
FICO LOBBIES PUTIN FOR LAJČAK AS UN CHIEF

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Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, who had dinner with Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday (25 August), has lobbied for Russian support for his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Miroslav Lajčák, to become the next UN Secretary-General.

According to a transcript published on the Kremlin's website, Fico tells Putin, We have an interesting candidate and we will try to find support from your side.

Miroslav Lajčák, Slovakia's foreign minister, is one of the 12 official candidates to replace Ban Ki-moon, whose second term expires on 31 December. However, Lajčák has so far gathered very little support among the 15 members of the UN Security Council, over the two secret votes held so far. A third vote is expected on Monday (29 August).

SLOVAKIAS FOREIGN MINISTER ACTIVELY CONSIDERING UN TOP JOB

Miroslav Lajčák, Slovakia's foreign minister, is actively considering being a candidate for UN Secretary General, replacing Ban Ki-moon, whose second term expires on 31 December, EurActiv was told yesterday (12 May).

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In the first vote on 21 July, Lajčák wasn't among the favourites, and support for him declined further at the second vote held on 5 August. The reason, diplomats said, was his Prime Minister's positions against Muslims.

FOUR EUROPEANS LEAD IN RACE FOR UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

Portugal's António Guterres, Slovenia's Danilo Türk, Bulgaria's Irina Bokova and Serbia's Vuk Jeremić have emerged as the frontrunners in a race to replace UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, whose second term expires on 31 December.

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SLOVAK PM: ITS IMPOSSIBLE TO INTEGRATE MUSLIMS

Challenging the EU's political correctness, Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico said he will not allow a large Muslim community in his country. Fico's anti-immigration rhetoric has boosted his Direction-Social Democracy party (SMER-SD) ahead of the 5 March elections.

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We will absolutely do so. Once again I want to stress that we are glad to see you and we will be pleased to discuss all these issues, Putin responds.

In the first part of the conversation, both Fico and Putin regret the reduction, by half, of bilateral economic relations, as a result of the sanctions imposed by the EU following the annexation by Russia of Crimea.

Putin says he is aware that Slovakia holds the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU and adds he counts on Slovakia to help in this capacity improve economic relations with Europe.

Fico answers that despite the objective reasons, he believes that everything should be done to bring economic relations back to the level which existed before sanctions were imposed.

Slovakia is not the only EU country who has sought contacts with Putin to lobby for its candidate to replace Ban Ki-moon. On 30 June, Putin arrived in Slovenia, where he met among others the country's candidate for the UN job, Danilo Türk, who served as president from 2007 to 2012.

WILL THE UN GLASS CEILING BE SHATTERED THIS TIME?

While the contest to select the next UN Secretary-General may not be on a par with the slugging match for the White House, it is beginning to heat up □ with some decidedly undiplomatic tactics evident in the campaign to replace Ban Ki-moon, writes Dick Roche.

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