



Croatia, special attention to its relations with Kosovo

Five Questions for Croatian Ambassador Zoran Vodopija



Special supplement: Report from global interfaith events in Kosovo



Kosovo's Petrit Halilaj at the Venice Biennale

Kosovan artist intertwines personal and national histories

Kosovo's New Diplomat



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NEWS

EU ACCESSION

Kosovo starts the EU integration process

The Government of the Republic of Kosovo welcomes the decision of the European Council to launch negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between the Republic of Kosovo and the European Union. The decision presents the first official step on our path towards European Union membership. SAA is the first contractual agreement between Kosovo and the EU that provides a clear perspective towards full membership of Kosovo in EU, as well this is the most advanced form of association that a potential candidate country may have with the European Union. The Agreement provides a strategic framework for the overall social, political and economic development of aspiring country for EU membership. This agreement also presents a legal framework which provides stability and assurance for investors, which in turn creates a sound basis for foreign direct investment and will lead to the generating of jobs.

The launch of negotiations between Kosovo and the EU firmly anchors integration process of Kosovo and, as well further consolidating the international legal status of our state. The SAA takes Kosovo a step closer to achieving status of candidate country, which will enable broader framework for financial assistance benefits from the EU.

This decision for the opening of SAA negotiations is to the merit of the all the institutions of the Republic of Kosovo and entire political spectrum, and also confirms the progress of political, economic and legal reform undertaken in Kosovo.

June, month of record recognitions

Month of June brought a new record in global recognitions of Kosovo's independence. Egypt, Tanzania, Yemen, El Salvador and Guyana recognised Kosovo as independent, while Kosovo was also admitted as sovereign member of Council of Europe Development Bank. Kosovo also entered into contractual relations with European Union, starting formally EU Membership process

In June 2013 the Republic of Kosovo has seen a string of recognitions from different countries and continents. The youngest European state has been recognized by Egypt, Tanzania, Yemen, El Salvador and Guyana. Accordingly, Kosovo has been recognized by more than half of the United Nations member states. This is a result of the commitment and continuous lobbying the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant actors in Kosovo

as well as Kosovo's partners worldwide. The recognitions of Kosovo come as Kosovo started normalizing it's relations with neighboring Serbia, in a process that was called as «historic» by high EU, US and UN officials. Bilateral recognitions in month of June raised the total of recognitions to 101 UN members. Another positive development in June was Kosovo's accession to the Council of Europe Development Bank. This bank that was established decades ago as

a fund for support of social inclusion in European continent. In a meeting of the Board of Directors of CoE Bank in Malta, it was decided to grant Republic of Kosovo full membership as the newest member of the bank. This move was greeted in Prishtina as another confirmation of the increasing involvement of Kosovo in the multilateral world. Late in 2012, Kosovo was also admitted to European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

The wave of these important recognitions of Kosovo's statehood is a result of the commitment of the Government of Kosovo towards the country's Euro-Atlantic integration, but also thanks to the progress recorded in the talks with Serbia. These recognitions have a particular weight as it opens doors for the recognition of Kosovo by influential countries of Latin America, Asia and Africa, as well as other multilateral organizations. PAGE 3

Diplomatic Bits & Pieces

5 QUICK QUESTIONS

Croatia, special attention to its relations with Kosovo

Croatia's duty as a new member of EU, and the leading country in the region for the moment, is to satisfy the expectations of Kosovo and other regional countries, and that task is corresponding to the common intention of Croatia, EU and USA.

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

The best thing about working in Kosovo is the attitude of the members of the Kosovo Government, the administration, leaders and members of political parties and above all of the Kosovars when it concerns Croatia. The people of Kosovo are more than friendly to Croats. It is of course a consequence of the common history we share, especially in the last 23 years and even before that. Hundreds of Kosovars studied in Zagreb and other cities of Croatia in the seventies and eighties. Dozens of Kosovars helped Croatia in the liberation war against the JNA and the paramilitary troops of Milosevi. We always again and again express our gratitude to all of them. Actually two of the ministers in the Kosovo government have double citizenship: they are citizens of Kosovo and Croatia. I should mention their names: Agim Ceku and Besim Beqay. But a multitude of others are in the same position and that is something that you can never forget or underestimate

2 How big is the Croatian presence in Kosovo?

As a new member of the European Union and even before that Croatia was in a position to attach special attention to its relations with Kosovo. Both politically and in the economy. We have excellent cooperation with Kosovo institutions. We had more bilateral visits in both directions at the highest levels than with almost all the other countries in the region put together! The visits were on the presidential, prime ministerial, Speaker of the Parliament and ministerial level. As a result we had, among other results, a constant growth of trade exchange. In 2010 Croatia had an export of 45 million Euros, in 2011 55 million and last year 65 millions. Unfortunately the import from Kosovo is just between 1.5 and 2.5 million Euros. Me in Pristina and my colleague the Ambassador of Kosovo in Zagreb are doing what we can to give a momentum to Kosovo export.

3 How do you see Croatian-Kosovar relations developing? Our main target in the region of South-East Europe is to offer and provide all kind

Ambassador
Zoran Vodopija



of assistance to all the countries on their path to the European Union and NATO. We have in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a Team of Excellency with great experience in negotiation with the European Union. They had the least eight years to learn and improve their skills in negotiating all the chapters and benchmarks that EU prepared for Croatia on its pace to the institutions in Brussels. Some of them already are posted in Montenegro; others are ready to give their knowledge to other countries, especially to Kosovo. The fulfillment of the requirements of the European Commission concerning the SAA or the visa liberalisation in Kosovo is a battlefield where their skills can be more than useful. Croatia's duty as a new member of EU and the leading country in the region for the moment is to investigate thoroughly enough, especially in the Prizren-Strpce area.

4 What is your favorite part of Kosovo? I must admit that Prizren and Peja have a more urban image for me than Pristina. They share important dates of Kosovo history and tradition and they have rivers and their banks contoured with streets and houses that I like very much. And the top destiny is close to Peja - the Rugova Valley that you can be proud of and that I consider as a pearl of Kosovo. Of course, crossing Brezovica and breathing the purest air that we lack in Pristina because of Obilic is an unforgettable experience. You should pay more attention to ecology and preserve the beauties of your country for the future generations. To my present work. I just finished, for instance, a book on Stalin during the German invasion in 1941 and after that I now started reading a book on Cairo, dated 2002, dealing with the then rise of militant Islam.

SHORTNEWS

FROM THE EMBASSIES



Foreign Ministers of Italy, Sweden, Lithuania visit Kosovo

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo, Enver Hoxhaj, has received several European Ministers of Foreign Affairs who visited Prishtina to support the ongoing dialogue with Serbia and the political progress achieved in Kosovo. Mrs. Bonino of Italy, Mr. Bildt of Sweden as well as Mr. Linkevicius of Lithuania, have all confirmed that the agreement between Kosovo and Serbia represents a significant achievement for Kosovo, and that their respective countries strongly support the European integration of Kosovo, including visa liberalisation for Kosovars. Minister Hoxhaj reaffirmed Kosovo dedication to Euro-Atlantic integration.



Minister Çitaku marks the first official visit of a Kosovo minister to Belgrade

The Minister for European Integration of the Republic of Kosovo, Vlora Çitaku travelled to Belgrade in the first official visit of a Kosovo Minister to the Serbian capital. Minister Çitaku attended the seminar entitled "Integration into the European Union and the process of normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia" which was organized by the "Forum for Ethnic Relations" in Belgrade, Serbia. The visit was enabled by the mediation of the European Union Office's in Prishtina and Belgrade. The visit was welcomed by the civil society in Serbia.

Kosovo closer to visa liberalization. First Kosovo visa issued

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo, Enver Hoxhaj took part in the ceremony of for the issuance of the first visa of the Republic of Kosovo, in the General Consulate of Kosovo in Istanbul, on July 1st. He added that the full functioning of the Visa Centre has a threefold significance for Kosovo:

safety; opening door to foreign visitors to visit Kosovo; and fulfillment of a European requirement.

