



Regional Women's Lobby

*For Peace, Security and Justice
In Southeast Europe*

March 2010 News bulletin

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KARADZIC TRIAL BEGINS

In the opening statement of his trial in The Hague on charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, Karadzic portrayed the Bosnian war as one of self-defense by Serbs against the Muslims intent on dominating Bosnia. Karadzic claimed the Srebrenica massacre is a myth and denied that prisoner of war camps existed. His application to have the trial delayed even further was rejected and the prosecution is expected to begin its case on April 13, 2010.

ASHTON VISITS BALKANS

High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton stated before the European Parliament this month that during her visit to the Western Balkans, she reached a conclusion that the entire region is making progress in European integration and stressed that the Balkans are precisely the place where European foreign policy was born, and that for this very reason failure is unacceptable.

Ashton pointed out that the EU has its biggest civilian mission in Kosovo and that in Bosnia EU work has been adjusted and now focuses on training programs. In the run up to the October elections, the main goal will be enabling the European message to be heard in the campaign.

REGIONAL SUMMIT IN SLOVENIA / UPCOMING EU SUMMIT IN SARAJEVO

The Slovenian and Croatian Prime Ministers, Borut Pahor and Jadranka Kosor, on March 20, 2010 hosted the first ever meeting of regional leaders organized by countries in the region themselves. With the EU regularly stressing the importance of regional cooperation, the organizers were hoping for top EU officials to attend and give symbolic support to the initiative. However, the summit was largely seen as a fiasco due to the boycott of Serbian President Tadic who refused to attend if Kosovo President Sejdiu was present. In the same vein, the chair of the BIH Council of Ministers, Nikola Špirić, left the conference room during a speech by Kosovo PM Hashim Thaci, explaining BIH has not recognized Kosovo. Serbia has warned it will only attend international conferences if Kosovo is represented under its UNMIK heading.

Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Füle deliberately left early from the regional summit frustrated with the lack of attendance by Serbia. Füle was the only EU representative to attend the regional forum. Herman van Rompuy, president of the European Council, had announced that he would attend only if all countries were represented, but this important political message failed to motivate President Tadic.

A second regional meeting for enhancing cooperation in the Western Balkans is due on June 1, 2010, organized by the Spanish Presidency. The main points of discussion of this June summit are: preparing finalization of



membership negotiations with Croatia; opening the accession talks with Macedonia as soon as possible; having the EU Commission prepare in due course its opinion on Albania and Montenegro's applications for EU membership; accelerating the process of granting candidate status to Serbia; enabling Bosnia to progress on its European course and to fulfill conditions for visa-free travel to EU states; supporting Kosovo's economic and socio-political development and its European perspective. Apart from the EU and the Western Balkan states, the US, Russia and Turkey will also be invited to attend part of the meeting.

According to EU officials and diplomats, the political directors of the EU member states will meet in Vienna a few days ahead of the conference to solve the two trickiest points: how Kosovo will figure in the meeting and what message the "Sarajevo declaration" should carry. It is not yet clear how the organizers will deal with the dispute over how to get Belgrade and Pristina to take part in the conference, as well as how the EU's own internal division over Kosovo's independence figures.

NEW GENDER ENTITY PLANS

The General Assembly's recently passed a proposal to create a United Nations body for gender issues. The motion is seen as an historic opportunity to give women a stronger voice in global governance and policymaking. The formation of the single composite body is expected to strengthen accountability in the United Nations system for gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. The composite agency will unite UNIFEM, UN-INSTRAW, DAW and OSAGI. The establishment of the agency is anticipated within the year and further details are expected soon.

UN ESTABLISHES EXPERT GROUP ON 1325

On March 10, 2010, the UN appointed a group of independent experts to advise on ways to better protect women in conflict situations, and to ensure that their voices are heard in peace processes and that they are included in post-conflict reconstruction and governance structures.

The establishment of the group comes as the landmark Security Council resolution 1325 on the role of women in peace and security marks its tenth anniversary in 2010.

Among other things, the group – which will be co-chaired by former Irish President and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, and Executive Director of Femmes Africa Solidarité, Bineta Diop – will be tasked with assessing the impact of resolution 1325 on women in the context of armed

conflict over the past decade.

The group will also help identify time-bound goals and targets, along with measurement and accountability mechanisms to inform and guide the work of a UN High-Level Steering Committee.

Other members of the group are: Salim Ahmed Salim (Tanzania), Elisabeth Rehn (Finland), Lahkdar Brahimi (Algeria), Hina Jilani (Pakistan), Sanam Anderlini (Iran/United Kingdom), Thelma Awori (Liberia/Uganda), Swanee Hunt (United States), Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls (Fiji), Susana Villaran De La Puente (Peru), Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda (Zimbabwe), Zainab Salbi (Iraq/US) and Donald Steinberg (US).



ALBANIA

The parliamentary boycott of the opposition party continued in March and at the end of the month the Socialist Party announced they were planning a series of nation-wide protests and demonstrations in an attempt to compel the government to call for early elections. EU officials have looked on these new developments and the lack of compromise with much dismay. If the deadlock continues, Fule warned that it could prevent Albania from reaching EU candidate status. The only new move in the boycott this month was a one day sitting of parliament attended by all in which a decision was brought to form a commission to investigate the opposition's claims of vote fraud, but NOT a recount of ballots which is what the Socialist's demanded.

