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BiH State-related Issues

BiH Presidency meets with the Croatian parliamentary delegation

All BiH media report that the BiH Presidency met on Monday in Sarajevo with a Croatian parliamentary delegation headed by Croatian Parliament Speaker Zlatko Tomcic. Tomcic said following the meeting that an idea had been discussed on drafting a general bilateral agreement, which would define all relations between the two countries. “We have correct neighboring relations, but we are not satisfied with a tempo of the implementation of certain agreements and resolution of certain issues, although there are no obstacles to their implementation,” Chairman of the BiH Presidency Jozo Krizanovic said. The Croatian delegation also met the representatives of the BiH Parliament, led by Speaker of the BiH House of Representatives Zeljko Mirjanic and Chairman of the BiH House of Peoples Sejfudin Tokic. After this meeting, Tomcic stated that Croatia did not want to interfere into the BiH internal issues, but that it did want to help Croats in BiH.

Lagumdzija meets with his Swedish counterpart in Stockholm

BiH Council of Ministers Chairman Zlatko Lagmdzija met on Monday in Stockholm with Swedish Prime Minister Goran Person, the BiH Council of Ministers said in a press release. According to Dnevni Avaz and Oslobodjenje, Lagumdzija informed his host about the current political situation in BiH with the particular attention paid to the strategy of the BiH economic development. Person expressed readiness of the Swedish Government to fully support BiH’s economic recovery.

Federation

The BiH Federation Government sends draft rebalance of this year's Budget into the parliamentary procedure

Due to an unexpected Budget income increase, the BiH Federation Government adopted on Monday in Sarajevo the draft Budget rebalance for this year and sent it into the urgent parliamentary procedure. "In this way, we will resolve our biggest problem, the outstanding debts of the ministries," BiH Federation Finance Minister Nikola Grabovac told journalists following the session. He added that the rebalance might ensure payment of another backlog pension by the end of the year.

NHI Presidency says final position on Mostar Aluminum must be made

According to Oslobodjenje, the NHI Presidency discussed at its last session the situation related to the Mostar Aluminum Combine, investigation against Zepce Group and the appointment of the Directors of the two BiH Federation intelligence agencies. The Presidency concluded that the institutions of the international community had to made their final position on the issue of the Mostar Aluminum in order to ensure that the Company may start dealing with its further economic development and creation of new jobs. The Presidency reiterated its earlier position that the investigation and possible trial of the Zepce Group might not be conducted by the Zenica Canton's Court in an impartial manner. The NHI welcomes establishment of a coordination body which will be tasked to work on the unification of the two Federation intelligence services.

Oslobodjenje: Eronet still not returned to HPT Mostar

The General Director of the Mostar-based HPT (Croat Posts and Telecommunications), Stipe Prlic, told Oslobodjenje that the decision of the BiH Federation Privatization Agency on the return of Eronet (a GSM operator) to the HPT made on June 15 this year, had still not been implemented. The newspaper concludes that the issue of the third GSM license will not be resolved as well all until the dispute over Eronet is not settled.

Dnevni List: Reactions to the FTV launch in Posavina

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

People in Bosanska Posavina welcomed the FTV launch with sympathies at first, as they can watch the HRT programs as well, being so close to the border. However, as time goes by, the sympathies are abating and have already turned into bitterness and indifference, says Dnevni List.

Prime-time newscasts carry more news from the RS than from some of the Croat-majority cantons so that people in the Posavina Canton ask whose television that is.

Since the subscription fee for TV BiH, imposed by the International Community, has been paid by as few as 1.5% of the people in Posavina, the most recent surveys show the rate of fee collection will not see any significant changes, says Dnevni List.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Interview with Josip Merdzo, the Prime Minister of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

(…)

On establishing of the Cantonal Government:

Josip Merdzo: “After the elections in November 2000, there was a period during which the Alliance for changes was being formed. After a series of talks, an authority at the Federation level was established and it affected our Canton. Since the HDZ was the victor coming from the Croat electorate, our people for posts in the Government were known, which was not the case with the Bosniak side. When that obstacle was removed, we were supposed to be appointed by the IC at a session of the Cantonal Assembly when I got the news that I was labeled as an ineligible person because of documents on collection of aid for families of The Hague indictees. This consumed another month and a half when the IC decided that I could be appointed to the post.

