



U.S. and Kosovo enjoy an extraordinary relationship

Five Questions for US Ambassador Christopher Dell



The Green Oasis

Wild hogs and lakes of Blinaja make an oasis in the middle of Kosovo.



Academic and Ecumenical gathering to mark St Constantine

Kosovo's New Diplomat



EU DAY organized jointly by EU and Kosovo's Ministry of European Integrations. DESIGN BY INIT

COLUMN

European Union's delays may impede progress in Balkans

The era of bloody interethnic wars in the Western Balkans has ended in the last century; however, the prospect of a secure peace is far away. There are many reasons why peace and stability remain so fragile in the Western Balkans, in particular in Kosovo. That is why we as leaders who have experienced the terrible consequences of the war time, have to stand up and speak loudly before we allow ourselves to be overtaken again by the same inter-ethnic hatred syndromes of the past. This pessimistic message it is not meant to cause panic, but rather to serve as waking bell for all of us and in particular for EU.



HASHIM THAÇI

PREMIER

All eyes on Kosovo's sports and culture

Month of May marks a flurry of arts and sports activities for Kosovans, as during this month Kosovo becomes present more than ever in the global stage. Kosovo jazz singer Rona Nishliu will participate in Eurovision song contest in Baku (vote 5!), IOC will decide on Kosovo's participation in London 2012 Olympics, while Prishtina's own Rita Ora has entered European music charts in top positions with new single. Europe Day and Muslim Mulliqi Art Prize will also bring top artists in Kosovo, including award-winning guitarist Petrit Çeku and Turner-prize winner Nathan Coley.

Kosovans are trying more than ever to be part of the global community and results have not been disappointing so far, despite challenges that disable young Kosovans to have freedom of the movement such as lack of visa-free travel oppor-

tunities. Republic of Kosovo is member of two UN Bretton Woods organizations such as IMF and World Bank, the country is increasingly recognized in multilateral stage, especially after the agreements signed in Bruxelles over Kosovo's region-

al representation, while the rate of recognition has increased.

Nowadays though, Kosovans want more than diplomatic recognition. They want to give their contribution to the sports and cultural scene. After decades of isolation and oppression,

young Kosovans are exploding with buzzing activity in football fields, Olympic stadia and music pop charts. So who are the new generation of Kosovo's sports and culture heroes? Some of them will become very famous in the next weeks and

CONTINUES ON PAGE 3

Let me recall a founding father of EU, Robert Schuman who in his famous declaration of 9th May 1950 said that "world peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it". Further on he said that "the contribution which an organized and living Europe can bring to civilization is indispensable to the maintenance of peaceful relations". Sixty two years have passed since then, but Schuman's remarks

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Diplomatic Bits & Pieces

5 QUICK QUESTIONS

U.S. and Kosovo enjoy an extraordinary relationship

Our political footprint? Probably not as big as the media—and some of the politicians—like to pretend.

1 What is the best thing about working and living in Kosovo?

What I enjoy most is the sense that this is a young, vibrant nation on the move. Having been here in 2000 and 2001, I will remember the sense that this was a wounded, tense place in those days. The contrast one sees and feels every time you walk down the street today is a reminder of how far Kosovo has come since 1999 and gives me renewed energy every time. It's a privilege to be able to participate in this remarkable process in some small way.

Ambassador Christopher Dell



stronger than ever. I fully expect that as Kosovo matures and consolidates its statehood, it will become more confident in asserting its independence and its prerogatives. This is normal. It's healthy, and I see no problem with it. We have differences with even our closest allies on some issues and there's no reason to expect that our partnership with Kosovo will suffer as a result.

2 How big is the American presence in Kosovo?

As several of my colleagues have noted in previous responses to this question, that's a tough one to answer because there are so many ways to answer it. Embassy employees? About 85 Americans. KFOR troops? Almost 900. Kosovar-Americans? Who knows? Thousands, for sure, and the number grows every day. Our political footprint? Probably not as big as the media – and some of the politicians – like to pretend. If I believed some of what I read, there'd have to be twenty of me making every decision on everything every day.

3 How do you see American-Kosovo relations developing?

As you know, the U.S. and Kosovo enjoy an extraordinarily close relationship. As one government minister likes to remind me, this is not based on blind love, but rather, on a proven record of mutual support and trust. I don't see anything realistically changing that relationship for the worse. When I came back to Kosovo in 2009, after having been away for eight years, I'd assumed that the relationship would have frayed a little at the edges, as is normal in the daily wear and tear of any partnership. I was very happy to find how wrong I was, and how the already close relationship between Kosovo and America was

4 What is your favorite part of Kosovo?

Once again, my answer depends in part on what you mean by the question. In terms of scenery, I love Dragash and the Gorani people, who are ethnically related to my wife (whose family are ethnic Turlaks from what used to be the western-most part of Bulgaria). But my real favorite part of being here goes back to what I said earlier, about being in a society as young and vibrant as this one.

