

## **SERBIA**

### **NEW CABINET VOTED IN**

BELGRADE, April 28 (Beta) - On April 27, Serbian Parliament voted in a new cabinet helmed by Serbian Progressive Party leader Aleksandar Vucic consisting of 16 ministries and two ministers without portfolio. The cabinet was voted in by rollcall. A total of 198 MPs backed the cabinet, 23 were opposed and six abstained from voting. The new cabinet was officially set to start after the prime minister and ministers were sworn in. The new Serbian government is made up of: Ivica Dacic, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs; Zorana Mihajlovic, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure; Rasim Ljajic, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Trade, Telecommunications and Tourism; Kori Udovicki, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government; Lazar Krstic, Minister of Finance; Dusan Vujovic, Minister of the Economy; Snezana Bogosavljevic-Boskovic, Minister of Agriculture and Environmental Protection; Aleksandar Antic, Minister of Energy and Mining; Nikola Selakovic, Minister of Justice; Srdjan Verbic, Minister of Education, Science and Technological Development; Zlatibor Loncar, Minister of Health; Ivan Tasovac, Minister of Culture and Information; Aleksandar Vulin, Minister of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Issues; Bratislav Gasic, Minister of Defense; Nebojsa Stefanovic, Minister of the Interior; Vanja Udovicic, Minister of Youth and Sports; Velimir Ilic, Minister without Portfolio; Jadranka Joksimovic, Minister without Portfolio.

### **VUCIC PRESENTS HIS CABINET'S PROGRAM TO PARLIAMENT**

BELGRADE, April 27 (B92) - Serbia's Prime Minister-designate Aleksandar Vucic said on Sunday that he was taking "full responsibility for the bold reform policy of the new government". It's goal is economic recovery and modernization of Serbia, he told MPs. "I am taking full responsibility for all decisions of the future government, and I will be the first to bear the consequences", Vucic said at the end of his speech to the Serbian parliament on the new government's goals and directions. He announced that the government will form a project implementation unit that will oversee implementation of government decisions and laws put in place. "The unit will report to the finance minister and me as prime minister", Vucic said, stressing that it is crucial that laws that are enacted are also implemented. He said that out of 19 members of the new government, only seven are from the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), of which he is the leader, stating that it "shows a different approach and outlook on Serbia's future".

Addressing the members of the next government, Vucic said that the ministries will no longer be political fiefdoms, nor will the ministers be able to make them "their own kingdom" where nobody is held responsible for anything as it used to be. He said that the ministers' accomplishments will be analyzed every six months and that those with poor job performance will be replaced. Vucic told the members of the new government that they will be "under enormous pressure" and that they will not be able to succeed in the mission that lies before them unless they harmonize their views and work together.

The keynote address given by the prime minister-designate at a special session of parliament, which lasted about three hours, was attended by National Bank of Serbia Governor Jorgovanka Tabakovic, representatives of the Vojvodina Assembly and the government of the province, the

Serbian Orthodox Church Patriarch and representatives of other churches and religious communities, representatives of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and representatives of top judicial authorities in the country and the diplomatic corps.

Serbian President Tomislav Nikolic arrived in the parliament to attend the debate on the new government's program as presented in the keynote by the future prime minister, and the election of the government.

During his expose earlier in the day in his role of prime minister-designate, Vucic said that the most important task and strategic objective for the new Serbian government is reorganization of public finances and public sector reform. Vucic pointed out that Serbia's unemployment, poverty and fiscal deficit are among the largest in Europe. Arguing that the country's huge public debt is the result of a disastrous and poorly written policies pursued in previous years, Vucic said that during that period, pensions and salaries were increased without a solid economic backing.

Thanks to the fact that people were employed based on their political activity or affiliation, Serbia's public sector now has as many as 800,000 employees. "Most of them do their work honestly and conscientiously, but there are many doing really nothing", he said, adding that the burden fell on the private sector as it is easier to tax private firms than oppose party bigwigs. "It is not normal that the average salary in the public sector is 30 percent higher than in the private sector", said the prime minister-designate. He pointed out that the state has been too generous, and therefore, in the first stage of public finances consolidation, salaries in the public sector will be reduced by ten percent and solidarity tax, which at one time was a necessary measure, will be abolished, said Vucic. "Thanks to the new measures and economy strengthening, at the end of the 2016, salaries in the public sector will be bigger than now", he added. Vucic said that only a very small number of employees in government's services below the level of ministers will have the right to use government vehicles, and there will be a reduction in state grants to sports clubs. This, along with other measures, should put public debt somewhere between three and four percent of GDP by 2017, said Vucic. He said that there will be no talks on the pensions' reduction before October, although experts of all international financial institutions, most notably the International Monetary Fund (IMF), insist on the measure. In the meantime, he said, the government will try using some other means and methods to reduce deficit. Explaining that pension increases in the past were economically unfounded, Vucic warned that they should be reduced by 25 to 30 percent if effects are to be significant. "Pensioners are the most loyal buyers and spend as much as 70 percent of their pensions buying domestic products, which means that the money comes back into the economy", Vucic said, adding that the social aspect should also be borne in mind, as pensioners are financially supporting their children and grandchildren. Although there will be no reduction in pensions, Vucic said that the talks with the IMF "will intensify in the first one hundred days of the new government and voiced belief that a new arrangement will be concluded with the financial institution".

