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Kosovo News Update

RW

Robert Wexler

Tue 6/19/2018 3:56 PM



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Sent Items

I thought you might be interested in the latest developments regarding the Republic of Kosovo.

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U.S. Continues Support for Kosovo

- In a letter from the US Mission to the UN, Political Coordinator Amy Tacho reiterated the US' strong support for Kosovo's independence, sovereignty, and integration into the EU, UN, and the broader international community, and called on all UN members to publicly recognize Kosovo as an independent state.
- The US Embassy in Pristina continues to encourage Kosovo in its training of the KSF and continues to gather international support for its transition.
- The Iowa National Guard visited Kosovo as part of a joint training exercise with the Kosovo Security Force, known as "Eagle 6".
- This military and cultural exchange is designed to help coordinate natural disaster reaction and relief, emergency response, refugee care, humanitarian aid, and cooperation with local authorities, organizations, and international military partners.
- Col. Justin Wagner of the Iowa National Guard commended Kosovo on its planning and execution of the exercise, stating that they have developed interoperability between NATO, Kosovo Forces, and regional partners, which will benefit the entire region if disaster strikes.

<https://usun.state.gov/remarks/8428>

https://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2018&mm=05&dd=18&nav_id=104197

Kosovo Increases Ties with European Neighbors

- Kosovo's President Thaci met with Serbian President Vucic to discuss the final phase of the normalization of relations between the two nations. President Thaci says the dialogue will continue, with the help of the US, EU, and other key players.
- Kosovo's President Thaci participated in the Sofia Summit, which joined together countries of the Western Balkans and EU member countries. The summit addressed cooperation in the fight against terrorism, justice reforms, and anti-corruption regulations.
- At the EU Summit in Sofia, EU member states adopted a joint declaration pledging to continue to support the Western Balkans countries in their efforts to join the bloc, and to work together on transportation, energy, digital, economic, and security initiatives, as well as, in the fight against corruption and organized crime.
- Kosovo's President Thaci met with Austrian Chancellor Kurz, where they discussed Austria's support of Kosovo's membership to Interpol and its support of the visa liberalization for Kosovo's citizens.
- Austria will support the final phase of the EU-facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, which coincides with the beginning of Austria's EU presidency.
- Kosovo announced that it met all the conditions needed for visa liberalization.

<http://balkan.eu.com/kosovo-is-participating-in-the-sofia-summit/>

<http://www.balkan.eu.com/fayon-kosovo-has-delivered-the-criteria-for-the-liberalization-of-the-visa-regime/>

<http://www.balkan.eu.com/thaci-and-vucic-meet-in-sofia/>

<https://seenews.com/news/kosovo-eu-integration-minister-hails-eu-w-balkans-declaration-613071>

<http://www.gazetaexpress.com/en/news/thaci-after-meeting-kurz-austria-supports-kosovo-s-membership-in-interpol-visas-dialogue-with-serbia-174156/>

Kosovo's Economic Forecast is on the Rise

- The EBRD raised Kosovo's projected economic growth for 2018 to 3.7% from 3.5%, which can be attributed to an increase in exports and investments.
- The EBRD projects record economic growth in 2019 at 4%.
- Kosovo's unemployment rate has been declining over the last three years and is predicted to see a record low in 2019.
- Kosovo's Minister of Trade and Industry, Hasani, has stressed that the mining sector is the most sustainable way to develop Kosovo's economy. Kosovo has 12 billion tons of lignite, over 60 million tons of lead and zinc, and has a young labor force, thus showing huge potential for development.
- Kosovo has taken many important steps to become pro-business, like passing legislation such as the Law on Investments for Public Private Partnership and the Law on Strategic Investments, which had led to economic growth, and an increase in jobs.
- The International Finance Corporation recently signed an agreement to help improve the business environment by reforming the business inspections system, simplifying administrative procedures, and providing better services to investors, which will boost the competitiveness of small businesses.

<https://seenews.com/news/ebrd-lifts-kosovos-2018-gdp-growth-forecast-611938>

<https://emerging-europe.com/in-brief/kosovo-looks-to-mining-to-drive-economic-growth/>

Gross Power Production Rises in Q1

- Kosovo's gross power production increased to 1,727.5 GWh in the first quarter of 2018, up nearly 50% from the fourth quarter of 2017, with the majority being supplied by thermal power plants (1,657.5 GWh), and hydro power plants (70 GWh).

<https://renewablesnow.com/news/kosovos-gross-power-output-rises-in-q1-613066/>

Kosovo Becomes a Top Tourism Destination in Europe

- Lonely Planet, a top travel guide, has named Kosovo as one of its 10 "essential destinations in Europe this year".
- Boasting Europe's youngest median population, Kosovo's coursing energy and young population have fueled development.
- Kosovo's peak-laden landscape offers numerous outdoor activities, beautiful views, and a growing wine region.

Kosovo Seeks New Reforms

- Substantive legislative reforms on public administration laws will enable Kosovo's public service jobs to be more equitable, merit-based, and accountable. The overall aim of the law on salaries is to harmonize Kosovo's civil service salary structure and have equal pay for equal work.
- The EU and Kosovo created a Sector Reform Contract for Public Administration Reform, which will provide €25 million in financial assistance to Kosovo until 2021 should Kosovo meet the agreed upon targets, such as: inclusive and evidence-based policy and legislative development, improved services for citizens and businesses, reduced administrative burden for citizens and businesses, improved public access to documents, improved policy planning, a more accountable state administration, improved access to administrative justice, and improved management of human resources and professionalism.

https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/india/44545/kosovos-progress-public-administration-reform_en

All the best,

The Honorable Robert Wexler