After having submitted the first Kosova visa, Mr. Hoxhaj said: "Edem Adzogenu, a Ghana citizen will enter Kosovo's history as the first national who obtained the first visa of the Republic of Kosovo".



Kosovo Parliament ratifies EU-brokered normalization deal with Serbia

Kosovo's parliament has overwhelmingly ratified an EU-brokered agreement aimed at normalizing ties with Serbia. Lawmakers voted 84-3 in favour of the agreement, which was reached in April. The agreement to normalize ties was reached in April after lengthy talks between the Serbian and the Kosovar Prime Ministers, Ivica Dacic and Hashim Thaci, mediated by EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton. Thaci told lawmakers on June 27th that achieving normal relations with Serbia would be difficult and complicated, but said he would pursue talks with Belgrade. The agreement is key to Serbia's and Kosovo's progress toward eventual EU membership.

NOS SCIMUS,
NON SOLUM
SCRIBERE



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Kosovo's
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NEWKOSOVOREADS

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

Title: InstaKosova/Instakosovo
Publisher: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo
Publication Date: 2013

On the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the independence of Kosovo, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo (MFA), in cooperation with the British Council and the Royal Norwegian Embassy, launched the National Competition for the best photography

on social networks. Over 8000 photos were posted on social networks, including Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, Facebook, with the #InstaKosova hashtag. The competition became a popular and fitting tribute to country's 5th anniversary. The competition organized under the innovative Digital Diplomacy program of Kosovo's MFA, aimed to collect the best photos of Kosovo by Kosovars into three categories:
 - Places in Kosovo (cities,

villages, nature, etc)
 - Kosovo people (youth, women, men, the elderly, children, etc)
 - Events in Kosovo (celebrations, concerts, public events, etc). The winners of the best 5 photos are: Arben Llapashtica, Beni Cufi, Besnik Hasanaj, Fisnik Dobreci, Shkëlzen Rexha. The winners of the best 15 photos are: Abdurahim Abdushi, Besian Durmishi, Bujar Gashi, Dita Sylja, Enis Abdullahu, Gent Gjilkolli, Ilir Llonçari, Linda

Dibra, Nëntor Oseku, Petrit Daku, Nita Pallaska, Faredin Agaj, Rejhan Rexhaj, Trim Kabashi, Valon Majanci. Due to the enormous public interest, the award budget was increased. Accordingly, best 15 photos were awarded with 200 euro, while the winners of the five best photos in all categories received 600 euros. The best hundred photos were published in a special book that has been sent to Kosovo embassies around the world.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

JUNE OF RECOGNITIONS

Kosovo now recognised by 101 UN members. In June, Kosovo also became a sovereign member of Council of Europe Development Bank.

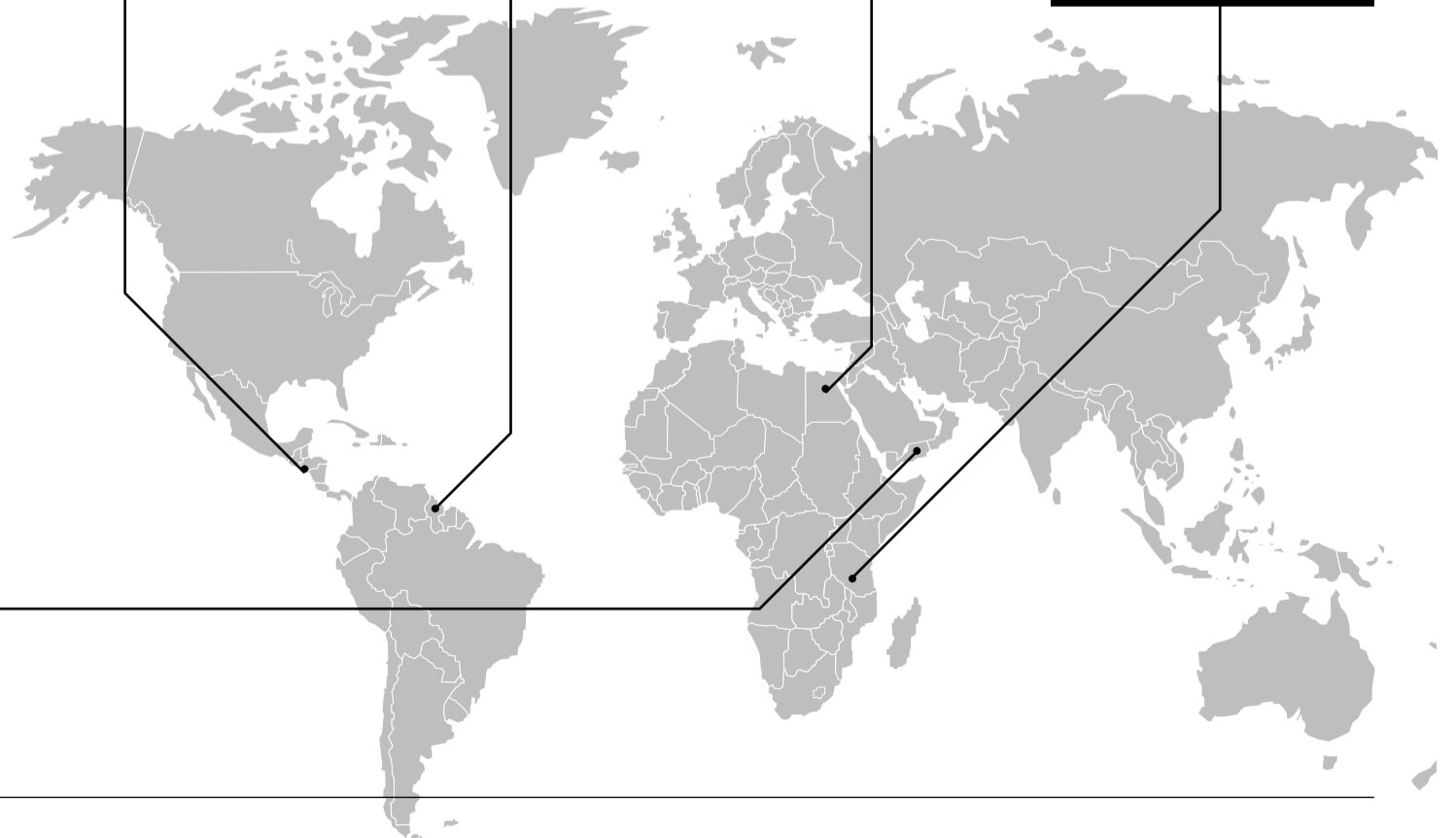
11 JUNE 2013
Yemen recognizes Kosovo
 Yemen announced its recognition of the Republic of Kosovo as an independent and sovereign state. The recognition of the Republic of Kosovo came in a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry. "Therefore, the Yemeni government will establish diplomatic relations with the Republic of Kosovo in order to develop the bilateral relations and serve the common interests of the two brotherly countries and peoples in all fields," the Foreign Ministry said.
 The statement expressed the government's aspiration of the Republic of Kosovo to exercise its effective role as a new member of the international community to help underpin the security and stability in the Balkan region and the world. It also pinned hopes that friendly relations and mutual respect prevail between the two neighbors, Kosovo and Serbia, for the prosperity of their peoples and the security and stability of the region. The Foreign Ministry urged Kosovo and Serbia to resolve all outstanding issues between them in accordance with the principles of the international law and the United Nations Charter.

29 JUNE 2013
El Salvador recognizes Kosovo
 The Government of the Republic of El Salvador decided to recognize the Republic of Kosovo. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo announce don Twitter the forthcoming recognition by this country and it was acknowledged subsequently that the Government of El Salvador has taken the official step of recognizing Kosovo as sovereign and independent nation. This recognition brought the total number to 101.

13 JUNE 2013
Guyana confirms recognition of Kosovo
 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Kosovo has confirmed the recognition by Republic of Guyana. The two countries signed a document establishing diplomatic relations thus confirming in writing the recognition of Kosovo as sovereign by Guyana.