5 What is your current reading list?

I am reading Simon Winchester's *Atlantic* at the moment. On my night table for dipping into are *Thinking, Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman, *A Visit to Portugal, 1866*, and a book given to me by FM Hoxhaj, Kissinger's *China*. I've got about a hundred books stockpiled on my Kindle and I'm looking forward to having a little more time in my next assignment to catch up on my reading.

SHORTNEWS

FROM THE DIPLOMATIC CIRCUIT



"Shaping the Future of the SEE Countries" discussed in Prizren with Albach

From April 27 through April 29, the Regional Conference of the European forum Albach convened in Prizren for the work session titled "Shaping the Future of the SEE Countries". The conference is an integral part of the annual program of Albach European Forum, which aims at promoting European values and exchanging ideas, and experiences of decision-makers and opinion-makers. This year, the conference was focused on the future and the euro-integration process of Kosovo and of the region, the role of civil society in the region and in presenting the project of the Regional Center for Advanced Studies. Attending in this conference were also the representatives of Albach European Forum from: Austria, Albania, Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Italy, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo.

"Shaping the Future of the SEE Countries" discussed in Prizren.

Soros Foundation and British Council publish "Kosovo Calling"

A one-day conference called "Kosovo Calling", was organized by the Soros Foundation / Kosovo Foundation for an Open Society (KFOS) and the British Council in Kosovo as part of the project "Kosovo Talks EU". Analytical book was presented that seeks ways to upgrade relationship between Kosovo and 5 EU non-recognizers. In a speech given to representatives of participating

states (Cyprus, Greece, Rumania, Slovakia, Spain and Bosnia and Herzegovina), at the conference, Minister Enver Hoxhaj, emphasized that it is necessary and entirely reasonable for these states to move towards accepting Kosovo. Authors and diplomats from several non-recognizing countries also participated in a debate that intends to act as a platform for more activities.



Supervised independence to end in September

The Assembly of Kosovo adopted the Law on village of Hoçë e Madhe and the law on the Historical Centre of Prizren. These two laws are part of Ahtisaari Plan and are among the last ones needed to conclude Kosovo's supervised independence. The adoption of these Laws by the Assembly was saluted by ICO, representatives of international institutions as well as of the diplomatic missions accredited to Prishtina. The Chairman of Parliamentary Committee for Constitutional Amendments, Arsim Bajrami, declared that the second week of September 2012 will be "the week that concludes Kosovo's supervised independence". International Seering Group of principle backers of Kosovo's independence will meet in September to deliberate on the progress achieved in Kosovo and will most probably recommend the end of supervised independence, which was envisaged by President Ahtisaari to be an interim solution.

Prizren and Hoca e madhe will be protected by Law adopted at Assembly.

nos scimus,
non solum
scribere



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NewDiplomat

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NEWKOSOVOREADS

EVERY ISSUE OF NEW DIPLOMAT WE WILL RECOMMEND TWO BOOKS, REPORTS OR WEBSITES WITH INTERESTING AND UPDATED CONTENT ON KOSOVO.

Title: Kosovo Calling

Authors: Giorgos Kentas, Ioannis Armakolas, Apostolis Karabairis, Oana Popescu, George Vadim, Eliska Slavikova, Jordi Vaquer, Denisa Sarajlic, Sonja Biserko

Publisher: Soros Foundation Kosovo / British Council

Publication Date: 2012

This book is comprised of various in-depth position papers written by distinguished authors from the countries that have not recognized Kosovo yet in EU and the region (Cyprus, Greece, Slovakia, Spain, Romania, Serbia, Bosnia). The papers were compiled throughout 2011 and are meant to serve as food for thought for policy makers in these countries as the process of

EU integrations and enlargement conditions an ever increasing contact between Kosovo and the "non-recognizers". Experts that have provided input for this book are all authors from civil society, think tanks, academia, etc. The papers are focused on the internal politics of these countries, geo-strategic considerations in the wider context of European security architecture. The book can also be seen as a type of guide-book for recognition, as many of the arguments put forth in this book are the critical bits and pieces of information missing from the dialogue between Kosovo and these countries.

As it is in Kosovo's own interest to develop new channels

and tools of communication with all EU members and their respective publics, not only to obtain recognitions, but also to build a strong base for stronger bonds between Kosovo and all EU members, which is a pre-condition for Kosovo's successful integration into EU, this book provides valuable insights as to what are the main challenges and opportunities in this process.

As editors of the book say, the hope is that "opinion-makers, elected representatives, civil society, media, and ultimately those in charge of state affairs will take a moment to read this book and understand that Kosovo's European perspective and regional integration

cannot become a true reality unless new approaches are developed with each of these countries. A new dynamic in Kosovo's relationship with these countries would strengthen Kosovo's EU integration prospects and amplify its voice on the regional and international stage, to the benefit of all citizens".

