



## Association Editorial

Daily activities of the Association of Kosovo Municipalities, with a clear vision towards overall support for local governments in Kosovo, were touched by the events in March. In this respect, many municipal mayors with the initiative of AMK raised their activities in a higher level to do their utmost to end the disorders.

AMK, as a component of central Governmental Commission, played a special role in the damage assessment of March 17 & 18 disorders. Certainly, the tireless work of municipal assemblies in the damage assessment gave an indisputable support to the central institutions.

Despite the absence in two important international meetings because of March events, AMK continued its work in cooperation and experience exchange with different local governments, such as the visit of LGIB in Kosovo, participation of Network of Association of Local Authorities of Southeastern Europe (NALAS) in Italy, where AMK became a permanent member, and the meeting with the Association of Albanian City Halls.

In addition, the initiation of presentation of development agendas of 12 municipalities signed a coordination of activities with MEF and respected donors in Kosovo.

On the other side, the activities such as the program "Inter-Municipal Partnership" and participation in the Analysis Groups of IFES, define strongly the direction of AMK and Kosovo Municipalities towards the European standards for local government services.

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(designate) of AMK

# Association of Kosovo Municipalities NEWSLETTER

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## The Association of Kosovo Municipalities gave a valuable contribution during the damage assessment

As part of the Commission for damage assessment from March 17 and 18 disorders, AMK was a member of the Central Commission together with representatives of the Office of the Prime Minister and the Governmental Group (Ministry of Economy and Finance, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning) headed by the minister Mr. Behxhet Brajshori.

During the work of the commission was discussed about the damage assessment of housing, cultural and religious premises during the March 17 and 18 disorders.

During these assessments, the Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AMK) was a focal point in the collection of records for incurred damages in the recent disorders, from the Municipal Assemblies, through the Directorates for Urbanism and the Municipal Working Groups.

These records were presented by the minister Brajshori on April 16, including the damages in 17 Municipalities of Kosovo; while the damages to religious premises will be assessed by another working group together with the presence of UNESCO experts.

### THE LETTER OF DR. HERWIG VAN STAA, PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF CONCILE EUROPE SEND TO MR. LUTFI HAZIRI, CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSOCIATION OF KOSOVO MUNICIPALITIES AFTER THE UNREST IN MARCH

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Concile Europe has followed with great concern the March events in Kosovo. The Congress is strongly condemning the use of violence and urges all leaders in Kosovo to appeal to a peaceful resolution of the current political and social problems.

It welcomes the press release issued by the Association of Kosovo Municipalities calling on all municipality Presidents of Kosovo to appeal for restraint, respect for the institutions and a return to order. It equally welcomes the letter addressed by Lutfi Haziri, President of AKM, to myself on 21 March 2004. We are counting of your full support to restore Serb citizens' rights and to ensure that peace and order is restored and that all citizens can live in adequate conditions of security – is written among others in the letter of Dr. Herwig Van Staa.

## Recommendations of the Analysis Group for Youth and Gender Equality to Municipalities of Kosovo

The Analysis Group for Youth and Gender Equality within IFES and with the support of AMK revealed the problems and difficulties faced by the officials for gender equality and the officials of the directorates for youth.

After an intensive discussion, the Analysis Group for Youth and Gender Equality came to an agreement about the most important and urgent matters faced by the municipalities and therefore gave the following recommendations: a) The Municipalities should offer equal employment opportunities to women and youth; b) There should be specific budget lines for youth and gender activities; c) There should be a higher number of scholarships to fulfill the need for education of young citizens; d) It is necessary to coordinate the efforts of other interested parties, such as central government and international bodies and other private donors; e) The Municipalities are strongly recommended to promote the self-awareness among municipal personnel and population regarding the Law on Gender Equality; f) The Kosovo Office for Gender Issues could offer trainings to Municipalities.