What is the reason that the Government was not functioning even after the appointment?

Because we did not have the Cantonal Minister of Interior. After that Governor Dziho obstructed the appointment of Ljubo Beslic for the post, asking for the consent from the IC, although that was not the practice before neither is a constitutional category. We lost extra month and a half to get the negative opinion from the IC for Mr. Beslic, which is in my book unjustified. After the Croat side nominated a new candidate, Dziho and the IC realized that the principles were leading nowhere, after which Goran Bilic was practically appointed the Cantonal Minister of Interior, and the approval from the IC is being processed and will come later, so after all this procedures we have pre-requisites to have Government sessions.

(…)

When will the PM and his Deputy and Ministers and respective Deputies be seated in one building?

We talked to the principles of the Federation Government, the PM Behmen and his Deputy Grabovac, about the issue. The Federation Government approved funds for completion of a building which would serve as the seat for the offices of the Cantonal PM and his Deputy and we await the funds. As far as the Ministries are concerned there are still no conditions to have them accommodated together. We are trying, in accordance with obligations, to have the institutions located in the Mostar's Central Zone and we are trying to reach an agreement with the "Gospodarska Banka Mostar" to use the "Staklena Banka" building for accommodation of all Cantonal institutions, even the Mostar institutions. We believe that the Federation Ministry of Finances and Minister Grabovac will assist to find a lasting solution for accommodation of the Cantonal Government.

In the initial communication with the Alliance's Government there were many misunderstandings. Are the relations better **now?**

I can say that there are no substantive developments.

What do you think is the reason behind it?

We addressed the Federation Government on many occasions but what happened was that the Fed. Government granted financial aid to the Bosniak part of the Cantonal Government in April this year. After that we asked that the Croat part of the budget be helped in the same manner but we did not get an answer from them until recently when we received certain promises but until the present day it has been just a promise.

How do you assess the Federation Government's attitude towards the Herzegovina-Neretva canton?

I would say, when it comes to our and other Cantons, that the most debatable issue is the issue of Cantonal Tax Administrations. Under the current establishment they are completely controlled by Sarajevo and we have not been able to

influence their work and hiring policy. Also, the some positions within the Cantonal Tax Administration (CTA) are still vacated and there are calculations within the Alliance as to who gets which position. Recently, Minister Grabovac sent a memo that enables the Cantonal Government to request some data and activities from the Cantonal Tax Administration. It must be said that the Cantonal Governments in the FBiH have no competence over the CTAs neither the CTAs have competence over big tax payers, the role that has been assumed by Sarajevo, in other words by the Federation Government.

At the first session of the Cantonal Government you enacted the joint budget for the first time which is decreased by 18 million when compared to the last year's. Which beneficiaries will be cut off?

The budget is linked to processes that occurred in the last year when the Federation Government unilaterally changed tax rates which affected the filling of the Cantonal budget. The changes meant that the Cantons and Municipalities got less funds. We had to plan the budget which could cope with the filling of it. It must be said that the beneficiaries such as education, police, justice etc. will not be affected by it. On the other hand we will not be able to help certain infrastructures, municipalities like we used to do.

Mostar is the centre of the Canton. Mostar suffered because of the dysfunctional authority and divisions **in it, and different legislation in two parts of the Canton. What will the Government do to remove the aforementioned?**

I do not agree that Mostar suffered that much. It is clear that there are some problems with implementation of some laws. When I say that I mean the Central Zone of Mostar and the obligation of the City Administration to harmonize the Interim Statute of the City to the Law on Local Administration for which deadlines have already been broken. Had it been done, many issues at the City level would have been solved and I

think that the City Administration would have functioned more effectively. But the problems are deeper and some areas that need defining by the laws are divided by the Canton and Federation. Unfortunately, some legislation is passed by Federation authorities without consultations or consent of competent Cantonal institutions. We do not want to give up and stop defining certain areas by Cantonal laws for which we are competent in accordance with the Constitution.