Sample review: "This book has 7 longer papers that describe critical issues at stake between Kosovo and the 7 European countries that have yet to recognize the young republic. The authors are credible voices in their own countries and they do not paint a pink picture but

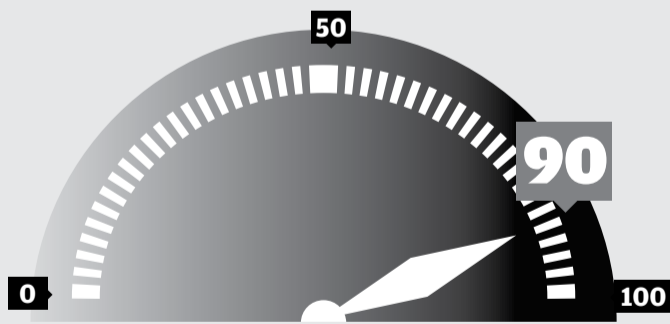


rather a realistic landscape that will require Kosovo to re-double its efforts to establish full relations with all EU countries. Each of essays has a set of useful recommendations that are valid not only for diplomats but for all those engaged in communication between Balkans and the 5 EU countries."

— Ambassador Lulzim Peci

RECOGNMETER

SINCE THE LAST ISSUE OF KND, ONE MORE COUNTRY HAS RECOGNIZED KOSOVO! COUNT IS NOW AT 90, SOON APPROACHING HALF OF UN MEMBERS WHO HAVE FORMALLY RECOGNIZED KOSOVO AS INDEPENDENT AND SOVEREIGN. KOSOVO ALSO JOINED 7 REGIONAL INITIATIVES AND FORUMS



Every two months, Kosovo's New Diplomat will report on the rate of recognitions of Kosovo's sovereign and independent status by UN member states, international institutions and sports and cultural organizations.

Last two months, recognition rate has not stopped: Important Asian kingdom of Brunei has formally recognized Kosovo, after Brunei's Prime Minister Hassanal Bolkiah officially informed Kosovo

MFA that his country had recognized Kosovo's sovereignty and independence. As we reported last issue, Uganda and Nigeria have also signaled their intentions as well in recent months.

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few months. First and foremost, Kosovo is waging a titanic battle to enable Kosovo's own Olympic champ Majlinda Kelmendi to participate in London 2012. Majlinda is one of the few Kosovans that have fully qualified for Olympic berth in London. While she is free and able to participate as citizen of Albania, hopes are that she will be able to take a place on her own, representing Kosovo and Kosovo sport federations. Majlinda's cause has been supported by European Parliament that approved a special resolution demanding from International Olympic Committee to enable Kosovo's participation in London 2012. BBC World also follows the trail of Majlinda as she attempts to present Kosovo for the first time ever in Olympics. Other Kosovans will also participate here, albeit under flags of other nations. Most notably more than 30% of Swiss football team in Olympics will be Kosovans who have been excellent in defending the colors of their new country.

While Majlinda hopes for participating in London as Kosovan, this was not made possible for Kosovo singers for Eurovision Song Contest in Baku. That being said, Kosovar jazz singer Rrona Nishliu easily won the prize for best song in neighboring Albania, and this Kosovan lady with exquisite voice will be heard all across Europe when she sings her beautiful song. Large Kosovo and Albania diasporas around Europe

MAY MADNESS

- In May, Majlinda Kelmendi expects final approval for participation in London 2012 Olympics
- Rona Nishliu from Mitrovica participates in Eurovision Song Contest in Baku on behalf of Albania
- Europe Day brings top contemporary arts and music stars to Prishtina
- Kosovan born pop star Rita Ora conquers top spots in European music charts with new single

should take note and vote for Rrona's song so she can make it into finals in Baku on May 26th. The hope is that as of 2013, Kosovo will appear with its own song for the Eurovision Song Contest, one of the most visible platforms for nation-branding in Europe.

Outside the formal arena of international competitions, another Kosovo-born musician is making waves across Europe. The cool Londoner Rita Ora, has been rocking the music charts across the globe with her mixture of hip-hop, garage and drum and base music. Rita has been active in music for many years, but she was noticed by the major American label Roc-A-Fella owned by the music mogul Jay Z, and after more than a year of intensive work

on a music album, Rita Ora is now releasing singles that are easy picking first places in top-charts. Rita Ora is being featured in all top music magazines as it appears that the Kosovo-British star is entering a phase of global recognition. Will.I.Am, Ester Dean, Drake, The-Dream, Kanye West and other major stars are all rumored to all appear on Rita Sahatçiu Ora's first album.

