

Policy Recommendations for Serb Representatives in Kosovo's Central Institutions

Introduction

The Council for Inclusive Governance organized on September 20-21 and 25, 2014 two activities for a number of Serb representatives: a workshop in Arandjelovac and a roundtable in Belgrade. The activities were part of the project supported by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

The workshop participants drafted a list of suggestions and recommendations for the new Serb representatives in Kosovo's institutions. The overall message of the workshop recommendations was that the Serb representatives should act as a political force more than as an ethnic party and thus engage on non-ethnic issues more robustly, including Kosovo's budget, privatization, infrastructure projects such as highways, and agriculture. They should also channel their efforts and ideas through institutions. Another recommendation was that they should assist in building efficient institutions in Serb-majority municipalities as the best guarantee for a sustainable future for the Serb community.

The roundtable in Belgrade reviewed, discussed and contributed to the recommendations and agreed in supporting them. The message of the roundtable was that the Serbs should become active participants in Kosovo's political life. The participants expected the stabilization of the situation in the north to remain challenging in the foreseeable future but supported the implementation of the Brussels agreement, though some had some reservations about the agreement and the dialogue process.

The next main challenge will be the formation of the Association of Serb-majority municipalities. A team of Serb representatives is working on the statute of the Association and many expect it to be a thorny issue once the discussions between Serbs and Pristina on the Association begin in earnest. The Serbs expect it to be a type of an institution while Pristina argues it should have the status of a non-governmental organization. The suggestion to the team working on the statute was that it should be realistic.

Some said that communication and cooperation with the Albanian community should be increased and see where the expectations of Serbs meet those of the Albanians.

The status of the University in Mitrovica received a lot of attention. Participants suggested to work towards "professionalizing and legalizing it." A good university for the Serbs in Kosovo would play a key role as "a community without intellectuals does not advance," a speaker said. Healthcare was another area considered important for the community. Currently, Serbian-run clinics are allowed to operate in Kosovo but are considered illegal by the Kosovo institutions.

Recommendations

It is in the interest of the Serb community that its representatives conduct **authentic policy** in the parliament and other levels of power with the goal of advancing national interests and improve the lives of the Serbs in Kosovo.

1. Active role in the formation of the government.

- 1) Define strategic goals for joining the ruling coalition.
- 2) Represent transparently the interests of the Serb community in Kosovo during the negotiations on the formation the government.
- 3) Serb representatives in the Kosovo Assembly, besides topics that are exclusively related to the Serb community, should also deal with other issues of public importance.

2. Selection of representatives of the Serb community at all levels of government is crucial.

- 1) Representatives with political experience, authority, reputation and credibility should be nominated and elected as members of government.
- 2) For other functions at all levels of government, the most qualified people with appropriate level of knowledge and familiarity with the issues and problems should be nominated and selected.
- 3) More experts should be hired at local and central levels to support the work of Serb representatives. Whenever possible Kosovo Serbs should be hired for these positions.
- 4) Promoting the principle of gender equality and regional representation in electing representatives.
- 5) Building better relations with the majority and other communities with the goal of stabilizing the situation and improving coexistence in Kosovo.

3. Continuation of the dialogue and the implementation of the Brussels Agreements.

Establishment of the Association/Community of Serb-Majority Municipalities.

- 1) Establishing the Association/Community of Serb Municipalities. Defining its responsibilities and ways of financing.
 - (a) Initiatives in the Kosovo parliament, government and other institutions to provide authority for the Association/Community of Serb municipalities so that it fairly represents interests of the Kosovo Serbs.
 - (b) Cooperation with the Kosovo Albanian political elite in achieving the full capacity of the Association/Community of Serb municipalities.
 - (c) Cooperation with the institutions of the Republic of Serbia in the process of forming of the Association/Community of Serb municipalities.
 - (d) Involving Serb representatives to secure stable financing of the Association/Community of the Serb municipalities.
- 2) Continuation of the Brussels dialogue.
 - (a) Serb representatives in the parliament, government and other institutions in Kosovo should actively promote the process of reconciliation and coexistence and use their influence in defining topics in the Brussels dialogue.

- (b) Solving problems in education and healthcare systems is a priority (recognition of diplomas of the University of Mitrovica, supply of medicaments and medical equipment, etc.).
 - (c) Securing complete freedom of movement (license plates, insurance paid at the administrative crossings, personal documents, etc.).
 - (d) Resolution of issues of the disputed property and privatization.
- 3) Implementation of all agreements that have been reached so far.