Republika Srpska

Four Bjeljina veteran and refugee associations send a letter of protest to the High Representative

Glas Srpski, on its cover page, reports that four Bjeljina Associations of Families of Killed Soldiers, War Veterans, Refugees and Displaced Persons sent a letter of protest to the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, due to a discriminatory treatment of Serb refugees and displaced persons in BiH. In a joint press release, representatives of these associations stressed that a "policy of double standards has been applying to refugees in BiH for a long time, but it culminated in a last couple of days in certain public statements. According to these statements, Bosniaks and Croats must return to their pre-war homes, while problems of Serb refuge population are being ignored."

Authorities of the entities and Serb deputies in the joint institutions are called on to start working on resolution of problems of this population.

RS Ministers Dokic, Bilic, Lemez, Tadic and Maric

to leave the Government soon?

Nezavisne Novine carries further speculations about the reshuffle in the Republika Srpska Government, according to which the number of Ministries in Mladen Ivanic's Cabinet should be reduced from 20 to 15. The daily writes that Ivanic is dissatisfied with performances of certain Ministers: Minister of Industry Bosko Lemez, Trade Minister Zeljko Tadic, Justice Minister Biljana Maric, Defense Minister Slobodan Bilic and Minister of Traffic and Communications Branko Dokic, who are therefore the most likely candidates to be dismissed in this reshuffle.

International Community

The High Representative meets with top RS leaders in Banja Luka

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, said following his meetings with the top Republika Srpska leaders in Banja Luka on Monday that he was very dissatisfied because the entity did not support work of the common BiH institutions. At the meeting with RS President Mirko Sarovic and Vice-president Dragan Cavic, Petritsch emphasized that there was a list of laws whose adoption was being blocked by the Serb representatives in the BiH Parliament. "Without passage of these laws, the RS citizens cannot expect faster implementation of economic reforms, creation f new jobs and better living standard," Petritsch said. He assessed that the latest return figures presented to him by Sarovic were more positive than before, but that they were still at an unacceptably low level. Speaking on the fight against terrorism, Petritsch said that it included the "struggle against extremism, fundamentalism and intolerance in one's own entity," as well as an "active cooperation with The Hague

Tribunal and bringing Radovan Karadzic before justice." Banja Luka Nezavisne Novine writes that, at a meeting with RS National Assembly Speaker Dragan Kalinic, Petritsch requested him to dismiss several officials from his party (SDS). In the course of the day, Petritsch also met with President of the RS Party of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) Milorad Dodik who presented him with his views about the current situation in the entity. Asked whether the OHR policy towards the RS was being changed, OHR Spokesman Oleg Milisic told Oslobodjenje that nothing was changed in the OHR's position towards the RS. "We have been dissatisfied with SDS' obstructions for a long time," Milisic emphasized. (All BiH electronic and print media, as well as Zagreb Vecernji List covered the HR's visit to Banja Luka as the event of the day emphasizing his criticism towards the SDS but basically avoiding comments).

Ivanic meets with Petritsch

Dnevni Avaz reports that Republika Srpska Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic met with High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch in Banja Luka on Monday, According to a press release from the Ivanic's Office, Petritsch reiterated his dissatisfaction with the SDS policy of obstructions. Ivanic said that the RS Government was prepared to continue carrying out started economic reforms. He emphasized that the Government was expecting a major support of the international community in the process.

