

Kosovo News Update

James Rubin

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

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Kosovo Sees Positive Steps in Diplomatic Relations

- EU Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos confirmed that Kosovo has fulfilled visa liberalization benchmarks.
- Kosovo's President Thaci told U.S. Ambassador Grenell that he's ready to consider lifting the tariffs on Serbian goods.
- U.S. President Trump has reached out to both Kosovo and Serbia to help resolve the decade long contentious relationship between the two countries. President Trump has assured President Thaci that he will help facilitate the Final Peace Agreement that will bring recognition of Kosovo by Serbia.
- European Commissioner for Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn visited Kosovo last month, stating, "I had a good, open discussion with PM Haradinaj and Ministers. Looking forward on working closely on all open issues this year, so that Kosovo can advance on its EU path".

- On Jan. 28th, Kosovo's PM Haradinaj announced a proposal for an international conference to work out a final deal for Kosovo and Serbia to normalize relations.
- The deal would suspend the tariffs that Kosovo has imposed on Serbian goods, prohibit the inclusion of border changes (warning that such discussions could revive old hostilities in the Balkans), allow for visa-free travel for Kosovo citizens to the EU, implement an energy treaty signed between the two countries, require Serbia's removal of all non-tariff barriers on goods from Kosovo, and require Serbia to publicly state it won't act against Kosovo as a sovereign state.

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https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-dangles-rose-garden-treaty-moment-in-quiet-peace-effort-between-serbia-and-kosovo/2019/01/06/b32fd76-1067-11e9-84fd-58e33d6c8e7_story.html?utm_term=.f652902656e3

<https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2019/01/18/hahn-meets-haradinaj-rama-first-visit-western-balkans-2019/>

<https://www.cfr.org/a/kosovo-haradinaj-serbia-conference-final-deal-relations/29736608.html>

Kosovo Gets Support from U.S., Germany, & Britain on Its New Army

- Kosovo will begin its 10-year plan to build an army by slowly expanding, equipping, and training its KSF forces.
- Kosovo's PM Haradinaj stated that its new army can be a contributor to peace, instead of just being a beneficiary of peace.
- It will first work on its Ministry of Defense and then develop its doctrine and training, relying on bilateral financial and military aid from other countries to help make its transition.
- Germany, Britain, France, and Turkey have all announced that they back Kosovo's plan to transform its security forces into an army.
- The U.S. is backing Kosovo's steps toward developing its own army, justifying the strategy as a natural next step in its journey of independence and explaining that it will take years to build. U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo Kosnett stated, "it is only natural for Kosovo as a sovereign, independent country to have a self-defense capability... Washington has consistently supported the development of the KSF and the development of the KSF into Armed Forces."
- U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo Kosnett said, "Kosovo's leaders have talked about how the Kosovo Armed Forces could participate in peace-keeping operations overseas.... Kosovo has reached the point where instead of only being a consumer of international security that it can contribute to it... This is all welcome."
- The U.S. recently delivered the KSF with 24 High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWVs) as part of a contract to sell 51 HMMWVs to Kosovo signed last July.

<https://www.wthr.com/article/kosovo-prime-minister-says-new-army-will-serve-world-peace>

<https://www.janes.com/article/85338/kosovo-s-new-army-to-get-off-ground-in-2019-with-three-phased-equipment-plan>

<https://www.thetrumpet.com/18291-germany-supports-creation-of-a-kosovar-army>

<http://rs.n1.info.com/English/NEWS/a443455/Great-Britain-supports-Kosovo-in-forming-its-army-advising-it-to-keep-in-touch-with-NATO.html>

<https://www.aq.com.tr/en/europe/turkey-hails-kosovos-move-to-establish-national-army/1341624>

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<https://prishinainstijet.com/new-u-s-ambassador-backs-establishment-of-kosovo-army/>

https://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2018&mm=12&dd=10&nav_id=105717

Kosovo's Economy Sees Positive Trends & New Initiatives

- Kosovo's GDP increased 3.4% year-on-year in the third quarter of 2018, and by 4.7% year-on-year in the second quarter of 2018.
- Kosovar PM Haradinaj declared that 2019 will be the year of economic development, stating that the government will draft better policies to attract more foreign investors.
- Kosovo plans to work on tax reform, improving its business climate, improving its living standards, creating a more competitive economy, increasing its exporting capacities and decreasing its trade deficit.
- The World Bank has launched and financed (€14.6 million) the Kosovo Real Estate and Geospatial Infrastructure Project (REGIP), which will increase the quality and availability of land, and secure and define property rights, which is critical for improving growth and development in the economy.
- The World Bank country manager for Kosovo, Marco Mantovanelli, stated "This project will help increase access to finance and reduce informality in the economy, positively impacting credit markets and the commercial banking sector which, in turn, could result in more investment and more jobs."