26 JUNE 2013
Egypt recognizes Kosovo
 The Government of Egypt has taken a decision to recognize Kosovo as an independent and sovereign state. The official decision of the recognition of Kosovo by Egypt was communicated to Kosovo's Foreign Minister, Enver Hoxhaj, by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt and by the Assistant to the President for Foreign Relations and International Cooperation, Essam Al-Haddad.

31 MAY 2013
Tanzania recognizes Kosovo
 Tanzania has recognized Kosovo's independence. The news was confirmed to Kosovo General Consulate in New York by the authorities of Tanzania. The news was also announced in Prishtina by Deputy Prime Minister Behgjet Pacolli, in a press conference. According to Deputy PM, this country has been making efforts to recognize Kosovo for four years and after some discussions in the parliament, finally decided to recognize Kosovo's statehood. Agreement with Serbia on normalizing relations paved the way for even greater recognition of Kosovo by the rest of UN members.



About Us & Our Events



Participants at the Kosovo-Montenegro Friendship forum in Prishtina.

Strengthening of relations between Kosovo and Montenegro

Prime Minister of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, Speaker of Parliament, Jakup Krasniqi, and the Foreign Minister Enver Hoxhaj greeted the Montenegrin delegation to Kosovo

On 3-4 June, 2013 the forum of Kosovo-Montenegro Friendship "Radovan Zogovic" was organized by the Association of Montenegrins of Kosovo, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, as well as by the Ministries of Cultures of the respective countries. The forum gathered dozens of diplomats, representatives of culture, activists and tourism officials of both countries, including representatives of the Albanian community in Montenegro and of the Montenegrin community in Kosovo. The title of the forum that aims to become a permanent platform for deepening relations between the two neighboring countries was dedicated to the famous Montenegrin poet Radovan Zogovic, who decades ago wrote about the atrocities and massacres of Serb military exercised against Kosovo's population and Albanians following the Balkan Wars. The Forum has worked over two days with the focus on the cultural area, commercial exchanges and the diplomatic cooperation between the two countries which seek membership in the European Union. During the five panels other topics were also discussed, including road transport, cooperation between businesses. In addition, an exhibition of modern Montenegrin and an evening of ethno-jazz music from Montenegro.

In the first day of the panel, among the special guests was the Head of the Kosovo Writers' League and famous political dissident, Adem Demaci, who highly appreciated the creation of the Forum and the commitment of both government in the deepening of good neighborly

relations. Mr. Demaci said that the two countries should further strengthen their ties. "First of all, we are humans, and then we are Albanians or Montenegrins and therefore we must consider these human relations for good neighborly relations," said the writer and publicist, Demaci.

The president of the Association of Montenegrins of Kosovo, Slobodan Vujcic, said that he is very proud of the initiative of the two countries for the establishment of a forum that will support cultural activity and heritage of Kosovo Montenegrins and will help deepen the friendship between the two countries. Mr. Vujcic expressed particular thanks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo for the great help given to the Forum, which was supported by the Foreign Ministries of the two countries, Soros Foundation (KFOS) and the British Council.

Deputy Foreign Minister of Kosovo, Mr. Petrit Selimi said that the Forum that was co-organized with the Montenegrin counterpart is an evidence that the Balkan states must cooperate with each other because of the commercial, economic and diplomatic ties that we must build on a sound basis and within the good neighborliness that is required from all of us who aspire to EU membership as a common family. Mr. Selimi said that "The fact that the ministries of the Governments of Kosovo and Montenegro cooperate closely in the creation of new bridges, proves once again that Kosovo has no open issues with its neighbors, except with Serbia with whom it is working on the normalization of relations, and that Kosovo is a proven country of tolerance and it is a factor of peace and stability in the Balkans".



SAMI KASTRATI

■ **What do you do, where are you based?** I'm Minister-Counsellor at the Embassy of the Republic of Kosovo in The Hague/ Kingdom of The Netherlands. I'm in charge of issues related to Economic Diplomacy, Public Diplomacy and Consular Affairs. ■ **What is the most you like about the job you do?** Firstly, representing and defending national interests of the Republic of Kosovo worldwide through diplomatic missions accredited to The Netherlands. Secondly, identifying, prioritising and boosting the issues of common interests with the receiving state on bilateral basis. And last, but not least, promoting and improving the

image of our country, especially in formal and informal gatherings where you find many prejudices and a lack of first hand information about Kosovo. The part I like the most is the feeling of being the eyes and ears of my country abroad. ■ **What is the best thing about the city you live in?** Rising from the barren desert, with its towering skyscrapers glittering in the fierce sun, futuristic buildings, glitzy shopping malls and sweeping highways, Riyadh is one of the most splendid and most attractive cities in the Middle East. Being located in the middle of the desert, Riyadh was described as "a jewel in the desert".



ZANA RUGOVA

■ **What do you do, where are you based?** I am First Secretary at the Embassy of the Republic of Kosovo in Vienna, Austria. ■ **What is the most you like about the job you do?** First of all, the part I like most about my job is representing my country and contributing to advancing its interests abroad. Secondly, I like travelling and learning about other cultures; and as a result getting a much broader experience. ■ **What is the best thing about the city you live in?** The natural beauty of Austria is spectacular. Vienna, the capital city is elegant, traditional and very vibrant. This elegance and tradition find their greatest

expression in the Inner City, which is not only visited by tourists but is also where the locals meet for coffee or shopping. The main characteristics of Vienna are the ancient and stunning architecture and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, which is known as one of the finest classical music orchestras in the world. Vienna's architecture is amazing and is highlighted by museums, churches, theatres, palaces, and many other ancient buildings. The other thing that has really impressed me is how the arts are so well integrated into society here. In other words, this city has given me an amazing and unforgettable experience.



BENJAMIN NIKOLIQI

■ **What do you do, where are you based?** I am Consul at the Consulate of the Republic of Kosovo in Geneva. ■ **What is the most you like about the job you do?** Apart from the privilege of being appointed as the first consul to Geneva, where I had the utmost pleasure to open our Consulate, the part I like most about my job is serving our citizens, strengthening relationships with the host authorities and establishing new ones with my fellow diplomats from both consular and diplomatic missions in Geneva. I've been truly blessed with serving my country by doing the work I love the most. ■ **What is the best thing about the city you live in?** The birthplace of Dunant, Rousseau and Gallatin, Geneva is located at the foot of the Alps and Jura mountains, around the Rhone river and Lake Lemman. It has with many

beautiful parks and gardens, and is also a home to the European headquarters of the UN and over twenty agencies dealing with human rights, training and education, humanitarian action, trade, the environment and sustainable development, meteorology, intellectual property, health, nuclear research, telecommunications and labour. It is also a host to over 170 permanent missions, including as many as 250 NGOs. Whether you call it "the smallest of the big cities", "International Geneva", "World Humanitarian Capital" or "The city of peace", you'll never go wrong. As the place of multilateral diplomacy it has been a setting to many historic negotiations, treaties and conventions. Rich architecture, museums and fine French cuisine are yet another reason more to enjoy the city.



ZEENAT KHANCHE

■ **What do you do, where are you based?** I currently work as a Communications Advisor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kosovo, based in the capital city Pristina. I am a UK diplomat who first worked with the Ministry last year, on a short secondment via the British Embassy, during which time I wrote Kosovo's National Digital Diplomacy Strategy. I'm now back in Kosovo to work on implementation of digital strategy and provide support on wider communications. ■ **What is the most you like about the job you do?** The people that I work with. I feel extremely privileged to work closely with the Deputy Foreign Minister Petrit Selimi, as part of his Cabinet. Having worked in the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Ministry, it is fascinating to be within the Ministry of another country - and Kosovo having just celebrated its fifth

anniversary this year is a very interesting place to be! My colleagues have all made me feel very welcome, and I certainly feel like I am also a diplomat on behalf of Kosovo, as well as the UK. ■ **What is the best thing about the city you live in?** Well of course the wonderful Kosovar friends that I have made. But the coffee is pretty amazing - I wouldn't hesitate to say that Kosovo has the best macchiato in the world! I like nothing better than doing as the locals do, catching up with friends over a macchiato. The cafe culture is brilliant, the food is great and with all the young people here, there always seems to be something fun going on. From fashion shows to parties, there is a vibrant scene in Pristina. And at weekends, it's also very easy to just pop to the countryside for a lovely lunch with a view.