Other events will also take place in Kosovo that will bring some major stars from classical music and contemporary arts. Europe Day and the forthcoming edition of contemporary arts show Muslim Mulliqi, organized jointly by EU Office in Kosovo, Ministry of European Integrations and sponsored by the public diplomacy program of British Council, Kosovo MFA and British FCO, will gather some top names. Kosovo-born Croatian musician Petrit Çeku (featured in the issue 2 of Kosovos' New Diplomat as "New face o Kosovo") will perform live with a trio of top European classical guitarists for the benefit of Europe Day celebrations in Kosovo. Furthermore, Kosovo Gallery will host a series of events with distinguished names from contemporary arts, including Nathan Coley, the famous British Turner-prize winner, Charles Esche, former Curator of Istanbul Biennale, and Galit Eliat, Israeli-born curator of Vanabbe Museum in Holand. For more on this event, check the backpage of this issue.

About Us & Our Activities



KOSOVO GALLERY

Roma Day celebrated in Kosovo

Kosovo MFA and US Embassy cooperate to bring Roma art to Kosovo audiences

Kosovo Art Gallery housed the first ever exhibition in its' premises by Roma artists, in an event that attracted many visitors and good reviews.

To mark the International Day of Roma, two artists of this community exhibited their visual arts works. The exhibition opened a little while ago at the Kosovo Art Gallery, by the artists (sister and brother): Farija Mehmeti and Bajram Mehmeti, from Kosovo's native Roma community. In the exhibition, supported by the American Embassy in Kosovo and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo, the artists presented to the public their portraits and pictures, mixed with images of ordinary men and women, who are anonymous in this visualization of daily Roma life.

The ceremony was accompanied by music by violinist Visar Kuçi, which was another element giving spirit and life to the art they made and added sounds to otherwise a good promotion of culture and Roma customs.

"We started this cycle of paintings, which represent daily Roma life, 12 years ago. The Roma have a rich and very unique culture, a life that should be remembered, and why not through artistic exhibitions like this one, today", added the artist Bajram Mehmeti, one of the artists.

Petrit Selimi, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo praised this work and pledged on behalf of MFA to tour the exhibition in Kosovo embassies throughout the world. Besides this, Selimi said that this exhibit shows that Kosovo has a lot to give to Europe. "One of the many things is diversity in age, gender and also nationality", said Selimi, adding that civil society and the state have to do outmost to cherish this diversity.

For Michael Murphy, Deputy American Ambassador in Kosovo, this exhibit shows how rich and developed Roma culture is.

"The work of these two Roma artists unveils the artistic and cultural diversity of the Roma in Kosovo", said Muphy.

The International Day of the Roma, which is observed on April 8, after the first Congress held on 1971, which decided on a flag and Roma hymn, sends a message of peace to all Roma in the world, to fight for their rights not to be discrimination and against racism and war.



The Roma have a rich and very unique culture, a life that should be remembered"

NEW DIPLOMATS



BESAR DINARAMA

■ **What do you do, where are you based?** Senior Donor Coordination Officer (Coordination, monitoring, analyzing and reporting on foreign aid). ■ **What is the most you like about the job you do?** The ability to attend and participate in very important meetings such as Sector Working Groups and Sub-sector Working Groups where I am able to track and share information related to aid-funded activities. Another interesting element about the job that I do is networking. I find networking an essential tool for surviving not only in the Republic of Kosovo but everywhere and I love interaction with people. ■ **What is the best thing about the city you live in?** Besides the old buildings from the previously Ottoman presence in some parts of Prishtina which make it an impressive sight to see, Prishtina is the ideal place to hang out with your friends by finding the best cafés all around the city. There, everybody can hang out with their friends and enjoy the city life.



DRITERO ARIFI

■ **What do you do, where are you based?** Political Adviser (to the Minister of European Integration Ms. Vlora Çitaku)- policy development, policy implementation, policy presentation and evaluation of the effectiveness of policies. ■ **What is the most you like about the job you do?** Opportunity to attend and participate in important meetings, particularly at the highest political level, with ministers of various countries and ambassadors. This experience enables me and helps me to understand the practical aspect of politics and international relations ■ **What is the best thing about the city you live in?** There is so many things that i like about my city, for examples, Theater, Kino, music, football game and other things. But, the best thing about my city, are people. They are very warm and friendly, also honest and loveable. Prishtina is the ideal place to hang out with your friends by finding the best cafés all around the city.



LABINOTE KASHTANJEVA

■ **What do you do, where are you based?** I am an Executive Assistant at the Ministry of European Integration, in the Department of the Minister's Cabinet. ■ **What is the most you like about the job you do?** Being an executive assistant to the Minister is a very opportunistic, challenging, and amusing job. It gives me the opportunity to meet people from different areas. People who are crucial decision makers for the country and those who make sure that the decisions are executed correctly; people who are very intelligent - the elite. It is a challenging job as I have to organize and plan the Ministers schedule always by making sure nothing conflicts and it is compatible with the second party. Nevertheless I enjoy the energy and dynamism that is created by the work at the cabinet. In the end of the day, it is very pleasant to work with my excellent co-workers and an admirable Minister like Ms. Vlora Çitaku. ■ **What is the best thing about the city you live in?** What I admire the most about the city I live in - Prishtina is the large number of young people I see everywhere I go - at work, at university, in the streets, at the bars, everywhere. What impresses me even more is their enthusiasm towards achieving their goals, whatever they are. I absolutely love the hospitality and warmth of the people. Another thing I find very attractive here is the energy and dynamism of life compared to other cities in Kosove. We have both Germia National Park to relax on the weekends and numerous bars to have a Friday and Saturday night out.