The Albanian government has backed away from a change in law that would give more direct control over the secret service to the Prime Minister. The proposal was condemned by NATO and other security partners, as well as by the political opposition.

CROATIA

Painful decisions are expected soon regarding the countries shipbuilding industries as the one of the last remaining EU negotiation chapters, competition policy, must be opened. Restructuring the shipbuilding sector will require some painful decisions that the government has been postponing, fearing the instability it could cause. At the beginning of March Croatia was confronted with large-scale protests by farmers, unhappy because the government failed to pay them promised subsidies. After a week of protests and some violent incidents the government relented and prepared a plan for the gradual payout to farmers. These protests and violence are widely considered an example of what might happen if the shipyards are forced into bankruptcy. This month Slovenia also dropped its blockage of the final negotiation chapter on foreign and security policy. This


move has completely opened Croatia's path to joining the EU in 2012.

In a surprise move Serbian President Tadic flew to Croatia days after the failed summit in Slovenia to meet with his Croatian counterpart in a relaxed informal meeting on the Croatian seacoast. This move was seen as an attempt to warm relations between the two countries and enhance cooperation after the refusal of Tadic to attend the inauguration of Croatian President Josipovic in February. In their discussions the two presidents also stated that there were possible avenues opening up that could lead to the dropping of the genocide lawsuits each country has brought before the Hague court against the other. At a subsequent regional meeting in Brussels, the two Presidents stated that regional cooperation between the two countries on the issues of security and organized crime was very good and that it remained one of the most important issues for the Balkans and security and stability.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

In mid March Bosnian media published a leaked "terrorist list" that was allegedly prepared by the Ministry of Security and forwarded to the UNSC. Of the 44 organizations on the list, one was Zene zenama, a women's NGO that works for interethnic dialogue and cooperation and the building of a peaceful multi ethnic Bosnia.

Zene zenama and its international partners strongly condemned the list and demanded accountability from the ministry and all other government institutions. The government responded that the list was clearly a mistake and that an investigation was underway. The ministry of security promised to investigate the secret services of Bosnia and their role in this affair, which led to a failed attempt the next day by the secret service to link the minister to a human smuggling and sexual



exploitation ring and thus discredit him. A reform of these security institutions is clearly a difficult and politically charged task and it remains to be seen whether Bosnian institutions will succeed in imposing rule of law in this area.

The European Parliament is being asked to voice dissatisfaction over Bosnia's limited progress as a potential candidate country on the path to EU membership through an official resolution. Doris Pack, the European Parliament's rapporteur for Bosnia points to the increasingly strident nationalistic rhetoric in Bosnia, which obstructs inter-ethnic reconciliation and hinders the country's ambitions for EU membership. The resolution points to the "unstable political climate and the lack of a common vision shared by both entities (Federation of Bosnia Herzegovina and Republika Srpska), and condemns the use of inflammatory language, which undermines the process of inter-ethnic reconciliation and the functioning of state structures."

The draft also addresses the necessity of constitutional reforms that would increase the effectiveness of the central administration in order to prepare the whole country for EU accession. In order to facilitate constitutional reforms, Spain, the current holder of the EU's rotating presidency, and the United States are to organize a new round of the "Butmir process." A first meeting is scheduled for early April in Sarajevo. The objective is to have political leaders of the country's three ethnic groups adopt a commitment to proceed with the reforms necessary for the next step on the way to the EU.

In order to avoid the failures of the first Butmir round, the leaders will be offered a motivation; if they can come to agreement, Bosnia could be given a Nato Membership Action Plan (MAP) after the NATO ministerial meeting in late April.

EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fule stated this

month that Bosnia is on the right road to achieving its visa liberalization this year. In a best-case scenario, given that the European Parliament strongly supports visa liberalization with Bosnia and the necessary procedure in the Council of Ministers, Bosnian citizens can expect to start to travel to EU countries without visas later in the year.

Fule called on the Bosnian government to continue with its reforms, changes in the constitution and election laws, in order to hold democratic elections in October. Changes in the electoral law are critical as the European Human Rights Court confirmed a verdict earlier this year stating that the Bosnian Constitution and election laws discriminate against citizens based on nationality, because minority officials cannot be candidates for entering the Presidency or National Assembly. Fule warned that the democratic character of the October elections could be brought into question if the needed changes are not implemented.

MONTENEGRO

Organized crime and security issues continue to top the agenda in Montenegro. Serbia is accusing Montenegrin institutions of not cooperating fully on security issues and extraditions after Montenegrin authorities allegedly did not arrest a wanted organized crime figure. Montenegrin officials accuse Serbia of falsely reporting the situation and not cooperating in good faith. Police professionals from both sides agree that police and security sector cooperation is hampered by political interference from above.

