

As delivered

**Statement by Mr. Peter N. Due,
Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMIK,
to the Security Council
New York, 20 October 2026**

Madam President,

You have before you the latest report of the Secretary-General on UNMIK. It is in the short update format in line with the new guidelines for all such reports. The reporting period ended on 15 September, so I will also update the Council on developments thereafter.

The past six months saw increased tensions in Kosovo and the region. On 7 June, the people of Kosovo went to the polls for the third time in sixteen months. The elections were peaceful and inclusive, but political uncertainty and heightened rhetoric followed.

In northern Kosovo and elsewhere, frictions increased around inter-municipal and property-related issues, including demolitions and evictions. These developments raised questions regarding property rights, due process, and potential socio-economic consequences for local communities and businesses. Concerns persisted regarding the stalled reintegration of Kosovo Serb judges and prosecutors, as well as restrictions on freedom of expression, including the use of signs, symbols and language associated with non-majority communities. There was also concern about law enforcement actions, including during the Vidovdan commemoration at Gazimestan on 28 June and other allegations of ill-treatment of Kosovo Serbs by Kosovo police officers. The Police Inspectorate of Kosovo opened investigations into these matters. Serbia-run healthcare and education institutions, as well as the Serbian Orthodox Church, continued to face challenges arising from closures, law enforcement actions and decisions affecting access to religious and cultural heritage sites and the conduct of pilgrimages.

Taken individually, some of these developments may appear administrative or localized. Taken together, they reinforced perceptions of insecurity and unequal treatment among Kosovo Serbs, eroding trust and affecting Kosovo's multi-ethnic character.

Madam President,

After the end of the reporting period, on 16 September, the first-instance judgment of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers found former President Hashim Thaçi and three other Kosovo Liberation Army leaders - Kadri Veseli, Rexhep Selimi and Jakup Krasniqi - guilty of war crimes but not of crimes against humanity. Demonstrations in Pristina and elsewhere followed. Most remained peaceful, although the protests on 16 September and 5 October resulted in minor injuries and material damage. Overall, the Kosovo police conducted themselves professionally in managing the demonstrations over 20 days, while safeguarding the rights to freedom of assembly and expression. At the same time, coordination and information sharing with the United Nations was inadequate. The Kosovo police briefed other international organizations but not the United Nations, an example of the limited cooperation that the authorities in Pristina extend to UNMIK. Operational coordination among international actors on the ground was also less than optimal. I have raised these concerns with the authorities in Pristina and with our international partners.

On 6 October, the Assembly approved amendments to the Law on the Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office, limiting their powers. I note the deep concern expressed by the EU about these amendments. I also note that the defendants retain the right to appeal. The integrity and independence of the judicial process must be respected. Any legislative action must be fully consistent with Kosovo's legal and international obligations. Another judgment concerning offences against the administration of justice is scheduled for 17 November.

These developments in Kosovo have unfolded against the backdrop of heightened political tensions across the Western Balkans, where narratives surrounding past conflicts remain contested and deeply divisive despite the passage of time. Accountability remains essential to building trust. In this regard, I reiterate the call for full cooperation by the authorities in Belgrade and Pristina to hold accountable those responsible for the attacks in Banjska/Banjskë in 2023 and on the Ibër-Lepenac/Ibar-Lepenac water canal in 2024.

Madam President,

The Assembly of Kosovo was constituted and the government formed on 13 September. Around midnight on 6 October, Justina Shiroka-Pula was elected President of Kosovo, the third woman to serve in this role. I warmly welcome her election.

Political disagreement is part of the fabric of democratic life, but prolonged institutional deadlock carries consequences. The formation of the institutions is

therefore encouraging. The political deadlock seems to have been broken, and the priority should now be to translate this progress into effective governance for all communities.

Madam President,

As the Secretary-General has stated, renewed progress in the European Union-facilitated dialogue to normalize relations between Belgrade and Pristina remains essential. Genuine commitment by both sides is needed to achieve tangible progress. I recognize the continuing efforts of the EU and welcome the separate high-level meetings it held with President Vučić and Prime Minister Kurti here in New York in September. I encourage both sides to engage constructively, implement agreements already reached, including the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities, and to take steps that help build trust and reduce tensions.

The EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, Mr. Peter Sørensen, has continued his concerted efforts, including on missing persons and the inclusion of the voices of women and youth. The United Nations fully supports his efforts and continues to cooperate closely with him.

As of today, 1,577 persons remain unaccounted for. Recent excavations and identification of remains brought a measure of closure to the families concerned, while serving as a reminder of the enduring suffering of those still awaiting answers. I urge all parties to ensure that the approach to the issue of Missing Persons remains humanitarian, victim-centered and free from politicization. I also encourage both sides to take steps to facilitate access to relevant archives, including through the designation of focal points. UNMIK remains committed to supporting these efforts, including through the Working Group on Missing Persons chaired by the International Committee of the Red Cross. I also welcome the complementary role of the EU-chaired Joint Commission on Missing Persons.

Madam President,

UNMIK has continued to deliver its mandate under Security Council resolution 1244, coordinating our efforts with the EU, KFOR, the OSCE, the UN Kosovo Team and other international partners.

Through its programmatic activities and engagement with political, religious, and community leaders alongside youth and women, UNMIK continues to foster dialogue and promote trust-building and inclusion across communities. We also

continue to perform significant so-called residual functions related to INTERPOL, the certification of documents and facilitation of Kosovo's participation in United Nations fora.

I am grateful to this Council and Member States more broadly for their support to UNMIK, including our trust-building activities. I also wish to express my appreciation to the staff of UNMIK and the UN Kosovo Team for their service despite the significant operational and financial constraints facing the Mission and the United Nations as a whole. We remain committed to making the most effective and efficient use of available resources.

Madam President,

Our shared responsibility is to work for reconciliation and normalization, so that all communities in Kosovo can participate fully and confidently in public life, with respect for the rule of law, human rights and Kosovo's multi-ethnic character. The recent increase in tensions and the legacy of past conflicts in the Western Balkans underscore that this Council should maintain its focus on Kosovo and the region despite challenges elsewhere. I hope that the recent formation of institutions in Kosovo will provide an opportunity for further advances, through dialogue and engagement, for the benefit of all the people of Kosovo.

I thank you, Madam President.