Simic says ban of the SDS not likely to produce desirable results

In a short statement with FENA news agency (carried by Dnevni Avaz), Ilija Simic, a deputy speaker of the BiH Parliament's House of Peoples, said he was surprised that the High Representative reacted so late on the Republika Srpska obstructions to the return process. "The politics of the SDS is dominant there and its final aim is the creation of an

ethnically clean Republika Srpska," said Simic. Commenting on the possible ban of the SDS by the High Representative, Simic said that such move was not likely to produce desirable results.

AFP: Envoy urges Bosnia's ethnic communities to fight terrorism

Bosnia's top international envoy Wolfgang Petritsch Monday appealed to Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats to fight against terrorism. "In neither of the two entities…extremism and terrorism must be accepted," Petritsch told journalists in Banja Luka, the capital of the BiH entity of Republika Srpska, which along with the Bosniak-Croat Federation makes up post-war BiH. The fight against terrorism should not be limited to tracking down members of terrorist organizations who might infiltrate the Bosniak-Croat half of the country but should also include cooperation with the UN war crimes tribunal, Petritsch said. Petritsch said Bosnian Serb war-time leader Radovan Karadzic, wanted by the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague and believed to be hiding in RS territory, should be brought to justice. The Federation's authorities were "very aware of the crucial necessity to take decisive action" regarding the arrest of possible terrorists, Petritsch said. "I think they have to a large degree demonstrated the necessary sense of responsibility", he added. During the past few weeks Bosnian authorities and NATO-led peace-keepers arrested a number of people from Islamic countries which disrupted an organization linked to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network. Bosnia came under scrutiny following the September 11 terrorist attacks against the United States, as hundreds of fighters from Islamic countries fought alongside mainly Bosniak government troops during the country's 1992-95 war. Under the Dayton peace agreement which ended the war foreign fighters were due to leave the country, but according to Bosnian authorities 70 stayed on and obtained Bosnian citizenship.

TIME: Five terrorists sheltered in the hills of central Bosnia

According to the Monday's European issue of the US magazine Time, the police forces and SFOR are searching for five more persons suspected of preparing and planning terrorist actions in BiH. "The officials told TIME that the police and SFOR are searching for five more alleged terrorists sheltering in the hills of central Bosnia," the article read. Dnevni Avaz could not get confirmation of this allegation from SFOR.

Dnevni List: Interview: Avis Benes, the Spokesperson for the OHR Mostar

(Full translation provided by OHR Mostar)

Interview conducted by Leo Plockinic

We have talked with Avis Benes, a Spokesperson of the OHR Mostar, about the Federation TV, a small number of Croats in this media outlet and reasons of shutting down of the HRT signal in BiH.

The Federation TV started to work. Is not it a bit indicative that the HRT signal was shut down and that the program, in which the Croat people are not present at all, has been imposed?

It is not correct that the Croat people are not present at all. The HRT signal was not shut down because of the HRT program, but because it is the public media from the other country. All over the world, there is no precedent that the public media from one country broadcasts its program in the other country, through terrestrial transmitters. Thus, the CRA simply cannot issue a broadcasting permit for HRT in BiH, and in a way, the broadcasting of the HRT has been prolonged since the OHR asked the CRA to allow broadcasting of the HRT in BiH until the Federation TV is established. As far as the

Federation TV is concerned, still it is not the way it should look, but we believe that the start of the functioning of the Federation TV is not the end but the beginning of one process, which should be continued with a higher presence of the Croats and Croatian language on the Federation TV.

Only 1% of the Croats work for the Federation TV, and for which reason the OHR does not support a TV or one TV program with a Croat national prefix, if we know that Serbs in the RS have their state TV?

The Serbs in the RS have an entity, and it still makes a difference. I would not comment on this percentage because we do not have such information here. As far as the process of recruiting of cadres for the Federation TV is concerned, we believe that there is a two-faced attitude of a part of the public, because on one side they complain about the lack of the Croatian language program and Croat cadres, while on the other hand nothing is being done in order to participate in the process, that can change this situation. Only Croats can change this situation. The IC can give funds and build a studio in Mostar, and they will do it, in order to strengthen production and enlarge a contribution of this region to the Federation TV. However, the IC cannot be that person, that journalist, who will be making programs in Croatian language. It must be the Croats from BiH.