Afterwards, each Municipality could hold a public debate about the new law. The Kosovo Assembly Deputy, Mrs. Melihate Termkolli, the Head of the Assembly Commission for Gender Equality, presented the participants of the Analysis Group with the Law on Gender Equality, which was just approved by the Legislative body of Kosovo.

AMK didn't participate in two international activities because of the March disorders

Because of the tense situation created in Kosovo during March 17 and 18 events, the Association of Kosovo Municipalities could not partake and introduce the Kosovo local authority in the Congress of Local Authorities of the Council of Europe held in Strasbourg on March 22 to 24. Also, for the same reason, AMK could not participate in the meeting of the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of Southeastern Europe (NALAS) held in Budva on April 5 to 7



## A LGIB delegation visited the Association of Kosovo Municipalities

A Local Government international Bureau delegation visited Kosovo during the first week of March. During the several days meeting and consultations, they brought their organizational and daily work experience of western Local Governments.

Also, the LGIB representatives were informed in detail about the work of the Association of Kosovo Municipalities and Municipal Assemblies, where they visited the Municipality of Skenderaj and Obiliq, and met with leaders of Prishtina.

During this visit they trained the AMK staff on communication, by exchanging their European local government organizational experience in the communication area.

## Continuation of violence is against the future and interest of Kosovo citizens

The Association of Kosovo Municipalities, on behalf of all member municipalities, appeals to all citizens to stop the violence towards the property and people of Kosovo, towards the police, KFOR, United Nations and other international authorities. AMK shares the grief and would like to console the Kosovan families for their loss, as well as the people suffering from injuries or loss of a loved one during the events of March 17 and 18.

The Municipal Mayors had an urgent and active meeting with leaders of local institutions, police and security forces and general public, to appeal for restraint from violence, show respect towards our institutions and recovery of public order.

Any continuation of violence is against the interest of Kosovo citizens and against the future of cities, villages and cultural heritage.

The Municipal Mayors had regular contacts with Kosovo institutions to enable the recovery of public order and tranquility.

EXTRACT FROM THE INTERVIEW OF MR. ALAN PACKER, TEAM LEADER OF IFES LTD, TO NEWSPAPER "PAVAREZIA"

### A. Packer: If the Municipal Mayors will continue to support AMK, it will achieve noticeable changes

"The difficulty related to municipal property stands in the fact that the central level decisions are taken without consideration of the society's full needs" – stated Mr. Alan Packer in an interview given to the newspaper "Pavaresia". To the question "if there is any unfairness in the management of municipal property from the Kosovo Trust Agency" Mr. Packer replied that "according to the previous system, the use of municipal property was principally determined by the municipality level, and the local authority allowed its use for public needs and for enterprises. The actual system of KTA deals with the property allocated to enterprises before 1999 without taking into account that the needs of cities and villages have changed.

The Association of Municipalities has requested that the municipal property given for use to enterprises, but that in fact has not been used, should be returned to the municipalities in order for them to fulfill their social needs". Talking about the involvement of IFES Ltd with the Law on Local Self-Governance, the team leader Mr. Alan Packer stated that "until now we have supported the Association in achieving its position in the working group appointed by the Ministry of Public Services. During this phase, the Ministry is just working towards a public draft. After the draft reaches the phase of public consultation, we think that IFES Ltd will give its constructive comments". "I feel optimistic for the Association which is still very fragile, but if the municipal Mayors will continue to support the association, then it could achieve noticeable changes in advantage of the citizens, municipalities and central level" concluded the interview of the daily newspaper "Pavaresia".

### AMK – permanent member of the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of Southeastern Europe (NALAS)

In the beginning of March the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of Southeastern Europe (NALAS) in Italy held a meeting with Associations and Local Authorities of Southeastern Europe. The main discussion theme of this meeting was the final statute of this network. Based on the statute approved in this meeting, AMK has become a permanent member of this network. The Network of Associations of Local Authorities of Southeastern Europe is a body of the Council of Europe.