NOVITET XH. NEZAJ

■ **What do you do, where are you based?** I am Acting Director of Legal Department in the Ministry of European Integration. My whole work is focused on approximation of Kosovo legislation with EU legislation. I have a passionate desire to work in the sector of legislation. I am drawn to legal sciences because I know of its strong reputation in areas of law. There are many people with a lot to offer our world society if given the slightest of opportunities. I am based in Prishtina. ■ **What is the most you like about the job you do?** Though Kosovo is by far the youngest country in this world, we have a long way to go. I know firsthand that we don't all start out in life on an equal footing. I take my commitments very seriously, and I am seriously committed to improve legal system in Kosovo. My personal, spiritual, academic and professional goals are closely tied by the underlying desire to achieve, become, and succeed. I feel that one of the best ways we can strengthen and improve Kosovo legal system is to strengthen and improve ourselves both professionally and personally. ■ **What is the best thing about the city you live in?** I feel that our city should provide numerous advantages to citizens, and of course more green areas.



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FEATURE *of the* MONTH



Within the fenced area of the park, three different types of deer coexist, the German deer (150), lepotar deer (140) and the red deer (40).



ASTRIT IBRAHIMI

The Green Oasis

Wild hogs and 30 artificial lakes of Blinaja make an oasis in the middle of Kosova.

Artan Behrami
Milot Hasimja

A few kilometers away from Prishtina, there is a natural reservation called Blinaja. For those that are not attracted to the seaside, this could be a very good spot to visit.

People, who don't like the sea and the sun, can get into groups and head for the national park of Blinaja. Those who are crazy about the wild animals and group walks through natural reservations will find Blinaja to be an ideal place. There are so many communist stories of hunting parties that stemmed from this place.

Walking through this natural reservation, Blinaja of Lipjan, will make you feel like you are in the middle of a documentary on rare wild animals that you've never seen before. They

cannot stand the noise and Blinaja is an oasis to them. The natural reservation, apart from the tall trees and many lakes, has a variety of wild animals.

This place, during the communist era, was a vacation spot. Although it was enjoyed only by those who had the special red permission.

These quick visits of the communist 'big shots' are still mentioned by the villagers, even though they hardly witnessed anything with their eyes. They could only hear the sound of hunting rifles.

'Only the biggest of the 'big shots' and the most powerful ones used to come to this place. The likes of Mahmut Bakalli and others', says Xhevat Mis-hori, a Blinaja resident, while pointing in the direction of the reservation. In his opinion, this is the most beautiful place

in the world. The aroma of linden after the rain is the thing he adores the most. There are three thousand fenced hectares of land and three hectares outside the fence which are considered part of the natural reservation.

Since the end of war, Blinaja, thanks to the Agency of the Forests of the Protection Corps of Kosova, is the most protected reservation in Kosova.

Wild hogs and 30 artificial lakes of Blinaja make an oasis in the middle of Kosova.

The reservation still remains out of the sight of the invaders. If you are in a bigger group, you will have to make a request to the Agency of the Forests beforehand. The agency is part of the Ministry of Agriculture.

As soon as you entered the camp of Blinaja you will see a

huge edifice. Formerly owned by the Executive Council of Kosova, it was transformed into the PCK base.

Blinaja consists of 30 small lakes, all of which are man-made. There is a dam between two hills which accumulates water during the winter.

Within the fenced area of the park, three different types of deer coexist, the German deer (150), lepotar deer (140) and the red deer (40).

This rare wild animal world also consists of the wild hog, the wild cat, the fox and the wolf. Also there are many different types of birds.

Down the hill you can encounter a tortoise, always followed by butterflies.

You will be surrounded by forest fruits. You will hear noises but you will not know what is making the noise.

There you can see an artificial lake surrounded by bushes, while on the far end of it, there is a cabin. Next to the cabin stands one of the 10 guards holding a rifle on his shoulder.

Even though they get paid very little, he covers over 20 kilometers on foot during one day.

It's been 20 years since Hazir Drenica has been guarding this beautiful place from the harm. 'This place has always been beautiful. The Italians, the Germans know about it. They have always visited, especially the VIPs', Drenica tells. He sets off for a nine-kilometer walk to his house. One thing lingers with everyone who visits this forest. What you see in three hours in Blinaje sticks to your memory forever. Even after 20 years, one cannot help telling about its beauty.

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Column / Events

Academic and Ecumenical gathering in Prishtina to mark St Constantine

Some of the top academic and religious figures will come to Kosovo invited by AUK in a conference that is meant to shed some light on legacy of Emperor Constantine and the ways how we can advance inter-faith dialogue in the region

On May 15-17, 2012 the American University in Kosovo is bringing together historians, scholars and academic theologians from around the world, in their capacity of academicians rather than representatives of faiths, to mark the 1,700th anniversary of the Battle of the Milvian Bridge.

