MINISTER REACTS TO REPORT CROATIA IS "BLOCKING SERBIA"

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The Serbian minister without portfolio in charge of EU integration in this way reacted to reports on Wednesday that Croatia has already blocked Serbia's accession negotiations.

"It probably will probably be (on the agenda) on Friday, so we will see how Croatia will proceed," Joksimovic told Belgrade-based daily Blic.

When asked "how she explains" a report in Croatian newspaper Vecernji List that due to Zagreb's decision not to have a position on the issue, the opening of chapter 23 had been removed from the agenda, Joksimovic said, "They probably need time to take a position."

Previously, the Zagreb daily cited diplomatic sources to report that Croatia was "already blocking Serbia into the negotiation process of accession to the European Union by means of not submitting its official position on the opening of chapter 23, resulting in this item being removed from the agenda of a working group of the Council EU that deals with enlargement."

Bilateral issues

Head of Serbia's team for negotiations with the EU Tanja Miscevic said on Wednesday that she expected the open issues between Serbia and Croatia would be solved bilaterally and that they should not affect the negotiating process with the EU.

"Bilateral issues should be settled through talks. I am sure that Croatia also has an interest in discussing them," she told state broadcaster RTS, Beta agency reported.

She added that she understood Croatia's interest and did not expect it to abandon its requests, but that it should not be a condition for the opening of new chapters in the negotiations.

Commenting on the possibility of just one of the 28 EU members blocking the opening of chapters, Miscevic said that there had been disagreement before, but that other members would usually exert pressure on the dissenting member.

"There have been different cases so far. Bilateral issues were included in the negotiating processes, and Croatia had the same problem. There is no pressure because other member states want to know what the cause of the problem is. Still, the tendency is for bilateral issues to be solved bilaterally, precisely to avoid slowing down the negotiating process," Miscevic told RTS.

SOURCE: BETA, TANJUG
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