Why does not the OHR build the TV or the program with the Croat prefix?

The Federation TV is not an ethnic TV, but an entity TV. Within the entity, that is called the BiH Federation, we know that Bosniaks and Croats are constituent peoples, and now, according to the decision on constituency, all three peoples will be constituent. The Croats and Bosniaks make a majority and they should be present the most, that is, their interests and persons from the lines of both peoples.

What does the public say? What do you think whether the Croats support the work of the Federation TV?

I cannot talk in the name of the people, what they want and do not want. I believe that they want a good program that will meet all their interests, and all other differences. I believe that everybody agrees that the HRT program was a program of a high-quality and many people regret that there is no program of that quality anymore. However, now, it is up to the people to secure and be present in the program of the Federation TV. It should be someone's responsibility towards the people, BiH citizens, to get involved as much as possible in the process through which it will possible to fulfill wishes of the people.

Does it mean that the OHR does not support the TV that would have the Croat national prefix?

Such TVs can exist and it is not questionable, however, the OHR is in a part and building of the process, that is not exclusive and that is the public media of the Federation. In terms of building of the public media the OHR does not support any exclusivity.

Do you consider that the best public opinion of the Croats is their

non-responding to the threats that criminal charges will be filed against them if they do not pay a TV subscription fee?

First of all, the charges of the Federation TV could not arrive because it has just started with its work.

These are the charges of the RTV BiH.

No, they say that they are the Federation TV?

In any case we believe that the official Federation TV started to broadcast its program last Saturday, and until that time people might have had certain reasons for dissatisfaction.

Is that a significant indicator?

It is the significant indicator, that has to be fully taken into account. Our information and findings are such that exactly the Federation TV and IC take them into consideration the most seriously.

It is hard to believe that there is a plan “Roman Defense”!

Our paper has published that a secret IC plan called ‘Roman Defense’ exists, whose purpose is merging of two nations within BiH Federation into one. Could you confirm or deny the existence of such a plan?

The OHR is not aware of any plan called ‘Roman Defense’ and it is hard to believe that such a plan, that would merge two nations in BiH, exists and according to our opinion it is absurd. It can be said that it is pure nonsense to think that such kind of the proposal on the merging of nations might have a support of any IC subject in BiH. Finally, it would be contrary to the Constitution, the Dayton Peace Agreement and even to the purpose of the IC presence in BiH, and it is to implement all aforementioned things and secure a permanent stability in BiH. Therefore, there is no stability, a permanent peace, prosperity of all peoples in BiH if there is no respecting of constituency of all peoples, as well as, all rights resulting from that position.

Editorials:

Oslobodjenje and Dnevni Avaz

In the Oslobodjenje In Focus column, Mirko Sagolj commented on the recent statement of SDP leader Zlatko Lagumdzija that “if the Alliance for Changes should be the SDP only, it will be the SDP than.” Sagolj concludes that, according to the current

disputes inside the Alliance, it will at the end be composed only of the SDP members. Oslobodjenje Editor-in-Chief Senka Kurtovic wrote that it was not clear why High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch had decided these days to say that the SDS might disappear from the country's political scene when it knew from the very beginning of his mandate that the party "has taken an extremist position." The Petritsch's statement is, according to Kurtovic, correct but not completely precise. "The SDS has taken the extremist position ever since its establishment," and not in the past days, Kurtovic emphasized. Husein Orahovac commented in the Avaz Commentary of the Day on an initiative to reach a comprehensive bilateral agreement defining relations between BiH and Croatia. Orahovac wonders if such an agreement would bring good to the two countries, having in mind that, firstly, it is almost impossible to properly define all the issues related to the bilateral relations between the states such as BiH and Croatia by only one agreement, and secondly, it could take too long.