By bringing historians and academicians, as well as observers from the religious communities to a US-accredited academic institution in Kosovo, which is ethnically mixed, academically independent and rigorous, and serves as a neutral venue for inter-ethnic dialogue, the conference will aim to demonstrate that the study of history

should be a pursuit of truth however impossible it may be to completely overcome the preoccupations of the time. Hence, the participants of the conference are invited to present on three broad themes that relate to Constantine's legacy, religion and politics up to the 20th century and religion's role in the public sphere currently.

The second day of the conference will focus on how the existing inter-faith contacts within Kosovo and throughout the region can be enhanced. Representatives of faiths will be invited as observers as one aim of the conference is to explore the possibilities of an extensive

inter-faith conference among religious leaders at a later date.

The Battle of Milvian Bridge, in which the Emperor Constantine defeated his enemies and became the undisputed Roman Emperor, has always been seen as crucial in the triumph of monotheism across Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. At least by the end his reign, it was believed that at the battle Constantine's troops were identified with a Christian cross or ChiRho ("In this sign, you will conquer"). While he was not baptised a Christian until his death-bed and did not make Christianity the State religion – his Edict of



Milan ensured toleration for all religions.

Constantine was born in Naissus (modern Niš in Serbia); his father was a native of Dardania (roughly corresponding to modern Kosovo). He transferred the Roman capital to the Balkans (Byzantium). It therefore seems fitting that his achieve-

ment be celebrated in the Balkans in the spirit of the Edict of Milan. The conference of historians in Prishtina will consider the historical significance of Constantine's legacy. Among conference guests are: Dr. Ivo Banac from Yale University, Dr Cristina Cidarcea from Bukurest, Prof Andras Riedlmayer from Harvard, Dr Ger Duijzings with high-level guests such as Muhyiddin Junaidi who is deputy head of Conference of Ulemas of Indonesia, Father Donald Reeve of Soul of Europe ecumenical organization, Paolo Rago from Community of St Egidio from Vatican and all the leaders of Kosovo's native communities.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

are still very relevant. The project he envisioned, what is now the European Union, is about to succeed but only if EU leaders stay firm in embracing the remaining Western Balkans within the EU family. After all, our place in this family is well deserved.

The recent years in the Western Balkans have been identified as the years of considerable success and progress, either in the aspect of democratic consolidation or economic development. This applies to my country, as well. Nonetheless, the mindset of the past is still present in some parts of the region. Thus, our northern neighbor Serbia still continues in an active manner to undermine Kosovo's statehood. By doing so, Serbia is questioning the existence of internationally recognized borders in Balkans. This attitude of thinking yet about redrawing borders in the Western Balkans represents the biggest threat to the fragile stability. Serbia in the recent weeks and months undertook several severe provocations against Kosovo. The last terrorist attack in an ethnic Albanian family in northern Kosovo caused the death of a citizen and injured several members of this family. Moreover, the recent developments in the security dimension in Macedonia underline the fragile situation

of the entire region. This situation raises several questions.

Why we can't overcome yet the instability and bring about more secure Europe? Do the decision-makers in Brussels lack the will or the power to accelerate the EU integration process for the remaining Western Balkan countries? Are the decision-makers in EU aware that by dragging this process, they unintentionally help maintain the conflict industry alive in Balkans?

One can not expect easy answers. But those who are responsible to deliver need to make it clear to the people of Balkans that the train they have embarked in, is the right one. That's the one towards Brussels. Because if otherwise, then we will all be in trouble. Any further delays from EU to accelerate the membership of the remaining aspiring countries of the Western Balkans directly undermine our efforts to build multiethnic societies in our countries. Further more, delays will serve to the radicals' aspirations to work on their agenda of creating mono-ethnic states. As consequence, this could lead towards the change of internationally recognized borders – the worst case scenario.

Personally, I have no doubt that Kosovo's rightful place is within the big EU family. Its membership and equality

within EU remains for us a roadmap of hope – not only for Kosovo but for other people in Balkans. We as leaders need to make sure our societies are being developed based on principles which served as foundations to build Europe after the Second World War. We know how difficult and painful that process was. However, it has proven as a successful model and we have no reason why not to adopt it. In this way, we make sure to build a better future which will prevent the bitter past being repeated. Moreover, kosovars have understood that membership into big democratic families cannot take place while obstructing the development of the others. Personally I am deeply convinced that the entire region will suffer if EU is thinking to close its door for newcomers like us. This would have been serious mistake.

In this context, I do understand limitations and difficulties of EU leaders and EU member states leaders. I try to understand their hesitations, complicated procedures of the art of reaching consensual decisions. Above everything else, we understand the EU key demands for us in reaching European standards when it comes to the inter-ethnic tolerance, respect for minority rights, fight against crime, corruption etc.