<https://emerging-europe.com/news/world-bank-launches-kosovo-property-rights-project>

<https://seenews.com/news/kosovos-gdp-grows-by-34-yy-in-q3-638048>

<https://www.balkanew.com/kosovos-pm-is-optimistic-about-the-countrys-economic-outlook-this-year/>

Kosovo Undergoes Transportation Transformation

- The EU is co-financing an additional €17.2 million through the EBRD to upgrade the international link Rail Route 10, which will improve railway connectivity between Kosovo and the European network, and will form the Western Balkans core railway network, an extension of the Trans-European Transport Networks.
- The European Investment Bank (EIB) loaned Kosovo €1 million for a technical assistance grant under the bank's Economic Resilience Initiative (ERI), which will complete the construction on a 30km single carriageway motorway

<https://outlook.office365.com/owa/?viewmodel=ReadMessageItem&ItemID=AAMkADA00ThiMDjLTnZTYtINDU3Yy05ZDmLWNkOGUzY2M0ODk3M...> 2/3

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- connecting Peja and Kijeve.
- The EIB also loaned Kosovo €80 million to create a motorway linking the capital Pristina to the border of Montenegro, to improve regional transportation integration and help develop strategic connections with its neighboring countries.
<https://www.railway-technology.com/news/kosovo-secures-additional-funding-for-rail-route-10/>
<https://www.devdiscourse.com/article/headlines/325631-eib-supports-project-for-construction-of-single-carriageway-motorway-in-kosovo>

All the best,

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Dominican Republic News Update

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

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The Dominican Economy in on the Rise

- The Dominican Republic has the fastest growing economy in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a 6.3% growth in GDP in 2018, the creation of 734,544 new jobs in the last six years, inflation below 4%, unemployment down to 5.5%, exports exceeding \$11 billion (9% growth from 2017), and international reserves increasing to \$6.98 billion.
- In 2017, the Dominican Republic exported \$27 billion in goods to the EU, an increase of 35% in 8 years, exporting bananas, cocoa, pharmaceutical items, instruments and medical devices, and rum.
- The industrial sector has grown 4% annually for 25 years.
- ECLAC is predicting the Dominican Republic will see a 5.7% growth in its economy in 2019.

<https://accento.com.do/2018/actualidad/8636290-republica-dominicana-y-onu-sostienen-reuniones-con-miras-a-presidencia-consejo-seguridad-onu/>

<https://accento.com.do/2018/economia/8635663-republica-dominicana-crece-63-gracias-economia-ee-uu-alifima-la-cepel/>

<https://accento.com.do/2018/economia/8633027-republica-dominicana-exporta-europa-727-millones-dolares/>

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http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/latestnews/ECLAC_predicts_Clean_economies_will_grow_2.1_in_2019

https://www.penguinish.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=37263&SEO=dominican-economy-grows-in-2018-driven-by-free-zones

The Dominican Republic Seeks to Improve Diplomacy & Foreign Relations

- The Dominican Republic and Spain signed a MoU to promote and strengthen their economic relations, especially in the fields of: infrastructure, investment, trade, tourism, renewable energy and agricultural production.
- The Dominican Republic recently assumed the presidency of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC) in UNESCO.
- The Dominican Republic not only became a non-permanent member of the Security Council of the UN, but also assumed the presidency of the council.
- At the UN ceremony the Dominican chancellor said, "As a country, this new challenge is part of the sustained and diligent efforts of our diplomacy, to make an active contribution to peace and conflict resolution, particularly in our own region of Latin America, but also in the debates of greater current relevance for the international community".
- As the President of the UN Security Council, it will promote human rights and lasting peace and security, adopt actions for the benefit of youth and women, and promote environmental changes.

<https://accento.com.do/2019/economia/8646781-gobiernos-espana-republica-dominicana-crean-grupo-trabajo-fortalecer-relacion-economica/>

<https://accento.com.do/2019/cultura/8645441-la-unesco-republica-dominicana-asume-presidencia-del-grulac/>

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<https://accento.com.do/2019/actualidad/8638575-republica-dominicana-se-convierte-hoy-miembro-del-consejo-seguridad/>

The Dominican Republic Promotes Human Rights & Improves Quality of Life

- The Dominican Republic takes action against sexual exploitation of children and human trafficking, providing informational materials at the airports, closing two trafficking centers and rescuing 70 women, and opening a shelter specifically for victims of these crimes, where they receive temporary housing and food, medical and psychological assistance, legal advice and support for reintegration.
- The Dominican Republic recently adopted its first National Plan for Human Rights (PNDH), which will be "an instrument that seeks to expand freedoms and meet the real needs of the inhabitants of the country and, at the same time, complies with the commitments made internationally in the field of human rights from a cross-cutting approach", according to FM Vargas.
- The World Bank is financing a \$100 million program to help better education and learning in the Dominican Republic, by extending the school day, improving teacher training and qualifications, institutionalizing the collection and use of student learning data, decentralizing the management of public schools, and modernizing the Ministry of Education, which will improve opportunities for employment and increase lifetime earnings.
- The OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) is loaning \$75 million to the Dominican Republic to support growth and living standards by improving access to energy. It will help finance the rehabilitation of about 1,048 km of power lines, targeting around 543,000 users.