## From the meeting of the Analysis Group on Urban and Rural Planning

In the work of the Analysis Group on Urban and Rural Planning were discussed matters related to local governments. During their meetings, a special attention has been paid to the preparation of Spatial Planning of Kosovo and the municipal development strategies. Main concerns of all participants were related to the foreseen 18-month period for the preparation of this plan, which is said to be very short, as well as the lack elementary equipments for professional work for the departments that would deal with this plan. In the future, on each of the objectives the efforts of the municipalities will be to stimulate professional workers to work in municipalities.

## Successful visit of ten Municipal Mayors in USA

**The Municipal Mayors of Prishtinë, Podujevë, Fushë-Kosovë, Kaçanik, Theranda, Drenas, Viti, Rahovec, Leposaviq and Shtërpçë visited USA from February 22 till March 17.**

The purpose of this visit in USA is related to supporting the development of local government in Kosovo. This three week visit was organized by Georgetown University – Center for Intercultural Development and Education, and it was funded by the State Department of USA, namely the Bureau for Education and Culture Matters within the Office of Experience Exchange Program.

During the first week, the mayors visited Washington, DC, such as the White House and other cultural monuments in order to learn about the U.S. history. First, they participated in a seminar having the main theme ‘conflict solution’ as well as in the American Mayors Conference. Our mayors followed the Official program of the seminar of Georgetown University to discuss about leadership, cooperation development and personal and organized change for solving problems in a creative way. On the last week of their stay in USA, they participated in the training program which included interesting themes, meetings with local and central authorities and experience discussion in advancing the local governance, and followed the seminar ‘Initiation and implementation of change’ lectured by Mr. Ted Rosen.

Kosovo Mayors met with the Iowa chancellor, Dr. John T. Blong, senators and congressmen of Iowa, the Mayor of Illinois, Mr. Mark Shwiebert, Mayor of the rural city of Eldridge, Mr. Frank Wood, and the Director of Finance of the city of Davenport, Mr. Kent Kolwey.

They also met with the Executive Director for Development, Mr. Mark Kapfer and the Directress of the Center for the Development of Small Businesses, Mrs. Ann Hutchinson to discuss about the synopsis on economic development of communities. During this visit, within the Project ‘Kosovo Mayors Exchange’ the mayors were given diplomas for their participation in seminars..



Ten Municipal Mayors of Kosovo during their visit in USA

## Council of Europe promises support to Kosovo Municipalities

The head of the Office of Council of Europe in Pristina, Owen Masters and the President of the Association of Kosovo Municipalities, Mr. Lutfi Haziri held a discussion regarding the operation of local authority, the reforms in local administration of Kosovo and the inter-boundary cooperation in the region, which is a project that is supported by the Council of Europe.

Mr. Masters promised the support of the Council of Europe for the positive processes in Kosovo municipalities, mainly in education and culture, as these are two important sectors for the society.

While estimating the support of CoE, Mr. Lutfi Haziri stated that inter-boundary cooperation in the region should be further developed since that is in the interest of other parties as well.

Mr. Owen Masters also met with Mr. Sazan Ibrahim, Executive Director (designate) of AMK to discuss about the work and activities of AMK and future plans.

## AMK facilitated the meeting between EU representatives and sanitary inspectors

The Association of Kosovo Municipalities facilitated the meeting between EU representatives and food sanitary inspectors for Pristina, Gnjilane, Prizren, Pec, Mitrovica, Ferizaj and Djakova for the implementation of the project for safe food system in Kosovo.

EU financed this project for human capacity building, training of inspectors and equipment of municipalities with lab devices and means for the work of inspectors.

During this meeting was discussed about the actual state of food control, work conditions and circumstances of municipal inspectors.

The European Union experts of food control will continue to contact and cooperate with representatives Kosovo municipalities.