Kosovo continues to be the only country in the Western Balkans which still does not have any contractual relations with the EU.

We in Kosovo have managed to achieve substantial progress in addressing all these aspects, but until now, there is no payoff for this progress. In contrary, the rest of the countries in the region managed to receive several carrots from the EU. The situation in Kosovo, as relates the EU affairs is engendering some negative implications. Considering the fact that EU so far did not deliver anything concrete on visa liberalization and Stabilization and Association process, citizens are discouraged and there are some clear Euro-skepticism signs, in this respect.

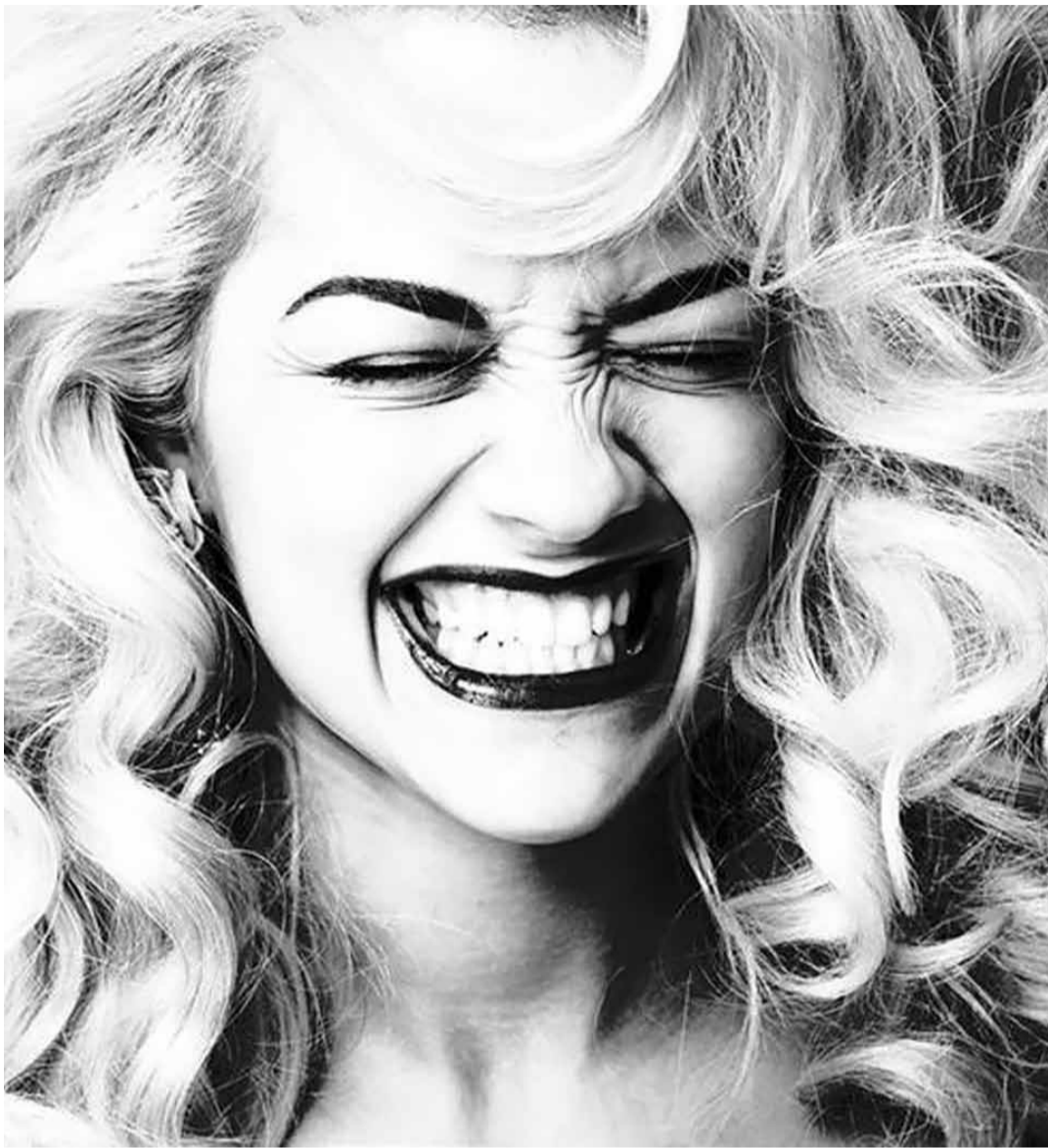
Kosovo continues to be the only country in the Western Balkans which still does not have any contractual relations with the EU. This is certainly not because we have not done our homework. Therefore, all we ask is to be treated by the EU as equal among the equals. In other words, we want to be treated fairly like other countries in the region. This is the

minimum we ask and it is a European principle. We do not ask for favors compared to others, but we likewise do not want to be deprived. In fact, the EU course of action towards Kosovo, until now is still in the phase of rhetoric. EU highlights the importance of European perspective for Kosovo, but no concrete step is seen and all this remains simply as a rhetoric.