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MADE *in* KOSOVO



Prizren City & Rahovec Winery; 2-Day Tour

Highlights

- Scenic drive through the picturesque Gorge of Caraleves
- Guided tour of Prizren's historic sights, which date from the Roman to Ottoman Empires
- Traditional Kosovo dinner overlooking the Sharri mountains
- Wine tasting at Stone Castle Winery, the largest in South East Europe

Departing from Pristina, we will drive through the beautiful Gorge of Caraleves and arrive in Prizren for a guided tour around the city. We will visit the Prizren

Castle, which dates from the Roman Empire, and the Ottoman era Sinan Pasha Mosque and Hamam (Turkish bath house). We will also visit a historic 200 year old tree, the League of Prizren Monument which commemorates Albanian nationalism in the Ottoman Empire, the 15th century Catholic Cathedral, Stone Castle Winery – the largest winery in the region, and the Daka family basement winery. The "Te Sylja" restaurant in Prizren will introduce the group to "Prizreni Qofte" and other de-

licious regional specialties for lunch. Overnight at the newly renovated SHARRI Resort in the Sharri Mountains above Prizren. Contact: Kosovo Tourism Group

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Diplomatic Agenda



PM Thaçi received at the White House by the VP of the United States of America, Joe Biden.

PM Thaçi and FM Hoxhaj meet with U.S. Vice President, Joe Biden

Prime Minister of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, was received at the White House by the Vice President of the United States of America, Joe Biden. The Prime Minister thanked Vice President Biden, on behalf of the government and the people of Kosovo, for the continued support that the Obama Administration, and Mr. Biden has personally, have given to Kosovo in these moments at this time of the consolidation of the new state of Kosovo.

Speaking on about the agreement of normalizing relations between Kosovo and Serbia on April 19th, 2013 in Brussels, the Prime Minister said that this agreement is not the end of normalization, but it is the beginning, and now the key word is the full implementation of this agreement. Prime Minister Thaçi thanked Vice President Biden for the unconditional support the U.S. has given to this process. "Without U.S. support, this agreement would not be possible. The U.S. guarantees and positions were decisive", Thaçi said. Regarding the willingness of Prishtina to implement the agreement, Thaçi said that legislative changes are in the final stage, and as soon as he returns from this visit, they will be adopted

in the Assembly, and that the Kosovar side will not cause any delay. Furthermore, in this regard the Prime Minister stressed that we the government is are working hard to convey messages to the citizens of the north, where, as part of the agreement, a development fund will be established for the north in order to improve the life of its citizens in that part, who for the past 14 years who have lived in fear for their future. Speaking of about the European perspective of Kosovo, Mr. Thaçi conveyed to Mr. Biden that Kosovo does not seek its future to enter into the EU by through just invoking moral principles, but also by fulfilling certain criteria. Kosovo's citizens are the only ones in the region who need visas to travel to the EU, having which creates a sense of isolation. "However, Kosovo's path towards the EU has no alternative, and we will continuously produce proofs for you Mr. Vice President, so that we can also facilitate your support for us", stated Prime Minister Thaçi. In During his meeting with U.S. Vice President Biden, Prime Minister Thaçi raised the issue of the future of the Kosovo Security Force, confirming Kosovo's the vision of Kosovo for NA-

TO membership, because KSF is also built under the supervision and upon NATO standards. On this event, Prime Minister Thaçi thanked the Iowa National Guard's for the partnership and support it is providing to KSF.

U.S. Vice President, Mr. Joe Biden, welcoming the Prime Minister, expressing his high regard for the vision and attitude of the Prime Minister, considering describing him it as the an undisputed statesman, who takes took very important decisions in difficult times, but is always working to in the benefit of Kosovo and its citizens. "The historic agreement reached in Brussels paves the secure way of for Kosovo towards to enter the EU and NATO. Your prudence and leadership in overcoming ethnic divisions and animosities of the bitter past is highly valued by the U.S., therefore, in this process, the U.S. support will never be lacking for Kosovo and for you," stated said among others the U.S. Vice President, Joe Biden. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo, Mr. Enver Hoxhaj, and the Minister of European Integration, Ms. Çitaku were also in attendance at in the meeting with U.S. Vice President, Joe Biden.

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen in an official visit to Kosovo

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi held a meeting with the NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, in July, at the KFOR headquarters in Prishtina. In the meeting they discussed the current political developments in Kosovo and the region, with

special emphasis on implementing the agreement normalising relations between Kosovo and Serbia. Mr. Thaçi expressed his gratefulness for NATO's continued support for the Kosovo Security Force and informed Mr. Rasmussen about the achievements in the process of normalising

of relations with Serbia. Mr. Rasmussen welcomed the agreement between Kosovo and Serbia and the increased cooperation that will come from its implementation. After this meeting, Prime Minister Thaçi also participated in the meeting of the NATO North Atlantic Council.

Kosovo participates at the 18th Central Europe Summit of Presidents

President of Republic of Kosovo, Mrs. Atifete Jahjaga, took part at the 18th Central Europe Summit of Heads of States, held in Bratislava. Among the heads of states present was Serbia's President Tomislav Nikolic. President Jahjaga said that Kosovo's future lies in the EU and that Kosovo is committed to this vision. Jahjaga said that "Kosovo will continue to remain a factor of peace and stability and it a promoter of good neighbourly



relations. I reiterate my gratitude to the organisers and the participating countries for helping the aspiring countries to be more closely aligned with the EU".

The UN Security Council meeting on the situation in Kosovo

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, attended the UN Security Council meeting on the situation in Kosovo.

Mr. Thaçi said that over the last three months, Kosovo has had several historic developments.

He stressed that the most important event was the signing, with the mediation of the European Union, of an inter-state agreement for peace and normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia.

Prime Minister Thaçi added that "in parallel with this event,



the institutions of the Republic of Kosovo have maintained economic and political stability, they have continued to promote and protect the rights and interests of all communities, they have improved the socio-economic situation in the country, as well as significantly advancing our European perspective".



The United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary, Mr. William Hague hosts Kosovo's President Atifete Jahjaga

President of the Republic of Kosovo, Mrs. Atifete Jahjaga, upon arrival in London, met with the United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary, Mr. William Hague, with whom she discussed the implementation of the agreement achieved in Brussels on normalisation of relations between Republic of Kosovo and Republic of Serbia

as well as the European integration process of Kosovo and the region. UK Foreign Secretary, Mr. Hague, praised the achievement of the agreement between Kosovo and Serbia and said that he expects its implementation in practice. Mr. Hague gave his support to Kosovo's European integration process.

Let Croatia lead the Balkans into the EU

Serbia and Kosovo have been locked in a deep and bitter struggle – until now. Through dialogue, co-operation and painful compromise, prime ministers Ivica Dacic and Hashim Thaci have reached a historic agreement to normalise relations. The next steps will not be easy, but these leaders have given their citizens an unprecedented opportunity to build a future defined by respect for rights, shared prosperity and peaceful coexistence.

James Joyce wrote that “history is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake”. Twenty years ago, Croatians lived that nightmare, imprisoned by regional hatreds and ravaged by war. On Monday their country became the 28th member of the EU.

JOE BIDEN

Vice-president of USA

Croatia has not merely awakened from its tortured history – it has realised the dream of a Euro-Atlantic future. Croatia's success was far from inevitable. In fact, it is a testament to the courage of its citizens and leaders who overcame the temptations of ultranationalism and resentment. Letting go of the past is a daily struggle. And, day by day, Croatians kept faith with an ambitious vision and built the democratic institutions that opened the doors to Nato and now the EU. This achievement belongs to the Croatian people. But it is also speaks to the transformative power of the European project guiding countries toward the rule of law, open markets, prosperity and peace. Croatia is further along that journey than some may think. It has been a Nato ally since 2009 and a contributor to security around the world, including Afghanistan. Once other countries sent peacekeepers to Croatia; now Croatia contributes to peacekeeping missions in

Kosovo, Haiti and the Western Sahara. Croatia's accession to the EU also raises the stakes for neighbours who face a risk of being left behind.

