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STATE SECRETARIAT FOR HUNGARIAN
COMMUNITIES ABROAD

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Commemorations on the Day of National Cohesion

On 4 June, the Day of National Cohesion was commemorated by the Hungarian nation for the fourth time.

At a commemoration held in the Magyarság Háza in Budapest, Deputy Prime Minister responsible for Hungarian Communities Abroad Zsolt Semjén said that the Hungarian nation can be proud of having survived the Peace Treaty of Trianon, which was signed on 4 June 1920. The Deputy Prime Minister said that 4 June is a day of mourning and remembrance, and a historical lesson at the same time.

At a meeting held on the Day of National Cohesion in the Research Institute for Hungarian Communities Abroad, entitled “The consequences of Trianon in the 20th and 21st centuries: minority questions in Europe”, Deputy State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Zsuzsanna Répás said that Hungary can only pursue sound policy for Hungarian communities abroad if it shows itself to be a strong country which can stand up for its interests: a country Hungarians can respect and be proud of.

At a gala event entitled “Vital tradition – Our heritage in the Carpathian Basin”, also held in the Magyarság Háza, Minister of Human Resources Zoltán Balog said that we must always remember the events which happened on 4 June 1920.

In his message marking the Day of National Cohesion, Chairman of Parliament's National Cohesion Committee Árpád Potápi said that a strong sense of unity within the nation makes a country stronger. Mr. Potápi added that the strength of national unity is growing and this strength helps Hungarians – not only on this day, but every day of the year.

The Day of National Cohesion was also commemorated by Hungarian communities abroad and those living in the diaspora.

Hungary submits application to intervene in the lawsuit of the Minority SafePack against the EC

The State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad has issued a statement confirming that Hungary has submitted an application to intervene in a lawsuit between the European Commission (EC) and a European citizens' group lobbying to safeguard national minority interests. In its statement, the State Secretariat recalled that a citizens' committee set up as part of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) – the vice president of which is the head of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) Hunor Kelemen – submitted its Minority SafePack initiative in July 2013. The EC rejected the initiative, saying that it fell outside its legal competence. The FUEN appealed this decision at the Court of Justice of the European Union in Luxembourg.



Strasbourg stands up for the Szekler flag

In a report issued on Tuesday, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) of the Council of Europe charged Bucharest with discrimination for restricting the use of national symbols. The Strasbourg organization has condemned the Romanian



authorities for launching a range of lawsuits related to the flying of the Szekler flag outside public institutions in Hargita/Județul Harghita and Kovászna megye/Județul Covasna, while in other parts of the country national symbols can be used freely. It is stated in the report that “authorities treat the use of Hungarian and Romanian national symbols differently: they prohibit the use of the former one and encourage the use of the latter one.” The ECRI urges the consistent and non-discriminative settling of ethnic disputes.

Even demonstrations for autonomy would be prohibited by Bogdan Diaconu

In his latest proposal, member of the Romanian Social Democratic Party (PSD) Bogdan Diaconu has recommended imprisonment for individuals who even mention the word “autonomy” in public. On Monday Mr. Diaconu presented his proposal, according to which individuals could be sentenced to prison terms of from one to five years for openly calling for territorial autonomy; furthermore, organizations which support territorial autonomy would be disbanded. Mr. Diaconu, who has gained notoriety for his initiatives aimed against Hungarians, said that “Hungarian extremists financed from Budapest” already represent a danger for Romania. The President of the Szekler National Council Balázs Izsák said that “Such a law could not have been proposed even in Europe’s cruelest communist dictatorship – that of Ceausescu – since even in those years Romania was a signatory to a range of international agreements which could not have been ‘opposed’.”