## AMK delegation visited the Association of Albanian City Halls

The Association of Kosovo Municipalities delegation, visited Albania and held important meetings with central and local institutions. This visit it was sponsored by SOROS Foundation. During this visit the AMK delegation met with the Association of Albanian City Halls, and discussed about improving the cooperation and experience exchange with the Minister of Local Governments, Mr. Ben Blushi. During the meeting, the AMK President Mr. Lutfi Haziri informed Mr. Blushi about the preparations for the draft law on local governments and mainly about the process of decentralization, while the minister offered his help through experts from Albania. The delegation headed by the AMK President Mr. Lutfi Haziri, included the Mayor of Skënderaj, Mr. Ramadan Gashi, the Mayor of Shtimje, Mr. Fehmi Mujota, the Mayor of Fushë-Kosovë, Mr. Skënder Zogaj, the Mayor of Podujevë, Mr. Agim Velju and Mss. Merita Krasniqi, who among other meetings visited the old city of Durrës.

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## AMK initiated the program “Inter-Municipal Partnership”

AMK initiated the work of the program “Inter-Municipal Partnership” with the goodwill and purpose to help out the Municipalities of Kosovo.

This project, being realized in close cooperation between AMK and URID (Urban and Rural Infrastructure Development) group, plans to help out the municipalities towards inter-municipal infrastructure development and their integration.

Actually, Kosovo municipalities are identifying projects that could get the financial support (at least 15% of the project value), and thus AMK and URID will assist in the evaluation, design and implementation of projects and the identification of donors. At the same time, this project will strengthen the inter-municipal and regional cooperation with the purpose of free movement of people and economic development in the region.

Named as “Inter-municipal Partnership”, each project should include at least two municipalities and the aim of these projects is the development and improvement of municipal conditions. This would facilitate the municipalities with low budget that are focused only on projects within the municipality.

The proposed projects could be chosen from the general infrastructure field, such as electrical (long-conductors, house supplying, lighting, etc), water-supply and canalization, transport (roads, bridges, etc), public buildings (schools, educational centers, day-care-centers, cultural centers, etc), health facilities (clinics, hospitals, etc). These projects should include several criteria: a) result in the quick reactivation of infrastructure and/or existing inter-municipal services; b) secure essential services for residents of the operation area of the project, mainly for returning refugees or resident; c) promote, directly or indirectly, the revival of local economy and secure important economic benefits, mainly for the employment within the municipality; d) guarantee that the projects benefits are open and available to all ethnic groups; e) consider the needs of the disabled or handicapped people; f) guarantee that the operational and maintenance expenses will provide sustainability; and g) include all reasonable improvements of potential negative impacts from the environment.

Following the data collection, by the end of April will initiate the concrete execution of this important program of AMK.

## Municipalities of Prizren region presented their development agendas

Five municipalities of Kosovo, under the organization of the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) and the Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AMK) and with the implementation of UNOPS, presented their municipal development agendas in front of many participants at the Government building, in the presence of UNOPS, UNDP, US-OFFICE, UNMIK, UN HABITAT, IOM representative.

The permanent secretary of MEF, Mr. Sefedin Sefaj, in the opening of this conference stated that “MEF has proposed that AMK has more access in the municipal development plans preparation”. Mr. Sefaj thanked the representatives of UNDP for their great support in these initiatives and “the trust in us” as he stated. He continued by saying that MEF welcomes the municipal development agendas by considering different financial possibilities together with foreign donors.

The Executive Director (designate) of AMK, Mr. Sazan Ibrahimli greeted the participants and stated that the main purpose of the presentation of these agendas “is the planning in municipal level with the involvement of key local actors”. Among other purposes Mr. Ibrahimli mentioned “the coordination in vertical line between the municipality and MEF towards planning the municipal budget for a planning based on needs of municipality population”.

The Director of AMK in his presentation also mentioned that “the invitation of donors for this event has been done with the purpose of additional mobilization of financial means for important municipal and regional projects”.

In the first meeting, the municipal representatives presented the development agendas of five municipalities of Prizren region, such as the municipality of Suharekë, Malishevë, Rahovec, Dragash, and Prizren. In the following meeting, the municipalities of Gjilan region will present their development agendas, to complete the number of 12 municipalities involved in this project.