Over time, the borders of the EU should unite the countries of southeastern Europe rather than divide them. We hope that one day its citizens will benefit from the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership we are negotiating with the EU.

But first, Croatia's neighbours must make difficult choices that will pave their own paths into Europe.

It is in the interest of the US, Croatia and the rest of Europe that they succeed. History has no greater monument to the idea that countries need not repeat the conflicts of the past than the EU – and no greater mechanism than integration to ensure they don't. Every country that binds itself to the EU's rules and institutions brings us closer to the goal of a Europe whole, free and at peace. Even during difficult economic times, a unified Europe is preferable to the threats of division and instability. That is why Croatia is working to bring the very people it fought less than a generation ago into the European fold. In recent months, I have met several leaders from the western Balkans. I am confident that, if they make the right choices, every one of Croatia's neighbours can get there. Serbia and Kosovo have been locked in a deep and bitter struggle – until now.



Croatians celebrated their country's accession to the European Union with a party in the capital city of Zagreb.

Through dialogue, co-operation and painful compromise, prime ministers Ivica Dacic and Hashim Thaci have reached a historic agreement to normalise relations. The next steps will not be easy, but these leaders have given their citizens an unprecedented opportunity to build a future defined by respect for rights, shared prosperity and peaceful coexistence. Montenegro and Albania, too, have hard work left to do, but they are making progress toward European integration, tackling economic and political reforms, fighting corruption and strengthening the rule of law.

Montenegro is also on the path to join Albania inside Nato. Macedonia must stay the course of reform, address its

interethnic tensions and, with Greece, summon the courage to find a mutually acceptable solution on its name. Unfortunately, there are still some who cling to ethnic grievances, personal rivalries and a zero-sum approach to politics that holds back progress. Four years ago, in Sarajevo, I stood in parliament to tell politicians and officials that the door was open for Bosnia-Herzegovina to become an integral part of Europe, and the US wanted to help them get there. That requires agreement to eliminate constitutional provisions that discriminate against minorities and the decision to register defence properties as state property. Neither has happened, and the people of Bosnia deserve better.

No country can completely leave behind its history or forget its tragedies. And nor should they. But countries can choose to put their futures first and act for the well-being of generations to come. That is what Croatia has done. And the result is that dreams that seemed inconceivable 20 years ago today are wonderfully, irreversibly real. That is both a cause for celebration and a reminder of what is possible. We congratulate Croatia and recommit ourselves to the larger goal of welcoming the entire Balkans into a Europe that is whole, free and at peace.

This column was published in FT. The writer is the vice-president of the United States

Kosovo becomes a sovereign member of Council of Europe Bank

PRISHTINA, 15 JUNE 2013 – The Republic of Kosovo has become a member of the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB). The decision was taken on June 15th, at a meeting of the Board of Directors of the CEB in Malta, when with 31 out of the 39 members voted to accept the application of the Republic of Kosovo for full membership in this institution, an autonomous branch of the Council of Europe (CoE). The Deputy Minister of Foreign Af-

airs of the Republic of Kosovo, Petrit Selimi, in a press conference, has revealed details about the great importance of the membership of the Republic of Kosovo in to this important key financial institution.

According to Selimi, Kosovo may benefit up to 30 or to 40 million euros per a year from their membership to this bank, which is also the largest organization after the EBRD, in which Kosovo is who accepted Kosovo with

full rights under Kosovo's constitutional name. He said that Kosovo will benefit mainly in social projects. “It is expected that 30 to 40 million euros per year will be ready in very affordable loans intended for social projects dealing with the strengthening of social equality and projects on displaced persons, homes for the destitute citizens,” Selimi said, adding that these projects will be mainly aimed at the strengthening



Kosovo became the new sovereign member of the CoE Bank, which will further support projects of social inclusion

of the social component. Selimi also said that membership to in the bank has been a priority of the Minister of Foreign Affairs,

Enver Hoxhaj, and is the result of a long work of partnering ministries. Membership in the Council of Europe Development Bank, which comes just days after the recognition of Kosovo by some several countries, is a great success for the Foreign Ministry at this stage of the strengthening of the international subjectivity of the Republic of Kosovo, as well as Kosovo's interaction in the multilateral organizations.

Kosovo Revives Its Jewish Heritage

Recently, many Muslim countries and Muslim minority communities have fallen back into conflict. The U.S., Britain and France have experienced new terrorist attacks, Turkey has seen spreading urban protests against its Islamist government, and horrific bloodshed continues in Syria.

In the Balkan republic of Kosovo, with a Muslim majority around 80 percent, a different spirit is visible.

On May 23, during a week of events promoting «tolerance and reconciliation,» the Kosovar Albanian government dedicated a monument of remembrance to the nearly unknown place of Kosovo in Jewish history. The stone slab was erected within the gated courtyard facing the country's parliament, in the capital, Pristina.

It reads, «This is the place where the last Synagogue [in] Kosovo stood until 1963. This plaque is raised in memory of Kosovo Jews that perished in Nazi camps during [the] Holocaust. [The] People of Kosovo will never forget them.»

The commemoration was attended by representatives of the official Islamic Community apparatus and the Catholic Church -- Kosovo's main Albanian religious minority -- joined by politicians and diplomats from many countries.

Inauguration of the memorial was carried out with great solemnity by uniformed members of the Kosovo Guard, a ceremonial body, since the republic now has no armed forces. Kosovo prime minister Hashim Thaci, a former commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army, delivered official comments.

He referred to the Holocaust as an «inconceivable crime that happened in Europe and which changed the paths of our societies in the last six decades.» Thaci pointed out that Kosovo had been a way-station for hundreds of Jewish refugees from the Balkans and other parts of Europe, who were protected in Albania.

He affirmed, «They found safe passage in our lands ... sadly few among the millions who perished.»

During Thaci's remarks the Muslim call to prayer was heard from a nearby Ottoman-era mosque. Following the prime minister, Israeli diplomat Yosef Levy



ARMEND NIMANI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Jewish Heritage Plaque
23 May 2013, Pejë

Kosovo remembers Jews who perished in the Holocaust as Pristina unveils commemorative plaque

Tolerance Week in Kosovo - which takes place from 20 to 26 May - on 23 May 2013 marked the remembrance of Holocaust victims as a permanent commemorative plaque was unveiled in front of the Kosovo Parliament. The Jewish community in Kosovo has a long history, contributing much to the diversity of the country, as they made Kosovo

their home. Many Jews were saved by the old code of honour, known as «besa,» as they fled the Nazi regime through Kosovo to Albania during the Second World War. This code called specifically for taking responsibility for refugees. Sadly, many Jews also perished as the Nazis reached Kosovo towards the end of the war.

commented on the coincidence as symbolic of interfaith harmony. He declared that Israel would not forget the rescue of several thousand Jews by Albanians.

Rabbi Levi Matusof, a European Jewish leader, recited a psalm and prayed in honor of the Kosovars. Albanian scholar Saimir Lolja, in an article titled «The Rescue of Jews in Kosovo,» published in the English-language weekly Tirana Times, described how protection of Jews from the Nazis in the Albanian lands during World War II was undertaken by Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox Christians. One Kosovar Muslim

man, Arslan Mustafa Reznici, has been honored as «Righteous Among the Nations» by the Holocaust memorial center at Yad Vashem in Israel.

Reznici constructed a house on his property to shelter Jewish families.

A handful of Jews were deported from Kosovo after a Nazi-directed raid in mid-1944.

But most Jews who went to Kosovo and Albania were saved by local officials who provided them with false identity papers, or moved them from place to place.

The Germans, who occupied Albania in 1943, demanded a list

of Jews, and authorization to deport them, from the Albanian authorities, but were told that jurisdiction over the Jewish community belonged to the Albanian government alone.