Dnevni List: Bypassing Mostar non-diplomatic move!

Written by Ivan Bakovic (Provided by OHR Mostar)

The Delegation of the Croatian Parliament, led by Zlatko Tomicic, pays a three-day visit to BiH. However, this visit has opened some issues related to the attitude of the current Croatian Authority towards the Croat people in BiH. It is indicative that the protocol did not envisage a visit to Mostar, which is, no matter if someone likes it or not, the seat of the political and cultural life of BiH Croats. The Parliament delegation visited BiH responding to the invitation of Chairmen of Parliament Houses, Zeljko Mirjanic and Sejfudin Tokic respectively. It is the same Tokic who led the BiH delegation in the visit paid to the FRY. During the visit Tokic visited Muslims from Kosovo and Sandzak, and when he returned to Sarajevo he stated that a new structure of the Authority takes care of the position of Bosniaks in

Yugoslavia. If it is the custom that all statesmen visit their fellow-countrymen during the visits paid to other countries in which their fellow-countrymen live as a national minority, even if that community has a size of a village, then the fact that the Croatian delegation does not visit Herzegovina, for instance, where their fellow-countrymen are the largest in a number, in the country in which Croats are not the national minority but a sovereign people, can be only judged as, to put it mildly, a precedent in the behavior of representatives of one people in relation to a usual diplomatic practice.

Dnevni List: HDZ is responsible for everything

Written by Marko Tokic (Provided by OHR Mostar)

Making a comment, from the right wing position, on the political reality in BiH, where everything is 'left' in all interpretations of this word, I am getting back to the thesis, according to which Croats cannot have the third entity because in this way Muslims would get it.

Why am I insisting on this story about the third entity if the principle of civic majorities Governments is being promoted, and it is being promoted. If introducing of Houses of Peoples in both entities would not be allowed, and this impossibility is being promoted. The only possibility, that we are left with under such circumstances, is to demand that areas in BiH are organized in a way that in the same number of Federal units constituent peoples can have a major influence in the forming of Governments of civic majorities.

Finally, there is one pattern for BiH. The Alliance does not function, social issues threaten to explode- the HDZ is responsible. Croats within the Alliance are not some important factor- the HDZ is responsible. The OHR ran the project of the Federation TV and in its last phase it excluded the HDZ as a collocutor in a dialogue: there is no either Croatian language or Croat(ian) contents on the Federation TV – the HDZ is

responsible. Mirko Galic calculated the true price- it remains unknown whether the price of the Croats or transmitters.

It is good to know the price: 2, 5 million Kunas in advice. The HDZ is responsible.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Agreement of Croat(ian)s

Written by Stjepan Kljujic (Provided by OHR Mostar)

In his commentary for Slobodna Dalmacija, Stjepan Kljujic says although the relations between Croatia and BiH are getting better, they have not reached the desired level.

The commentary says the delegation from Croatia met with senior officials of BiH and announced meetings with the High Representative and the OSCE, but all these meetings were preceded by a very important one. That was the meeting that the delegation had with Croat political and clerical representatives, organised by the Croatian Ambassador to BiH, Josip Vrbosic, who, according to Kljujic, is the best that Croatia could give to BiH.

The article says the meeting resulted in coming up with two important principles: Croats in BiH are a constituent people and must have the rights equal to those of Bosniaks and Serbs, and Croatia does not have any territorial aspirations to BiH, but even supports the existence of the country and will do its best to support the political forces that see BiH as the homeland of Croats, too.

Kljujic says perhaps the most important message from the meeting was that of Zdravko Tomac, who said the following: “We are aware of the fact that Croatia, on its way to Brussels (EU), goes through Sarajevo. Therefore, if there had been certain dilemmas in the past, Croatia now wants to declare clearly that BiH is our most important neighbor, a friendly country whose future we must support, but primarily as a

democratic country. In this respect, Croatia, within the framework of international institutions, will extend significant support to BiH as a country of three equal peoples.”