

Press review: 15th of July, 2010

The EU is going to struggle for new powers at United Nations. Furthermore, the Union is about to renew accession talks with Turkey. But it is concerned about the media freedom in candidate-countries from the Balkans. Meanwhile, Kyrgyzstan has formed a new government. In addition, UN representative alarms that peace in West Africa remains fragile. While Rwanda calls for support to disabled people.

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EU Affairs

EU reaches out for new powers at United Nations

EU countries at meetings in Brussels and New York have agreed to table a resolution in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) to give the EU the right to speak. The EU currently has only observer status at the UN. Its delegates do not sit among the UN member states, but off to the side, along with entities such as the Vatican, the Red Cross and the Arab League.

If the motion, which is to be tabled in the coming weeks, is approved by the general assembly, the EU will also be awarded other rights enjoyed by fully-fledged UN members, such as the right to make proposals and submit amendments, the right of reply, the right to raise points of order and the right to circulate documents. There will also be additional seats put in for the EU's foreign policy chief, High Representative Catherine Ashton and her officials. An EU diplomat said the idea behind the changes is to boost the profile of the EU as an entity in itself at the international level.

<http://euobserver.com/9/30481>

Enlargement, European Neighbourhood

EU concerned about media freedom in south-east Europe

European Union institutions and international journalist associations are increasingly concerned about the media situation in south-east Europe. Media pluralism and press freedom are expected to be among the major concerns the European Commission will include in this year's progress reports for Western Balkan countries. Intimidation of journalists, political pressure, and illegal state subsidies for government-controlled media are common in most Balkan countries, with the exception of Croatia.

In some countries the media environment has even worsened in the form of increased pressure on professional journalists. This is the case in Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo. The Western Balkan countries care about what is written in the progress reports about the media situation. But they just pretend that are working to improve the situation, an EU official said. The situation is not satisfactory in some EU member states, either. Bulgaria, Italy and Slovakia, for instance, have been ranked by Freedom House as EU countries with only partially-free media. Although there is no explicit censorship.

<http://waz.euobserver.com/887/30485>

Füle: Turkey should have 'zero doubt' about EU's commitment

EU Enlargement Commissioner Štefan Füle assured Turkey that the European Union was committed to the Muslim country becoming a full member, saying that ways of accelerating the process would be worked on. EU foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton and Füle met Turkey's Foreign Minister and EU Affairs Minister for a first set of talks under a new political dialogue process meant to bring the two sides closer together.

Turks suspect some EU states of foot-dragging due to their reluctance to let in a Muslim nation, whose membership would mean the EU losing a buffer between itself and the Middle East. Besides, Turkey is backing reunification efforts, and wants the EU to lift its embargo in the Turkish north of Cyprus, while the EU expects Turkey to open its ports and airports to traffic from the island. Out of 35 chapters - subject areas for negotiation prior to EU entry - Turkey has completed one and opened 13 others, leaving 21 to go.

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/fuele-turkey-should-have-zero-doubt-about-eu-s-commitment-news-496329>

Development

Kyrgyzstan forms new government

Kyrgyzstan's President Roza Otunbaeva has formed a government that will run the country until parliamentary elections in October. The unveiling of the new cabinet comes after the resignation of leading ministers from the interim government that ruled the country after president Kurmanbek Bakiev was deposed in the wake of bloody confrontations in early April.

Otunbaeva had called on prospective candidates to resign, saying it was the only way to ensure the election would be held fairly and on an equal footing for all those taking part. The president has also called for neutrality within the interim government in the period leading up to the ballot and disallowed interim cabinet members from joining political parties. Competition for seats in the parliament is expected to be intense, with several new parties appearing in recent weeks. The legislature's powers were boosted and the authority of the president diluted by a revamped constitution, approved in a national referendum.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Kyrgyzstan_Forms_New_Government/2099408.html

Peace in West Africa remains fragile

UN Secretary-General's special representative for West Africa Said Djinnit has said conflicts in West Africa, including ethnic tensions and governance challenges, could overturn gains made in consolidating peace, leaving the region at crossroads. He, however, called on the international community, including the United Nations, to continue to support the sub-region in the maintenance of peace and stability.

The UN envoy described as 'encouraging signs of progress' the staging of peaceful elections in Togo with the subsequent formation of a new government with the participation of part of the opposition. Though, he mentioned that the prospects for achieving the Millennium Development Goals were weak. Later in closed-door talks with the UN Security Council members, Djinnit presented the Secretary-General's latest report on the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA), which noted that despite progress in shoring up peace and human rights, such strides are being undercut by the paucity of good governance. Thus, he underscored the key role of international assistance in promoting human rights and supporting electoral processes.

<http://www.afriquejet.com/news/africa-news/west-africa:-peace-in-west-africa-remains-fragile-2010071452721.html>

Disadvantaged Groups

Rwanda: Support the vulnerable, minister urges

The Minister of Gender and Family Promotion Dr Jeanne d'Arc Mujawamariya has called for support to persons with disabilities. She made the appeal at the launch of the five-year strategic plan of ANFSMR-Umucyo, a national association of women with hearing impairments. The plan aims to conduct more quality interventions by reaching out to more vulnerable women and girls with such impairments and addressing their problems.

Mujawamariya hailed ANFSMR-Umucyo for their strategic plan saying that it is aligned to the national strategies and clearly contributes to the achievement of Millennium Development Goals. She stressed that this plan will be effective in the promotion of education, sustaining socio-economic initiatives and health related interventions, with a particular focus on the fight against HIV and AIDS. Muhorakeye explained that, the strategies detailed in the plan were formulated on the basis of gaps and challenges identified while conducting an assessment of their organizational capacity.

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201007140309.html>