Vucic said that the country's policy on Kosovo and Metohija will not change, that "there is no and will be no recognition of Kosovo", and that solutions for every problem between Belgrade and Pristina will be sought with the framework of the EU-facilitated dialogue. "The Serbs in Kosovo know that this is their government and that it makes its every move acknowledging the political realities and taking care of the interests of the Republic of Serbia", Vucic said in the Serbian parliament. He said that the policy it pursues has already stood the test of time and the next government will neither change it nor give it up. Continuation of the Brussels-based dialogue and the process of normalization of life in KiM is a priority for the government and is in the best interests of the Serbs in KiM. He said that Serbs in KiM "have accepted the policy and

thanked them for the trust and courage they have shown", Tanjug reported. Vucic stressed that the government's "main tasks in the coming period are forming the community of Serb municipalities and continuation of provision of material assistance to Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija".

Vucic said on Sunday that the country's judiciary reform is aimed at creating conditions for efficient conduct of judicial proceedings, strengthening the capacity of the judiciary and strengthening the role of the state bodies taking part in the fight against organized crime and corruption. Vucic said that fundamental changes will be implemented to solve current problems in the Serbian judiciary and ensure a uniform jurisprudence. "The court should be freed from all accompanying jobs so that a trial where the citizens shall have a court ruling rendered within a reasonable time can be its absolute priority", he said. Vucic said that improvement in the professional competence of the judiciary and judicial and prosecutorial assistants is a prerequisite for a successfully judiciary. He stated that the new government faces the task of implementing a project to modernize the criminal justice system and build an efficient system of cooperation between state institutions and bodies in charge of the fight against corruption. "Corruption and organized crime can only be stamped out by strong and well-organized state bodies", said Vucic. Therefore, it is necessary to reorganize the prosecutor's offices system, set up a system of information exchange between state bodies and chief teams prosecuting organized crime, the prime minister-designate said. He said that the government will give maximum support to the development of new working procedures and elimination of relevant legal barriers. Vucic said that amendments to the Law on the Anti-Corruption Agency will help improve corruption prevention and announced the passing of a law on protection of whistleblowers in June.

The new government would also reform the state administration and local self-government, Vucic said in his expose. He presented the program of the next government to the parliament and said the goal of the reform would be to change the number of employees, boost the capacity and increase the responsibility of civil servants, but also the responsibility of the local governments. Mandatory education and training of civil servants will be introduced on all levels, along with well defined criteria for their employment and advance, he noted. The administration will become a support rather than an obstacle to investors and private businesses, and the introduction of e-government will facilitate that greatly, he pointed out. Based on the law on ministries that was adopted on Saturday, a secretariat of public policy will also be created to harmonize public policies with the country's financial means, he said. According to Vucic, amendments to laws, mostly to the law on state administration, will define how public policies are adopted to make sure they are realistic, harmonized and feasible. Representatives of the business community, civil society and all those interested will be included in all stages of the drafting of those laws, he remarked. Many people were given jobs in local governments based on their party affiliation, so the reform will define the maximum number of employees that will depend on the population and economic development of each municipality, Vucic explained.

## **VULIN: ECONOMY, CULTURAL HERITAGE NEW TOPICS OF TALKS**

BELGRADE, April 28 (Beta) - Incumbent Minister of Labor Aleksandar Vulin said on April 25 that he expected new talks with Pristina to focus on the economy and protecting cultural heritage. "Brussels Two, Brussels Three, or however we want to call the talks, must deal with the economy and the position of our church and our cultural heritage", Vulin told reporters at the

Palace of Serbia after the April 25 signing of a contract donating the Simpo plant in Zubin Potok to the Raska-Prizren Diocese. Vulin further said he expected the next EU-brokered talks with Pristina to yield concrete solutions which would make life easier, economically speaking, for Serbs in Kosovo-Metohija.

### **MISCEVIC: EU ELECTIONS ALSO A CHALLENGE FOR SERBIA**

BELGRADE, April 28 (Beta) - Serbia's chief negotiator with the EU, Tanja Miscevic, said on April 25 that there were rumors that the European Commission (EC) would not include an enlargement commissioner in its next lineup, which, she said, would send a very negative message to the entire western Balkan region. "That would be a very big mistake and be a bad sign to the western Balkan region, which is unambiguously European. I hope the reports are untrue and that the debate will not go in that direction," Miscevic told a round table on the role of civil society in accession talks, organized by the Center for Foreign Policy. She pointed out that elections in Serbia had not slowed down the screenings scheduled as part of the negotiations and that a certain expediting of the talks had, in fact, been planned since the teams were well-prepared, but that elections in the EU would be a test of sorts of relations between Belgrade and Brussels. "It is in our interest to open the chapters as soon as possible. During the elections and the formation of new commissioners' colleges, the EC will have to be more sensitive to member-states, which can be on our side, but not necessarily", said Miscevic, noting, though, that the EC was made up of professionals who, she had no doubt, would continue doing their jobs properly.

### **WW2 DEPORTATION OF NOVI SAD JEWS REMEMBERED**

NOVI SAD, April 28 (Beta) - A commemoration marking 70 years since the mass deportation of Novi Sad Jews to Nazi detention camps in World War Two, was held in Novi Sad on April 25. Goran Levi, chief of Novi Sad's Jewish quarter, said that around 3,000 out of Novi Sad's 4,350-strong pre-WW2 Jewish community were murdered, killed or otherwise died in concentration camps.

Representatives of the embassies of Israel, Germany and Hungary, the Jewish municipalities of Novi Sad, Belgrade and Subotica, and representatives of the city authorities laid flowers beside a memorial plaque outside Novi Sad's Synagogue. Remembering the deportation of Novi Sad's Jews, the Vojvodina government said that today's youth should be aware of the horrific crimes that happened in the past so as to prevent them from reoccurring.