This action was recognized by Yad Vashem in 1998. The placement of the memorial to the lost synagogue of Pristina elicited some critical comments from Kosovar personalities.

But nobody objected in principle to its installation. Leka Reznici, grandson of the aforementioned Arslan Reznici, and an activist in the Kosovo-Israel Friendship Association, questions whether the location of the synagogue, demolished under Communism, has been correctly identified.

x Kosovo Assembly vice president Glauk Konjufca of the «Self-Determination» movement, which stands in opposition to Thaci and the current administration of the country, found it unsatisfactory that the memorial was set up in a space that is not visible to the public. Otherwise, however, Kosovo opinion expressed enthusiasm about the recovery of their small part of Jewish memory. The Kosovo government has also pledged to construct a Museum of Kosovo's Jewish Heritage.

A vestigial Jewish presence long survived in the historic Kosovo city of Prizren.

Before the 1998-1999 NATO intervention in Kosovo, the community was headed by Nexhat Fetah, son of a Jewish mother and Muslim father. The Kosovo Jews are led currently by Votim Demiri, who participated in the activities surrounding the synagogue plaque. In most Muslim lands and in many formerly Communist countries, the Jewish legacy has been treated ambivalently at best.

The Jewish people were devastated by the Holocaust, and then by the post-1948 expulsions of Arab-speaking Jews to Israel, along with anti-Jewish discrimination in Soviet Russia and Poland.

By contrast, in the Balkans, Jews are prominent in Bosnian cultural and political affairs and celebrated in Kosovo public life.

The moderate Muslims in these countries deserve encouragement for their proven commitment to mutual respect between differing faiths.

InterfaithKosovo

— JAVA E TOLERANCËS
DHE PAFITIMIT · THE WEEK OF TOLERANCE
AND RECONCILIATION · NEDELJA
TOLERANCIE I POMIRENJA —

The Peja Principles

1. We reiterate the willingness of all parties to work together, in Kosovo and wider world, towards better interfaith understanding.
2. We recognize that inter-religious dialogue is enriched by appreciation of compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, and the quest for justice and peace enshrined in the Abrahamic traditions and faiths others than their own.
3. We confirm our willingness to learn from the Sacred Texts of traditions other than their own.
4. We stress the necessity of taking as much time as is needed in working for the common good of humanity through dialogue.
5. We confirm the commitment of all parties to work together toward a more peaceful and tolerant future.
6. We reiterate the understanding that inter-religious dialogue is not only the preserve of scholars but includes all members of mosques, churches, temples, synagogues, and other faith communities – including particularly the voices of women, young people and children.
7. We stress the importance of international stakeholders such as donor community, international multilateral organizations and others to make available resources for ensuring open channels of dialogue and communication.
8. The participants of the Interfaith Conference in Kosovo, as people who strongly believe in dialogue and reconciliation, want to express our sincere hope that the forthcoming processes aimed at ending the conflict in Syria, will demonstrate the will of all parties to listen to, understand, and work to live in peace with each other. This must lead to implementation of a peace agreement to immediately end the conflict to the benefit of all the people of Syria and across the region.
9. Where inter-religious dialogue works, trust between the different parties grows, self-criticism begins to emerge, and solidarity between the parties flourishes. Faith works to build tolerance and mutual respect among disparate communities.
10. Building sustainable peace among people of faith starts with the kind of interfaith dialogue was strongly reinforced in the Peja/Pec Conference. Fulfillment requires continued dialogue, enhanced understanding, increased tolerance, and sustained commitment toward learning from one another, openness, and recognition of common goals among faith communities.



dings, Kosovo Deputy Foreign Minister Petrit Selimi thanked the participants for coming to Kosovo and expressed his hope that the outcome of this important conference would be captured in the «Peja Principles», a set of commitments capturing discussions from the conference.

A lively panel discussion on the issue of «old media, social media and interfaith relations» was chaired by Noori Bibi, director of the organisation Young Muslim Voices in the UK. It considered how developments in media and technology can assist in helpful dialogue, and how it can also be a barrier when used by extremists and religious fundamentalists.

Panelists included Rabbi Joshua Stanton, Associate Director of the Center for Global Judaism at Hebrew College in the US, who said: «Social media is here to stay, the question in my mind is what we do?» He gave examples of how he has used social media effectively in his own work to create online communities.

Other panelists included Stephen Suleyman Schwartz, a columnist at the widely read website Huffington Post; Rizwan Hussein, founder of UK organisation working with Pakistani youth Jawaab, Omer Karabeg, Editor of Radio Free Europe, with headquarters in Prague; and Dr Anna Di Lellio, who currently teaches at the New School in New York City. Themes raised during the discussion included how real-time information overload can distort accuracy and the role of individuals; there were concerns that some internet forums have become a platform for disinformation and hate speech, as individuals were able to hide behind their computer screens. However, the power of social media means that it is important for religious and community leaders to engage to ensure that positive discussion is also present online.

Following lunchtime speeches from Imam Sabri Bajgora of the Kosovo Islamic Community and Bishop Andrej of the Serbian Orthodox Church, participants went on a tour of Peja. They visited historic and religious sites including the Peja Ethnological Museum, the Old Bazaar, Bajrakli Mosque and the Pec Patriarchate.

Many of the international participants left Kosovo on 23 May 2013, though a number are planning to travel further around Kosovo and the Balkans region.



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— JAVA E TOLERANCËS
DHE PAFITIMIT · THE WEEK OF TOLERANCE
AND RECONCILIATION · NEDELJA
TOLERANCIE I POMIRENJA —

Opening the proceedings, Kosovo Deputy Foreign Minister Petrit Selimi thanked the participants for coming to Kosovo and expressed his hope that the outcome of this important conference would be captured in the «Peja Principles», a set of commitments capturing discussions from the conference.

10th Anniversary of South East European Gathering - Breakfast Prayer Ceremony

This event was organized by the Parliament of Kosovo and was inspired by the National Prayer Breakfast in the United States – a gathering of world leaders in the fields of politics, diplomacy, and economics that is held every year in United States in order to forge bonds between the United States and other world leaders through the promotion of values of peace, belief, and tolerance. The Breakfast Prayer Ceremony in Kosovo was held this May with the intention of promoting the same values. Since 2003, Balkan governments have hosted events modeled on and supported by these organizers from the United States. This year, Kosovo had the honor of hosting the 10th Anniversary of the South East European Gathering Breakfast Prayer Ceremony – an event that assembled a range of lawmakers, diplomats, and executives from South East Europe, the United States, and the rest of the world. The



Gathering of world leaders at the Breakfast Prayer Ceremony in Prishtina.

ceremony was held on the 25th of May at the Emerald Hotel in Prishtina, and the attendees had additional opportunities to meet and network with leaders from all political parties and communities within Kosovo. In order to continue to promote the positive agenda and reconciliation in

the Balkans, it is especially important to note that this year's gathering was organized against the important backdrop of the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue – one whose goal is to bring reconciliation between the two countries on their road to Euro-Atlantic integration.

Interview with Edem Adzogenu from Ghana, the recipient of first Kosovo visa

1) What are your impressions of Kosovo?

It is a very resilient country, full of young people who are open to ideas, managing their affairs and determined to establish a country on proper values. Kosovo's population, as one of the youngest in Europe, represents the potential and energy for development. Kosovars are a particularly friendly and hospitable people.

2) How do you see Ghana/Kosovan relations developing?

Ghana stands strong for with Kosovo in line with the father of nation, Kwame Nkrumah, who led the way to, and guaranteed, Africa's self-determination and prosperity.

Naturally, Ghana recognized Kosovo without hesitation.

I see possibilities for the deepening of socio-economic ties at the bilateral level. There is also potential for tourism sector cooperation.

Ghana and Kosovo should absorb each others' strengths. Ghana is a hub in Western Africa, with its natural resources and a strong middle-upper class. Kosovo is strong in its strong human resources, with many young people who studied and worked abroad since the wartime when they were forced to leave their country during the war.

Other areas of cooperation include agriculture, health, and the environment. Kosovo can also bring expertise in technology and architecture. Hence, the countries will share each others' strengths.