<https://accento.com.do/2018/actualidad/8634983-republica-dominicana-toma-acciones-prevenir-explotacion-sexual-ninos-ninas-adolescentes/>

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<https://wnews.com/caribbean/dominican-republic-scale-efforts-improving-learning-084413889/>

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/middle-east/ofid-commits-us75-million-to-energy-access-i-511669.html>

Tourism Sees New Growth

- The Dominican Republic welcomed a historic number of tourists in 2018, over 6.5 million, a 6.2% increase from 2017, with 58% visiting from North America, 24% from Europe, and 14% from South America.
- The Dominican Republic made \$7.6 million in tourism income in 2018, a 6% increase from 2017.
- The executive director of the Dominican Port Authority announced that it closed 2018 with 1.35 million cruise tourists.
- Hotel occupancy in the Dominican Republic is now above 87%, an over 2% growth from 2017, even with 4,000 new hotel rooms. The occupancy rate has also become more stable with less fluctuations between seasons.
- Travel weekly declared the Dominican Republic the number one destination in the Caribbean at the 2018 Travel Weekly Readers' Choice Awards.
- The Dominican Republic received two Caribbean Travel Awards in 2018: 1) New All-Inclusive of the Year: VH Atmosphere, Dominican Republic, which has 193 rooms (including 16 honeymoon suites), four restaurants, two pools,

and the beautiful layered design of top designer Sarah Garcia; 2) Small Hotel of the Year: Eden Roc Cap Cana, Dominican Republic is a boutique hotel of 40 rooms offering spectacular food and luxurious rooms.

- Santo Domingo was voted as one of the '2018 Friendliest Cities in the World' by Condé Nast Traveler's readers, which helped to drive tourists seeking a friendly hospital vacation destination.
- Golf.com announced Teeth of the Dog, La Romana, Dominican Republic, as one of the best golf courses of the year, with stunning views and a challenging course.
- The Dominican Republic has worked hard to appeal to tourists, recently spending \$20 million CAD to revive 11 beaches in popular tourist regions and developing plans to open two new museums in Santo Domingo (an undersea museum showcasing the nation's underwater salvaged heritage and a museum displaying the nation's musical history) for those tourists looking for culture.
- A new cruise port is opening in Puerto Plata in 2020, with the capacity to handle 680,000 tourists a year, with five cruise lines already in talks of using the port.
- Two new PR campaigns, the "Smile" campaign which showcases the hospitality and warm demeanor of its people, and the "More than History" campaign which showcases the colonial city of Santo Domingo not only for its history but also as a cultural, affordable, convenient and cosmopolitan city, will help Santo Domingo reach its goal of 10 million tourists by 2022.

<https://acento.com.do/2019/economia/8641808-republica-dominicana-alcanzo-2018-cifra-historica-llegada-turistas-informa-banco-central/>

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<https://cruise fever.net/new-cruise-port-being-built-in-the-dominican-republic-will-open-in-2020/>

<https://www.travelweekly.com/Caribbean/Travel/Insights/Whats-new-in-the-Dominican-Republic>

<https://www.pleatlist.com/index.php?o=m&id=37023&SEO=cruise-season-keeps-pace-in-dominican-republic>

<https://www.golf.com/travel/2018/12/20/golf-staff-favorite-courses-played-2018/>

<https://www.pleatlist.com/index.php?o=m&id=37131&SEO=hotels-occupancy-in-dominican-rep.-grows-in-2018>

<http://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2019/01/25/1705750/0/en/Dominican-Republic-Named-1-Caribbean-Destination.html>

Innovative Energy Techniques Look to Improve Environmental Impact

- The Dominican Republic will soon be home to a SeaFloat barge power plant with a capacity of 145MW, which will house a hybrid electricity solution- a mix of natural gas turbine combined cycle power plant with a battery energy storage system- to provide clean and green energy.
- A 48.3-MW wind farm recently opened, bringing the total of wind power in the Dominican Republic to 175 MW, which annually offsets some 300,000 tons of CO2 emissions and replaces the importing of 900,000 barrels of oil.
- The Dominican Republic has approved a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) Action Plan, designed to: reduce climate vulnerability in agricultural, tourist and marine coastal areas; create cleaner and greener transportation; create incentives to increase energy efficiency; increase renewable energy; and integrate watershed management through local systems of sustainable production.

<https://www.power-technology.com/news/floating-power-plant-dominican-republic/>

<https://www.energy-storage.news/news/scarcity-of-land-inspires-dominican-republics-floating-gas-plus-battery-hyb>

<https://renewablesnow.com/news/egg-hanna-completes-48-mw-wind-farm-in-dominican-republic-637297/>

<http://sdg.iisd.org/news/dominican-republic-launches-climate-action-plan-with-ndc-partnership/>

All the best,

Rebecca Benn

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