
SLOVENIA HOPES FOR BETTER RELATIONS WITH NEW CROATIAN PRESIDENT

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President Borut Pahor has congratulated Croatia's newly elected President Zoran Milanović over the phone. "I am happy that he reiterated in our conversation that he wanted to improve relations with Slovenia and that this will be one of his priorities," Pahor told the press on Monday.

"I replied that, in this sense, Slovenia has a friend, somebody completely devoted to dialogue, to finding solutions. But added that he must be aware of my position about the arbitration agreement and that these must be taken into account."

He expressed hope that the dialogue will lead to the implementation of the border arbitration decision through agreement of both countries and to benefit of them both.

Pahor said he would attend Milanović's inauguration in early February, to convey the message that Slovenia and Croatia are neighbouring countries and must also be friendly countries.

He believes that his presence at the inauguration will also be that relations between the two countries were mostly good, bar one, very complicated chapter.

However, a tribunal has decided on the issue and the decision will have to be upheld sooner or later, added Pahor.

Milanović was Croatia's prime minister at the time when Croatia withdrew from the border arbitration procedure, declaring it null and void after a wire tap showed inadmissible communication had taken place between Slovenia's arbitration agent and the tribunal member nominated by Slovenia.

The agent and the tribunal member resigned immediately and the tribunal decided that the breach was not such as to warrant a discontinuation of the arbitration process.

Nonetheless, Croatia withdrew and has been refusing to implement the border arbitration decision ever since it was presented in mid-2017.

Pahor, who signed in his capacity as prime minister in 2009 the arbitration agreement with Croatia that led to the arbitration procedure, said today that he would approach his relationship with President Milanović "with open arms and open doors".

Social Democrats (SD) president Dejan Židan also congratulated Milanović, who is a member of the Croatian Social Democrats (SDP).

Židan expressed confidence that the countries will be able to renew friendly relations "based on the rule of law, mutual respect and dedication to common European values".

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