4. Human Rights.

- 1) Protection of private property of the Serbs (return of seized property).
 - (a) Initiating the formation of working groups that would examine disputed cases of usurpation and misappropriation of assets.
 - (b) Initiating amendments to laws and regulations that would speed up the process of returning the property.
- 2) Ensuring the right to work and return to their work places. Employment of Serbs in public companies.
 - (a) Advocating for consistent implementation of the Law on Public Services, which guarantees that members of non-majority communities comprise at least 10 percent of the workforce.
 - (b) Revising payments to employees on the basis of privatization carried out during the period of limited freedom of movement of internally displaced persons and lack of access to the Privatization Agency and to the judicial authorities.
- 3) Insisting on consistent implementation of the Law on Languages.
 - (a) Serb representatives in the government and parliament in cooperation with the Commissioner for languages in the Prime Minister's office should persistently insist on consistent application of the Law on Languages.
- 4) The right of return of the displaced.
 - (a) Advocating for ensuring the necessary requirements with the relevant institutions for the return of the displaced persons and their integration.
 - (b) Establishing full cooperation between the Kosovo Ministry of Communities and Returns and the Commissariat for Refugees of Serbia.
- 5) Protection of the status and property of the Serbian Orthodox Church and protection of cultural and historical heritage.
 - (a) Insisting on the implementation of the Law on the Historic Centre of Prizren, the Village of Velika Hoca, religious freedoms, and protected areas.
 - (b) Insisting on continuing the renovation of religious buildings of the Serbian Orthodox Church.
- 6) Ensuring full equality and access for all to the judicial authorities and public institutions.
- 7) Formation of credible legal institutions in Serb-majority municipalities that satisfy the needs of the local population in line with the Brussels Agreement and the Ahtisaari Plan.
- 8) Ensure better access to education and healthcare for the Serbs living outside Serb-majority areas and ensure their representation in the Association/Community of Serb-Majority Municipalities.
- 9) Improving security for the Serbs living outside Serb-majority areas.

5. Economic development.

- 1) Active participation in creating better investment climate in Kosovo.
 - (a) Fight against crime and corruption.

- (b) Full participation of representatives of local authorities in the privatization process, and engagement of representatives of the Serb community in parliament in initiating discussions examining this process.
 - (c) Creating and strengthening of the business infrastructure to raise the level of competitiveness.
 - (d) Lowering of taxes and burdens that weaken competitiveness and ensure more efficient implementation of the CEFTA agreement.
 - (e) Removing trade barriers such as monopolies and cartels that have monopolized imports.
- 2) Enabling re-registration of the business entities registered in the Business Registry Agency of the Republic of Serbia in the Commercial Register of Kosovo through a facilitated procedure.
 - 3) Repealing certain provisions of the Labor Law and the Law on Public Procurement for a limited period to allow companies of the Serb community to be included in Kosovo's economic system.
 - 4) Creating a package of fiscal measures to revive the economy and entrepreneurship in Serb areas.
 - (a) Provide incentives.
 - (b) Propose adoption of fiscal incentives.
 - (c) Active participation in the monitoring of the distribution of funds of the Development Fund for the North.
 - (d) Allocate more funds from the budget for the economic development of Serb communities.

Participants

Zdravka Erak, Senior Adviser, Committee for Kosovo and Metohija, Parliament of Serbia

Marko Jaksic, Analyst, North Mitrovica

Vesna Jovanovic, Director for Education, Health, Social welfare, Youth and Sports,
Municipality of Partes

Vladeta Kostic, Member of the Serbian Parliament, Serbian Progressive Party

Milivoje Mihajlovic, Head of the Office for Media Relations, Government of Serbia

Ljubisa Mijacic, Analyst, Zubin Potok

Petar Miletic, Former Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Kosovo

Smiljka Milisavljevic, Professor, University in Mitrovica

Dragan Nikolic, Mayor of Partes

Srdan Popović, Director, Office for Communities of the Prime Minister of Kosovo

Dejan Radenkovic, Member of the Serbian Parliament, Socialist Party of Serbia

Nenad Radosavljevic, Director of the Board, Independent Network of Serb TV Stations in
Kosovo

Vinka Radosavljevic, Head of the Pec District of the Government of Serbia

Branko Ruzic, Member of the Serbian Parliament, Socialist Party of Serbia

Predrag Simic, Professor, University of Belgrade

Aleksandra Sanjevic, Programme Coordinator, Open Society Foundation

Rada Trajkovic, Former Member of the Parliament of Kosovo

Janko Veselinovic, Member of the Serbian Parliament, New Democratic Party

Stevan Vulovic, Mayor of Zubin Potok

Shpetim Gashi, Vice President, Council for Inclusive Governance

Alex Grigorev, President, Council for Inclusive Governance

Igor Novakovic, Associate in Serbia, Council for Inclusive Governance

Julien Stauffer, Attaché, Swiss Embassy in Serbia