3) How can the recognition of Kosovo by Ghana affect the



Minister Hoxhaj and Mr. Adzogenu during the ceremony of receiving the first visa.

West African countries?

Ghana blazed the trail for independence in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is a beacon of hope and light for democracy in West Africa, pursuing the tenets of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), mainly self-determination.

Based on Ghana-Kosovo relations and their tangible outcomes, other countries in the region will be encouraged to recognize Kosovo.

It is encouraging that Kosovo and Serbia have made important steps toward normalized relations. Ghana will share this and other Kosovo's other achievements

with the countries in West Africa.

4) How do you feel as the first foreign citizen to have been given the first visa of Kosovo, the youngest country in Europe?

I am truly blessed and honored to have received the first Kosovo visa. There are 193 countries in the United Nations. For any person to become the first recipient of a country's visa is a 1 to 7 billion chance. I am one of those privileged ones to who can send the message to the world, through the sticker on my passport, that Kosovo is a

country that must be visited and that it has an address on the map of the world. It is an incredible feeling.

5) How do you see Kosovo in the future?

Kosovo is a small country with a small population. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

Kosovo personifies a country with character in the midst of adversity. It is a model for the values it continues to convey

to the major countries in the world.

What the world needs is a humane society. This implies enabling people to live in peace and harmony, to be able to share each others' strengths and to united in principles, to provide food, clothing, shelter and dignity.

Kosovo should serve as a model for the European countries to fashion themselves after.

This is achieved by growing at its own pace, creating a sustainable development model and a proper value system. Kosovo should not follow the West's tale, it should rather move it.

The design of Kosovo visa presented

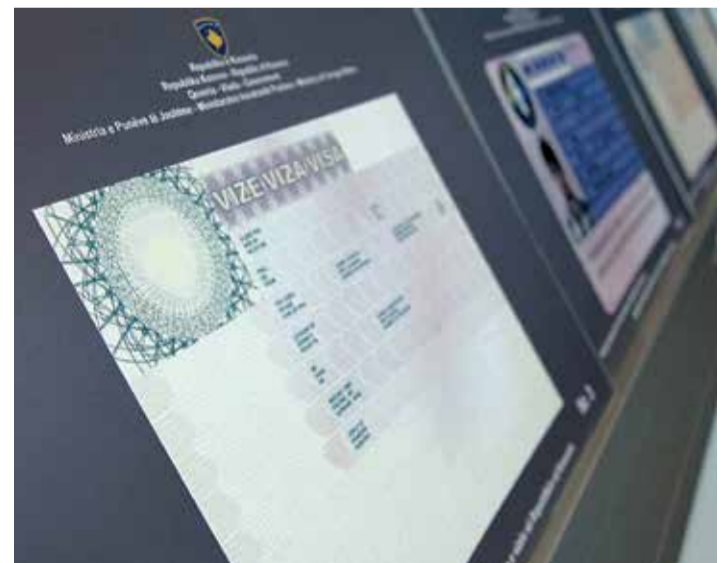
The design of the official visa of the Republic of Kosovo was presented on 5 June 2013 in the premises of the Government of Kosovo. Following a national competition organized by the Norwegian contractor that is responsible for delivering the visa system for Kosovo, a winner of the project was announced.

The introduction of visas for the citizens of 87 countries is an obligation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo, following the Roadmap for Visa-Free Travel to EU that was

approved earlier last year. Foreign Minister Enver Hoxhaj declared that, in conformity with legal deadlines, the system will be launched as a pilot project in the General Consulate in Istanbul, through which many travelers from Africa and Asia arrive to Kosovo. By the end of the year, Kosovo will entirely implement the visa regime, thus introducing a safe system of arrivals and departures in Kosovo. The winner of the design competition is Antuan Kurti, a Kosovar designer who lives in Belgium.

The Kosovar Shpend Berbatovci came second, and Norik Rizaj came third.

Minister Vlora Citaku of European Integrations announced the winner who won the prize. Designer Kurti declared that he is very happy and proud that his design was selected among many who applied. The design of Kosovo visa will be printed with secure features against counterfitting, while the design incorporates elements of traditional images from Kosovo



World Press

New York Times profile on Kosovo Prime Minister Thaçi

“Mr. Thaci is being hailed in Washington and Brussels as the Gerry Adams of the Balkans, his country on the road toward Europe, his name even invoked, however improbably, as a possible Nobel Peace Prize candidate.” - NY Times Saturday Profile

PRISTINA, Kosovo — This is where it all began. On ¶ PRISTINA, Kosovo — WHEN Hashim Thaci directed a bloody guerrilla war from the mountains of this poor and rugged country, he was so adept at evading capture that fellow fighters called him the Snake. Now, Mr. Thaci, 45, the former commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army and the current prime minister of Kosovo, wants to be remembered as a statesman. In June he agreed to put in place a landmark power-sharing agreement with Serbia that is being hailed in Europe and the United States as a triumph of peace and reconciliation in the region after the Balkan wars of the 1990s, in which about 120,000 people died, more than 10,000 of them in Kosovo.

Mr. Thaci (pronounced THAH-chee) is being hailed in Washington and Brussels as the Gerry Adams of the Balkans, his country on the road toward Europe, his name even invoked, however improbably, as a possible Nobel Peace Prize candidate.

But in Serbia, he remains a deeply reviled figure, a complication that underlines the challenges to overcoming ethnic enmities in a region where memories run deep. Former K.L.A. commanders and Western diplomats say he was a ruthless and much-feared leader during the 1998-99 Kosovo war, who ordered arrests, assassinations and purges within the rebel army's ranks to fend off potential rivals. Mr. Thaci has strongly denied this.

“Most people in Serbia consider Thaci to be an undicted war criminal who personifies the double standard of the victor's justice,” said Ljiljana Smajlovic, a prominent Serbian commentator who is president of the Serbian Journalists' Association. “He now wants to forget his past and go by the book, and he is no doubt sincere in that pursuit. But every warlord in the former Yugoslavia rein-

vents himself as a liberal democrat.”

In an interview, Mr. Thaci rebuffed that characterization, arguing forcefully that he had been fighting a brutal war against a violent enemy. “I was fighting on the right side of history, liberating my people from tyranny against a ruthless enemy engaged in a massive attempt at genocide,” he said.

Yet the past keeps coming back to haunt him. In 2010, a Council of Europe report accused Mr. Thaci of having led a “mafialike” group that smuggled weapons, heroin and human organs during the war and its aftermath. Mr. Thaci has rejected those accusations as well, and the Kosovo government at the time called them “despicable.” In August 2011, the European Union set up a special task force to investigate the veracity of organ-trafficking claims, including whether or not Mr. Thaci was involved. It has not yet delivered its findings.

Asked about the accusations, including that Kosovar Albanians kidnapped Serbs during the war and harvested their kidneys at a secret “yellow house” in Albania, Mr. Thaci transformed his grin into a grimace.

“Something like that never happened; we have nothing to hide,” he said. “The earlier the issue is clear, the better it is for Kosovo. It is really a very heavy burden for us, and we believe in truth and justice.”

Such demons hover over regional reconciliation, and the success of the power-sharing accord would mark a rehabilitation of sorts for Mr. Thaci and a turning point for his country, which has struggled to gain full international acceptance.

MR. THACI said his wartime experience had taught him to keep his patience during six months of 12-hour-a-day talks this year when he faced his former foe, Prime Minister Ivica Dacic of Serbia. Mr. Dacic was the war-



Photo by New York Times

time spokesman of the former Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic, whose forces had tried, without success, to hunt down and kill Mr. Thaci.

“It wasn't easy to sit opposite one another at the table, two former sworn enemies,” Mr. Thaci said, recalling his first awkward handshake with Mr. Dacic. But he said pragmatism had ultimately prevailed. Being celebrated at home as a former soldier also helped.

An athletic and lanky man with a vise-grip handshake, Mr. Thaci, the seventh of nine children, comes from a family of farmers in the Drenica region of Kosovo, the heartland of Albanian resistance to the Serbs.

