problematic issue in the HNC is the different basis for calculation of salaries although it was previously agreed that such practice would cease. Stating that the principles of the HNC Government are yet to provide a joint action plan for unification of ministries, Bercot added that he considered it obstruction and that is evident that the Cantonal principles do not live up to their commitments if they cannot provide one single working document. “With such irresponsible behaviour by the Cantonal officials, the process of merging is paralysed, and with the practice of applying differing standards, it is very difficult to expect that the Canton will be able to adopt a truly unified budget”, says Bercot, reminding that the according to the Cantonal Constitution, principles of the Cantonal Government (**NB**: Deputy HR Bercot said Cantonal Governors not Government principles, an obvious mistake by the journalist) could dissolve the Cantonal Assembly if the Assembly does not adopt the budget within ninety days from the beginning of the fiscal year. Bercot also announced concrete actions by the OHR if the irresponsible behaviour of the Cantonal officials continued. Asked whether the OHR attitudes on the HN Cantonal Government are in the line with the SDP’s request on the removal of the HN Cantonal Government and the demand of People’s Party Working for Prosperity on snap elections in the WH Canton, spokeswoman of the OHR Avis Benes stated that OHR does not advocate snap elections with this stand.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Petritsch meets Picula

Slobodna Dalmacija and Vjesnik report on Monday’s meeting between the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, and the Croatia’s Foreign Minister, Tonino Picula, as well as on the controversy caused by the meeting between Croat parties from

BiH and the Croatian Prime Minster, Ivica Racan. Vjesnik also quotes the OHR Mostar spokesperson, Avis Benes, as saying that the OHR generally does not object to such meetings.

" The OHR is of opinion that meetings, such as the recent one in Zagreb between the Croatian PM Ivica Racan and political representatives of BiH Croats, are not detrimental if they are of informative-consultative nature. Beside that, Croatia is a signatory of the DPA", said Benes.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Jozo Krizanovic, Croat member of BiH Presidency: I am lucky not be known in Croatia

Slobodna Dalmacija carries an interview with the Croat member of the BiH Presidency, Jozo Krizanovic, in which he talks about the constitutional changes, overall situation in BiH and Croatia-BiH relations.

In relation to the constitutional changes and the CoCo's Decision, Krizanovic regrets that such changes were not carried out some three to four years ago, adding that people are dealing with less important issues such as revisions of the Dayton Peace Accord, Dayton 2, Dayton 3 etc. With regards to the Dayton-envisioned BiH, Krizanovic says that BiH has an irrational and complex structure, with inefficient bodies and too large of an administration which does not ensure protection of human rights. When questioned whether he had personal contacts with the High Representative in connection to introducing the House of Peoples in the RS, Krizanovic said that he had a meeting with Petritsch but not on his own since he was accompanied by representatives of significant parties from the Federation. He added that he and Beriz Belkic were unanimous in assessment that symmetrical solutions in both entities should be implemented. "We also talked about the House of Peoples and other details, even about some solutions that would make the administration be cheaper through abolishment of entity Presidents and Vice Presidents, Cantonal

Governors and Prime Ministers, some of them are surplus and about number of MPs in the HoR in the Federation Parliament. When questioned to comment on the recent opinion poll conducted among the MPs of the Croatian Parliament when majority of them did not know who was the Croat member of the BiH Presidency, Krizanovic said that it was a lucky situation that BiH was not a topical issue in Croatia and in the world. "It means that we have taken a peaceful road to democracy and building of BiH (…) I would say that it is more down to the Croatian TV not being interested in BiH problems", says Krizanovic.

Republika Srpska

SFOR Bob Stewart: The circle is closing in around Karadzic

The circle around the former RS President Radovan Karadzic is closing in, and he will soon be arrested and extradited to The Hague, where he would be tried for war crimes committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina(BiH)", head of the British SFOR team for arrests of criminals in Bosnia and Herzegovina Bob Stewart told the listeners of the BiH radio, reports Belgrade press Thursday. The spokeswoman of the Hague Tribunal chief prosecutor Florence Hartmann told the BiH radio Wednesday that Radovan Karadzic would soon be arrested. "This does not mean that Karadzic would necessarily be arrested by the British SFOR troops, as announced. He can be arrested by any troops – even by the local authorities", said Hartmann.

Nevertheless, Stewart said that Karadzic would , after all, probably be arrested by the British troops. Karadzic will be tried at The Hague together with former RS President Biljana Plavsic and former Serb member of the BiH Presidency Momcilo Krajisnik, noted Hartmann.

Jacques Paul Klein slams West's failure to arrest Radovan Karadzic

AFP reports that the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, Jacques Paul Klein, slammed the International Community on Wednesday for failing to arrest the wartime Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, perhaps the most wanted war crimes suspect still at large.