KOSOVO

After Kosovo Security Forces paraded with weapons at a KLA memorial event NATO command, COMKFOR, announced it was temporarily suspending support and training of KSF. The ICO also supported NATO's decision, saying that KSF is supposed to have a multiethnic character. Government officials replied that the show of weapons by the KSF Honour Guard on the occasion of launching of the KLA Memorial was appropriate. Despite the good cooperation that Kosovo has



with KFOR, a government spokesman told KFOR that Kosovo acts as a State in terms of its decision-making. Several days later KFOR announced that it was resuming cooperation with KSF after an agreement was reached that would allow the forces Honour Guard to use "demilitarized firearms" in parades in the future. The agreement also restated KFOR's view that the Kosovo Security Force has no military or defense role. Instead, KSF's mission is described as rapid reaction, clearing explosives and civil protection.

The US State Department 2009 Human Rights Report describes corruption and Serbia's parallel structures in the North as the critical problems facing Kosovo. While the report does emphasize that interethnic violence has dropped, in the North the situation is still described as tense.

The EU has adopted three main objectives in its relations with Northern Kosovo; it aims to set up a visible and functional EULEX presence, open an "EU House" for outreach in northern Mitrovica, and implement EC projects aimed at improving quality of life for Serb residents. In a meeting held last week in Brussels to discuss EU policy for northern Kosovo, EU member states dismissed the "Strategy for the North of Kosovo," which had been drawn up by Peter Feith in his capacity as head of ICO. The strategy for the north involves bringing Serbs from northern part of Kosovo back under central control this year. However the EU institutions have shown a preference for supporting the work of the EU "facilitator" for Northern Kosovo, the Italian ambassador in Pristina - Mike Giffoni as opposed to the Kosovo government's and ICO's Strategy for the North.

These discussions come amid a call by the Serbian Ministry for Kosovo based in Belgrade to transfer

more of its presence to Mitrovica and Gracanica and in this manner increase its exercise of authority over Serbs in Kosovo.

MACEDONIA

Another round of name negotiations was held between Macedonia and Greece at the end of March however the sides again failed to make progress. The Prime Ministers of the two countries met in the margins of the spring European Council in Brussels.


The ethnic Albanian party that is the junior coalition partner in government is pressuring PM Gruevski to find a compromise position in the name dispute with Greece. The DUI party based its election platform on progress in EU and NATO integration and is worried about the effects of the prolonged dispute with Greece. Analysts believe there is a chance the party could pull out of government if no progress is made on the dispute and thus trigger early elections.

The EU ambassador to Skopje criticized the government for failing to include sexual orientation in the anti-discrimination law, something all other regional governments have done. Such measures are needed to bring the law in line with the EU's values and position.

SERBIA

At the beginning of the month, Serbia asked Interpol to arrest former Bosnian wartime leader Ejup Ganic in London. This move was seen as a retaliatory measure by Serbia and as a political campaign to divert blame for wartime atrocities. The arrest is widely seen in Bosnia as a provocative move by Serbia, and as an attempt to equalize blame for bloodshed committed during the Bosnian war.

The verdict of the International Court of Justice (ICJ)



on Kosovo's declaration of independence legality is expected to be postponed from June to November. Some analysts believe the verdict is being postponed to give more time to Serbia to extradite war crime suspect Ratko Mladic.

Regardless of the ICJ decision, it is widely expected that Serbia will use the autumn 2010 session of the UN General Assembly to try and push for the adoption of a resolution calling on Kosovo to renew the status negotiations. The strategy for returning Kosovo's partition on the negotiating table comes under the cumbersome Serbian slogan, "one side can not possibly get everything, while the other loses everything." The leader of the Serbian entity in Bosnia, Milorad Dodik, has made several statements leaning towards the partition of Kosovo this month, a topic that alarms many in Bosnia.

Serbian security sector institutions held a press conference this month to present their work on the preparation and execution of the National Action Plan for implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. The Defense Minister stated that the defense sector is ready to play an active role in the process and said that in 2007 the first class of female cadets was admitted to the Military Academy and will complete their education and get promoted to the first class of female ensigns in September 2011. Also, this year, 25% of the applicants to the Academy were women. Civil Society submitted recommendations for the action plan to the Minister and said that it is of great significance that the Defense Ministry recognizes the importance of women's participation in the security sector.

Serbia could be the first country in the region to adopt a national action plan, the implementation of which will fulfill the constitutional obligation of the state to secure equal rights for men and women.

The basic goals of the national action plan are equal status of men and women in the decision-making process regarding security issues and the increase of female staff in the security sector. This also means that female influence in the security sector will increase, as well as the

role of women in the creation of peace, protection from all forms of discrimination and improvement of conditions for professional advancement.

Serbia's parliament passed a resolution on March 30 apologizing for the 1995 Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia. The resolution, approved by a narrow majority of the pro-Western governing coalition after 13 hours of heated debate, says Serbia should have done more to prevent the tragedy but stopped short of calling the massacre a genocide. Only 173 of 250 MPs were present for the vote, as many had left in protest after the debate. Serbia has found itself deeply divided on the issue and many analysts say the resolution itself is a thinly guised attempt to curry favor with the EU, with little meaning behind it. Parliamentarians have announced a resolution condemning crimes against Serb victims for April.