He said fighting was in his blood. His paternal grandfather fought the Nazis, and after the war his family became staunch anti-Communists who fought against Serb forces in the Yugoslav Army. Already an activist in his teens, he said, he became politicized while visiting family in Vienna and Paris in the 1980s, and glimpsed the possibility of a “normal” life away from Serbian police batons.

He later went underground to join the Kosovo Liberation

Army. While some, like Kosovo's first president, Ibrahim Rugova, favored Gandhian passive resistance, Mr. Thaci was a forceful advocate of armed struggle. “The Serbian regime would not be pacified by smiles and hugs,” he said.

In the early 1990s, he pursued postgraduate studies in politics and history in Switzerland. He is married and has a son.

He is credited with transforming the unwieldy and divided K.L.A. into a unified fighting machine in the late 1990s, as clashes with Serbian forces intensified. Colleagues recalled how during the war he walked the mountainous border between Kosovo and Albania more than 50 times, wearing a threadbare camouflage uniform and evading Serbian snipers, sometimes through snow several feet deep.

“He was viewed as charismatic, tough, courageous and brave,” recalled Petrit Selimi, Kosovo's deputy foreign minister.

At the NATO-sponsored peace talks in Rambouillet, France, early in 1999, Mr. Thaci made a strong impression on Madeleine K. Albright, the United States secretary of state. He proved to be a

pragmatist, signing a compromise deal that fell short of guaranteeing Kosovo's independence. The talks eventually collapsed when Belgrade refused to withdraw all of its military forces, prompting NATO's bombing campaign.

AFTER the war, he has been credited with demilitarizing the rebel army, though thousands of Serbs were nevertheless forced to flee from revenge attacks. He founded the Democratic Party of Kosovo, or P.D.K., which was made up largely of former guerrillas. After the party lost two consecutive elections — an unexpected blow — he overhauled its nationalist fighter image, preaching closer ties with the West. He finally won an election in November 2007.

He has also tried to revamp his macho reputation and recently startled even his closest advisers in this conservative country by championing civil rights for gay people. He has developed a love for fine Italian wines, is an avid skier and has long since traded in his camouflage gear for dark designer suits.

Although he has been widely credited with shepherding Kosovo toward independence — Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. has called him the “George Washington of Kosovo” — his government has also faced repeated accusations of rampant corruption. In May, he suffered another blow when a European Union court here ordered the arrest of seven former K.L.A. commanders accused of war crimes, including two former close aides.

Mr. Thaci insists that he and his fellow soldiers were freedom fighters. He quoted the lyrics of a favorite Sting song he said he had listened to as a young guerrilla leader.

“Takes more than combat gear to make a man. Takes more than a license for a gun. Confront your enemies, avoid them when you can. A gentleman will walk but never run.”

Dan Bilefsky for New York Times

World Press Photo exhibition in Kosovo for the first time

Prishtina has joined many of the world's capital cities by hosting the photographic exhibition World Press Photo 2013. Under the organisation of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the World Press Photo Fund, and with support from Dutch Embassy in Prishtina and the Embassy of Kosovo in Amsterdam, the exhibition of photographic reporters was opened on Wednesday evening in the Museum of Kosovo. The photos have been selected from all over the world from the last year.

At the opening ceremony were the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, Memli Krasniqi, representatives from the Dutch Embassy in Prishtina and the Embassy of Kosovo in Amsterdam, representatives from World Press Photo, Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Petrit Selimi, as well as artists and citizens.

In his speech, the Minister Krasniqi pointed out that the opening of such an exhibition for the first time in Kosovo constitutes a unique event in the whole cultural calendar. He further added that a photograph often tells

a better story than words themselves for certain histories or human fates. "The famous sentence 'the photo tells more than a thousand words', is true particularly when we refer to the journalistic photograph", he said.

"This exhibition besides being a documentation of many events all over the world, it also is a summary of photographs bearing high artistic values".

Minister Krasniqi also stressed that MCYS is very much dedicated to enriching the cultural calendar in Kosovo by supporting many cultural activities.

"We are highly prepared to support promotion of the work of many of our reporters in Kosovo and abroad as well", Krasniqi said, while he also added that Kosovo was already honoured 13 years ago when the photo-reporter Afrim Hajrullahu won the prize in this great competition.

The Minister also thanked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Embassy of Kosovo in Amsterdam, the Dutch Embassy in Prishtina, and World Press Photo Fund for their cooperation in bringing this exhibition to Prishtina.

The representative of



Photography by the Swedish photographer Paul Hansen who won the 56th World Press Photo.

Dutch Embassy in Prishtina, Carel Brands, expressed that he feels honoured that World Press Photo, established in the Netherlands more than 60 years ago, has come for the first time to Prishtina. He congratulated all stakeholders who worked for opening this exhibition, estimating that it is a very important event not only for the culture but for journalism in general. Brands stressed that he hopes that it shall not be

the last time that World Press Photo opens an exhibition in Prishtina.

The coordinator of the exhibition World Press Photo, Famke van der Valk, said that the initiative to bring this exhibition to Prishtina was launched two years ago and during this time great work has been done. She further added that it is a result of immense engagement by all the institutions who have worked towards this exhibition.

"Media has a great responsibility, not only in the case of which photo shall be published by them but they also have responsibility for the one that they don't publish", she said, further adding that photo-reporters risk a lot and make extraordinary efforts to bring before us images from important moments throughout the world.

The exhibition is open until 12 July 2013 in the National Museum of Kosovo.



Simon Shiroka retrospective exhibition in Prishtina.

Simon Shiroka retrospective at the Kosovo Art Gallery

A retrospective exhibition of works by renowned artist Simon Shiroka at the Kosovo Art Gallery opened on Friday, June 28th and will remain open until 28th August. Curated by Erzen Shkolli, this is the second retrospective the gallery has exhibited this year, the first

being the Engjëll Berisha Retrospective. The Kosovo Art Gallery has collected 155 artworks made during the 60's and 90's, including filigree and graphic work, as well as works which combine techniques of sculpture and drawing, made during the last years of the artist's life.

Kosovo's Petrit Halilaj at the Venice Biennale

Kosovo marked its first official participation at the Venice Biennale with Petrit Halilaj's installations. Halilaj's work consisted of intertwining branches, twigs and rods that transform the exhibition space into an anomalous spectacle, directly inverting visitors' expectations of contemporary art within a gallery setting. Taking up almost two-thirds of the space was a gargantuan structure that is detached from the ground, recalling images of some kind of primordial shelter or spacecraft from the future. The earthy scent of the installation further intensified the sensation of being within a tranquil inner realm. Halilaj introduced a personal touch to his



work by allowing two of his canaries to live within the installation itself, provoking the viewer to contemplate the notion of art as habitat. As with previous projects, Halilaj prepared for this installation by enlisting the involvement of his family, friends and other people close to him. Inspired by his mother's suggestion to create a structure within

a structure, the artist amalgamated the collective experiences of his contributors to form multiple narratives on the recent, painful history of his country. At the same time, his project is reminiscent of a desire to restore the fragile purity of nature to the world we reside in. The Kosovo Pavilion will be at the Venice Biennale until 24 November.

Events at the National Gallery of Kosovo

Pavilion of the Republic of Kosovo

La Biennale di Venezia

55. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte
Partecipazioni nazionali

PETRIT HALILAJ

I'm hungry to keep you close.
I want to find the words to resist but in the end
there is a locked sphere. The funny thing is that
you're not here, nothing is.

01/06/2013 — 24/11/2013

Commissioner:
Erzen Shkololi

Curator:
Kathrin Rhomberg

Organization:
National Gallery of Kosovo

Under the patronage of:
The Ministry of Culture, Youth and
Sports of the Republic of Kosovo

Supported by:
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo
Ministry of European Integration of the Republic of Kosovo
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Ministarstvo Kulture, Omladine i Sporta



Galeria Kombëtare e Kosovës
National Gallery of Kosovo
Nacionalna Galerija Kosova



Ministria e Punëve të Jashtme
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ministarstvo Inostranih Posolov



Ministria e Integritimeve Evropiane
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