

United Nations Kosovo Trust-Building Forum: Moving Forward

Keynote Address by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of Mission, Mr. Zahir Tanin

18 October 2018, Pristina

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Distinguished guests, colleagues and friends,

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you tonight to this event in which we are taking stock of progress and opening new avenues. Less than six months ago, many of you joined us in Ljubljana to contribute to fortifying the foundations of an enduring peace and a sustained, inclusive and stable society. We have just seen some of the highlights from that exceptional gathering of distinguished leaders and change-makers. Building trust between communities in Kosovo requires courage, dedication and determination. In May 2018, your ideas came together at the United Nations Kosovo Trust-Building Forum in Ljubljana, and that is a credit to the effort of all of you in this room today.

Among the major outcomes of the Forum was the adoption of a series of recommendations in the areas of 1 (first) Good governance and access to services, 2 (second) Access to justice, 3 (third) Building inter-religious trust, 4 (fourth) Economic empowerment and the environment, 5 (fifth) Media and communications and 6 (sixth) Education. The report of the final outcomes was released last month, and I am pleased to present it to you today in English, Albanian and Serbian languages. I invite all of you to share the report with your networks, and most of all, to use the recommendations as a roadmap for trust-building initiatives in your communities and institutions. Developed through consensus among the participants, these recommendations represent the culmination of months of preparatory work, including focus group discussions with experts and practitioners on key issues for all people in Kosovo, to develop workable solutions while nurturing deep connections among neighbours and diverse constituencies.

Together, the Forum participants identified practical ways of ensuring constructive engagement and ways of supporting locally-owned and grassroots-level processes that must complement political discussions and negotiations at different levels.

The real work of translating this vision into action is now underway. There are no shortcuts on the path you have outlined, but it is possible and essential to set priorities. Advancing the Forum recommendations will require sustained effort and continuous consultation, equally involving Kosovo and international institutions. This is the journey we are marking today.

The United Nations remains committed to its role as reliable partners in your work. I am sharing today with you updates on our work to take forward the Forum recommendations.

Following Ljubljana, six workshops were conducted with participants from each of the focus groups, providing an opportunity for participants to discuss the recommendations in more detail and to identify priority areas of work. This was necessary also to achieve consensus and finalize the final document. At the same time, we undertook wider consultations with many international partners to consider in more detail complementarities and synergies with the full range of ongoing work and existing activities.

These efforts informed a mapping exercise conducted by UNMIK in August which helped to identify existing and non-existing frameworks -- governmental and non-governmental -- that relate to the Forum recommendations, as well as detect and address gaps and areas that have received insufficient attention currently.

Allow me to take a moment to address just a few areas of work stemming from the Forum recommendations in additional details.

We are allocating a significant part of our resources this year for the implementation of most of the Trust Building Forum recommendations, although the implementation of all recommendations will take more time. There are many projects now under consideration on how to move forward within the framework of this mapping-out of recommendations. We are in the stage of making decisions and some preparatory work for implementation of some of projects has started. At the same time, in the areas of Justice, Human Rights, Empowerment of Youth,

Women and other vital interest groups in society, we have committed very substantial resources as well. For us, in UNMIK, this year is the year of Trust Building and the United Nations is concentrated on society-wide issues which complement the political processes under way. To mention just a few of the very important initiatives:

1. We are hosting a series of events and conversations across Kosovo, including townhalls and meetings among municipal officials. Creating complementarity of efforts with the political processes, we will guide informed conversations to help a wider section of the society become more actively involved in shaping the decisions that determine their future.
2. We will convene and create space for communities to come together through development of the Kosovo Trust-Building Digital Platform, as a means of maintaining the relationships forged in Ljubljana, sharing information and conceptualizing and organizing work projects to advance implementation of the recommendations.
3. We will contribute to the development of a sustainable language center, where all residents of Kosovo would have an affordable opportunity to learn and/or improve their knowledge of Serbian and Albanian languages, thus providing students, public servants and others alike with the opportunity to be far more job-ready in future.
4. In addition to the United Nations' continuing efforts to promote gender equality in Kosovo, we will work with partners to build on strategies to support victims of gender-based violence, including through creating opportunities for economic participation and personal empowerment. A central issue highlighted throughout the Forum is the empowerment of women as drivers and sustainers of trust-building. Even as visionary individuals, organizations and institutions are doing important work to promote gender equality and women's rights, many challenges persist. We will also work to promote the role of youth and other change-makers in Kosovo society.

Out of the 134 Forum recommendations, 102 are already being addressed, albeit partially, but none among all ethnic groups throughout Kosovo. Furthermore, 20 recommendations require further thinking and an estimated 50 recommendations we seek to address through programmatic activity proposals. At least 75 per cent of

the recommendations from the Access to Justice focus group are being partially addressed by our Justice 2020 programme, while all recommendations relating to gender are being addressed by UNMIK partners in different geographical areas.

For programmatic funding, activities related to Women, Peace, Youth and Security receive **16** percent of total investment; Rule of Law receive **43** percent of total investment, while Trust-building, including language center receive **41** percent of total investment.

Trust-building is at the center of the United Nations Integrated Strategic Framework for Kosovo and our priority area for funding programmatic activities. Of course, the initiatives I have described represent only an illustrative sample.

Once again, I wish foremost to commend and thank you, the participants, in the United Nations Kosovo Trust-Building Forum for your personal commitment to this process. I would also like to seize the chance to invite all stakeholders – from local grassroots organizations to the international donor community – to build on the outcomes of the Ljubljana process, to identify opportunities for your respective entities to contribute to the implementation of the recommendations, and to help maintain the momentum for building trust.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As Secretary-General António Guterres noted in his recent speech before the 73rd General Assembly session, “Our world is suffering from a bad case of ‘Trust Deficit Disorder’”. Here in Kosovo, nearly twenty years have passed since the Security Council called for ensuring the conditions for a peaceful and normal life for all inhabitants. Yet, conflict narratives driven by mistrust continue to fuel mutual suspicion and tension among ethnic groups. Economic, social, cultural and political life remains largely identity-based, and dividing lines leave many uninvolved in shaping a common future. The magnitude and the intensity of these challenges require a common approach. As the Secretary-General additionally said in his remarks, “In the face of massive, existential threats to people and planet—but equally at a time of compelling opportunities for shared prosperity—there is no way forward but collective, common-sense action for the common good. This is how we can rebuild trust.”

I welcome you the leaders and all partners for peace in Kosovo to join us in taking forward the Forum's recommendations as a roadmap for our collective efforts toward lasting reconciliation. Our future rests on solidarity. There is much work to be done, and I am confident that together, we will move forward effectively, farther and faster.

The journey of building bridges between people and communities is about moving from frozen conversation to meaningful communication, to necessary coordination and to real cooperation. We are in the middle of this journey, and as I said in Ljubljana, it is now time to organise the future, not simply to mourn the past.

Thank you.