

UNMIK/PR/860

Wednesday, 30 October 2002

SRSB discusses elections

SRSB Michael Steiner met today with Yugoslav President Vojislav Kostunica and Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Nebojsa Covic. The SRSB later briefed Contact Group ambassadors on the current situation in Kosovo.

After the meeting with Mr. Covic, SRSB Michael Steiner briefed press about the recent municipal elections.

“Frankly, my impression is that Serbs from Kosovo have shot themselves in the foot,” he said. “The result of contradictory messages concerning the elections was the low turnout among the Serbs. This has diminished their capacity to take part in decision-making in Kosovo, but that was the decision of the voters.

“Seeing this outcome, it makes no sense to go forward with the meeting I had proposed originally for Gnjilane. But this does not mean that the philosophy of decentralization is off the table.

“Decentralization continues to be necessary and good for all communities in Kosovo. We need to have decentralization in line with the Constitutional Framework and European standards, and we will find a resolution for that within Kosovo with all the legitimate leaders.

“It is true that I would have hoped for better participation from the Serbs in these elections, in their own interest But, at the same time, I must say that there was no Kosovo-wide boycott... We had participation all over Kosovo, also by the Serb community, except in one place and that is the northern part of Mitrovica, where unfortunately there was a boycott of the legitimate elections organized by the OSCE.

“My seven-point plan was an excellent offer--also to the Serbs in the North--, as it would provide security, provide a firm mechanism against outvoting and provide economic perspectives. Unfortunately, co-governance is not possible now.

“We need to fill the legal vacuum created there by the boycott. We need to have a legitimate authority in the north of Mitrovica.”