"It shows the impotence of the West in the face of evil," Klein told journalists. It is "illogical to talk about international terrorism" while Karadzic remains at large, he added.

Klein warned that Karadzic's freedom hindered the International Community's efforts at achieving reconciliation in BiH. "It makes hardline Serbs resist change … (and) moderate Serbs cautious about engaging with us," Klein said.

International Community

Petritsch ready to testify at The Hague

Although he has not received any official court summons, the High Representative of the IC in BiH, Wolfgang Petrtisch, said he is ready to tesify before the Hague Tribunal if at former Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic's trial, reports Beta news agency. Petritsch also proposed that US and Russian mediators Richard Halbrooke and Boris Majorski be asked to testify at the Hague on the events that preceded the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia. Petritsch said he believes that that the structures of those truly responsible for all these events would be revealed at the trial. He said it was politically clear who bore the responsibility and who issued the orders. Before the Hague Tribunal, said Petritsch, "Milosevic is leading the battle of his life."

Editorials

(provided by OHR Mostar)

Dnevni List: Dual citizenship, pasos and putovnica (NB: Pasos is Bosnian/Bosniak for passport, whilst Putovnica is Croatian for passport)

By **Jurislav Petrovic**

Today's Dnevni List carries an editorial by Jurislav Petrovic in which he writes about the issue of dual citizenship. The author criticizes parties from the Alliance, especially the Liberal Democrats, for their announcements according to which the BiH Croats who have dual citizenship, would have to renounce of one of them. He says that it is much easier to travel around Europe if you are a holder of a Croatian passport, especially if you are a businessman because time is money. If Bosniak parties knew that, they would realize why some Bosniak Ministers travel around the world with a Croatian passport. "In the same time Zlatko Lagumdzija discusses with his Belgrade counterpart about the dual citizenship between BiH and FRY according to which the Bosnian Serbs would be entitled to dual citizenship. It is high time for the Alliance partners to agree on the matter or maybe it is another case of discrimination of the smallest-in-number constituent people", says Petrovic, reads Dnevni List.

Vecernji List: Fear and Democracy

By Ivo Lucic

In this editorial Ivo Lucic comments on the Jacques Paul Klein' statement given to HTV, saying that it is a big problem that BiH has never been a state in its history. Serbs frantically defend the RS and they are afraid of political changes of any kind, and even of any initiative. Bosniaks-

Muslims are in fear of their identity, of the destiny of their religion and culture, and at the same time they are trying to extend their national framework on the whole BiH territory. Croats feel as prisoners of the Federation with the Bosniaks, that they accepted in 1994, with a guarantee of Confederation with the Republic of Croatia.

The fact is that all three peoples in BiH are in fear, and fear is negation of democracy. It is not necessary to attack or threaten with war a nation here in Southeast Europe. It is enough to deny, dispute or bring in question its roots, its history and even its motives. Reactions to General Klein' statement are the best proof for this fact.

Dnevni List – WANTED: Nine dangerous Islamic terrorists

Dnevni List exclusively publishes photos of nine members of the "Egyptian group". Most famous of them is the (in)formal leader Abu Minah, AKA Seror Said. Second on the list is Al Wakil, who is a holder of an identity card number 1556/200 issued in Mostar. Other names are Gemail Husein, Ibrahim Hosni, Mahmud Mitawali, Mohamed Al Nagli, Kaled Barkad, Ahma Jusuf and Asraf Hasan. All of them have been deprived of the BiH citizenship by the Alliance authority but none of them have been arrested and extradited to Egypt despite a request coming from that country. Majority of BiH citizens are asking who has been protecting these internationally recognized terrorists that the American and Egyptian authorities are looking for.

Headlines

Glas srpski

- Former Director of the RS Commodity Reserves Mirko Nozica and Deputy Minister For Foreign Economic Relations Nikola Kragulj Rejected All

Accusation Before Banja Luka Basic Court Yesterday

Nezavisne novine

- Train Tragedy in Egypt – 370 Passengers Died

Oslobodjenje

- Is there illegal tabacco factory in BiH?
- Over 350 people die in train accident in Egypt

Dnevni Avaz

- The joy of Bairam

Jutarnje Novine

- Bairam joy to be shared with family and friends

Dnevni List

- Wanted: Nine dangerous Islamic terrorists
- How does leading Croat party prepares itself for elections: Jelavic leaving presidential position in HDZ in May

Vecernji List

- ICTY sends its opinion on indictments for war crimes to Prosecution in BiH: Sarajevo receives 50 sealed envelopes from The Hague