MKP and RMDSZ plan firm cooperation in the European Parliament

The delegation of the Party of the Hungarian Community (MKP) and that of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) have had talks in Brussels on their cooperation in the European Parliament. At the meeting, the MKP was represented by party leader József Berényi, Member of the European Parliament Pál Csáky and the MKP’s secretary responsible for international affairs Attila Lancz, while the RMDSZ delegation comprised elected Members of the European Parliament Gyula Winkler and Csaba Sógor and secretary for foreign affairs and vice-president of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) Vincze Loránt. The parties stated that “It is important for all of us to continue the fruitful work of the previous period in the field of national issues; we must cooperate – in the spirit of partnership in the Carpathian Basin – in order to make assertion of our national community’s rights successful in Europe.” In addition, the RMDSZ and the MKP would also like to cooperate with the FUEN because they believe that the maintenance of minority solidarity strengthens the enforcement of Hungarian communities’ interests.

Officials decide who is a good representative of minorities

The mandate of the current members of the Committee for National Minorities is soon to expire, therefore the government office is searching for new candidates in the body. This



year, however, will see an innovation: candidates will be tested and screened, thus it will actually be the government office which decides who qualifies as a good representative of national minorities. In previous years, representatives of national minorities were appointed by civil organizations, thus Hungarian representatives were chosen by the Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia. The spokesman of the organization Géza Tokár said that he finds it outrageous that the government commissioner incorporated an element into the system which enables the screening of candidates without any hindrance. As a result, the Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia will not take part in the process.



Zsuzsanna Répás: the issue of autonomy is no longer taboo

On Thursday, at the opening ceremony of a three-day legal-academic conference on territorial and non-territorial autonomy in Palics/Palić in Vojvodina, Deputy Prime Minister for Hungarian Communities Abroad Zsuzsanna Répás said that the question of autonomy has been the subject of public debate in every Hungarian community abroad and it seems that the fear surrounding this concept is fading away; the topic no longer appears to be taboo. At a round table discussion with the participation of the head of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ) and president of the Provincial House of Representatives István Pásztor and the head of the Hungarian National Council (MNT) in Vojvodina Tamás Korhecz, it was said that the question of personal, territorial and provincial autonomy had already been formulated in the 1990s in Vojvodina; this region became the only place in the Carpathian Basin where such a form of non-territorial autonomy was realized, as a result of which the MNT could be established and is still exercising its rights.

Speaking at the conference, Hungary's new Minister of Justice László Trócsányi said that "Those who want autonomy do not want to separate from a country, since autonomy is built not against somebody but in cooperation with them."

New election system in Vojvodina

The Provincial House of Representatives in Vojvodina has adopted an amendment to the electoral system, therefore in the future politicians will be able enter the House of Representatives exclusively on party lists, according to a proportional system. In addition to the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina (LSV), members of several opposition parties voted in favor of the amendment to the electoral system, but the governing Democratic Party (DS) and the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ) voted against it. The head of the Provincial House of Representatives István Pásztor said that the VMSZ does not support the proposal, because under the new system more than one million citizens in Vojvodina will remain without a provincial representative; this is also the case with citizens of Serbia, since the majority of them do not have representatives in the country's parliament.



Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has talks with Ukraine's new President in Kiev

On Saturday Prime Minister Viktor Orbán had talks with Ukraine's new President Petro Poroshenko after the Ukrainian president's inauguration ceremony. Among other issues, the two politicians discussed the situation of Hungarians in Transcarpathia and Ukraine's EU integration. Viktor Orbán said that it is in the interest of Hungary for Ukraine to be a country with European prospects. According to a press release, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán received reassuring and encouraging information concerning recognition and respect for the rights of Hungarians in Ukraine.

In Kiev, Viktor Orbán also had talks with the head of the Cultural Alliance of Hungarians in Transcarpathia (KMKSZ) László Brenzovics. The two politicians discussed the fact that two-thirds of Hungarians living in Ukraine voted for the candidate who has become the country's elected president. Mr. Orbán and Mr. Brenzovics agreed that the interests of Ukrainians and Hungarians living in Ukraine are the same: to have peace in the country. They also agreed that the solution to the current situation in Ukraine would be attainment of a European democratic country which respects the rights of its national minorities.