We continue to believe in the European principles and values, but that has not helped Kosovo not to be considered still as a black hole of the region. This is the right moment for Kosovo to move forward and get closer to the EU destination; it's also time for EU to tell us that beyond the rhetoric, the future of Kosovo is also concretely linked with European perspective. This will also contribute further to the peace and stability in the region and will be a decisive step of closing the doors for the mindset of the past, which is still present in the region. Almost two decades ago, the Kosovo War served as a catalyst for the democratization and European integration. Now Kosovo should not be left as the last country on our continent without a European future.

Make no mistake: This must be the hour of Europe for Kosovo.

Note: Hashim Thaçi is Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo



Prishtina's Rita Ora towards global music's highest peaks

Since after the publication of her "Hot right now" hit the fame of the signer with Kosovo origin living in London, Rita Ora, has been constantly increasing while the attention of various international media has focused on her. Her recent presentation has been by one of the world's most renowned fashion and culture magazines in Britain, "i-D". In this magazine, Rita is presented in a very trendy photo set. "Under the production of a noted name, like Jay Z, and after cooperation with Drake singer, it seems that there is no doubt that the expected moment has arrived for this Albanian blonde" writes the magazine. Meanwhile, other British media write that the entrance of Rita Ora in the world music market has startled many singers who see her as a rival.

Her appearance in "The Guardian" does not leave much to be desired. Titled "Born

ready- Jay Z told me that I could be as famous as Rihanna," Ora was covered by the edition of 12 April together with publishing by the famous newspaper. Tim Jonze, journalist at this prestigious outlet, who usually deals with the most recent criticism and trends in the music worldwide, dedicated a page to Ora calling her a charismatic girl who is "progressing terribly fast in the music of the time, without much effort as it is the case with the others."

"I don't think there will be a next Rihanna, but Jay Z definitely sees me as someone who could be as big as her. Initially, all knew Rihanna as a small-island girl, but Jay Z wants to repeat that success. I think that is me," says amongst other things Rita Ora in this article dedicated her, as reported by Balkanweb.

"The Guardian" describes Rita as a girls you can easily notice her – a haywire mass

of peroxide blonde. "She used to adore Spiceworld and Celine Dion – and she still keeps a classic T-shirt with Dion's face on. The difference between her and Rihanna is that Rihanna comes from Barbados, while Rita's life started in Kosovo before her family moved to London," says amongst other things the article on "The Guardian". With a big printed photo and three on the webpage, Ora did not forget to mention her pride in being a Kosovar. "I have said and I will always say that I come from Prishtina and that I am proud of that. Cooperation with Jay Z or Drake is of a higher level, but that does not mean that I will forget my people," said Ora. Her latest hits have been highly appraised, and during the week she will present a new project of hers. During the interview she was also asked about her cooperation with signer Drake. **The Guardian**

Majlinda Kelmendi in "London 2012"

Institutions of the Republic of Kosovo and national sport organizations are engaging in powerful lobbying campaign on achieving Kosovo's goal on having Kosovar sportsmen, especially of judo champion, Majlinda Kelmendi, in Olympic Games "London 2012" which takes place from July 27 to August 29, 2012.

It is officially expected that Majlinda will attend in Olympic Games London 2012 but it is still unclear under what flag, namely she will attend under the flag of Kosovo or the Olympic Games flag. Having won the silver medal in Germany's Grand Prix, held February in Dusseldorf, Kosovo's best sportswoman has managed to enter the top five of the Olympic list.

During his recent visit to the United States, at the seat of the United Nations in New York, Kosovo's Prime Minister, Hashim Thaçi, met with the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, and asked for his personal support that Kosovo would be able to attend Olympic Games.

Memli Krasniqi, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, and Enver Hoxhaj, Minister of Foreign Affairs, are making ongoing efforts in powerfully lobbying in attaining the goal that Majlinda Kelmendi would attend London Olympics.

In terms of engagements in ensuring Majlinda Kelmendi's assistance at the Olympic Games "London 2012", the minister informed that his meeting agenda in the following months will be very busy. "Majlinda is the basis of all discussions I have had with international sports institutions" noted Krasniqi.

The Minister stated that during his stay in Quebec of Canada, where the Executive Committee of the Olympic Committee will take place, I will file a clear request on how Majlinda will attend the Olympics.

In the end of March, the European Parliament, too, adopted a resolution on Kosovo, which includes a call addressed to the International Olympic Committee, to allow sportsmen from Kosovo to attend Olympic Games "London 2012".

Kosovo institutions are also support Majlinda Kelmendi financially.

Ministry of Culture awarded judo sportswoman, Majlinda Kelmendi, with 10 thousand Euro, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also allocated 10 thousand Euro, and the Ministry of Trade and Industry allocated 5 thousand Euro.



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