

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Security Council Meeting
Report of the Secretary-General
on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

STATEMENT

By

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Honorable President,
Your Excellencies,

I am very pleased to report to you today regarding the latest progress in Kosovo—the young country that is today recognized by a majority of UN members and weeks away from also entering the formal process of EU accession.

At the start, allow me to thank Special Representative of the Secretary General, Mr. Zarif, for his previous engagement in Kosovo. He represented the UN according to the new situation that has evolved in Kosovo: after the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Kosovo, the opinion of the ICJ on the legality of our declaration as well as the UNGA Resolution in September 2010. This resolution once and for all closed the issue of the status of Kosovo by starting EU-facilitated talks on normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia.

I also welcome Mr Zahir Tanin to Kosovo for his mission. Afghanistan was the first or the second country in the world that recognized us as independent – minutes divide them from Costa Rica – so it's quite appropriate that we now have two consecutive SRSG's from a dear, friendly country.

To return to last month's developments, Kosovo has faced some of the most difficult challenges in the last few years; however, as you have heard by now, these challenges also provided Kosovo with opportunities to prove its transformation from importer of security resources to exporter of stability and peace initiatives.

Honourable President,

I want to inform you that the Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo has now voted to amend the country's Constitution to create a Special Court that will adjudicate the alleged crimes derived from the report of the Council of Europe.

The vote in our parliament was overwhelmingly positive. As a Deputy Prime Minister and the president of the Parliament's largest party, I worked with my colleagues to convince its members, as well as the greater public, to establish this unusual legal instrument so that we might have credible trials that are independent and internationally managed.

Seventeen years have passed since the Kosovo war began in 1998. You may remember that our resistance was a true case of David versus Goliath.

Allow me Mr. President to say that no Kosovar, myself included, will stand idly by and allow our Special Court to equate the genocidal acts of Slobodan Milosevic, the State of Serbia, with eventual acts of desperate individuals from the community of the oppressed, committed during or after the war. Serbia's war against Kosovo was conducted with the involvement of the army, police, and paramilitary units, and backed by Serbian intellectuals. It was fascism, pure and simple. We in Kosovo will not allow our history to be rewritten to blur the differences between the hunter and the prey. We will protect the legacy of our war, Kosovo's freedom, and our independence.

But we now have delivered on the creation of an instrument that is far more credible than any of the trials held in the courts of all Balkan countries. We thank individual member countries that have noted and welcomed this move by Kosovo, and I hope that the UN Security Council will also recognize the mature efforts of the Kosovo government to deal with all crimes done in the years of conflict.

I also invite European Union member countries to—without delay and new justifications—sign the MSA in September. Any political delay in the signing of the MSA or for visa liberalization will be strong setback for the dialogue process in Brussels.

You may have seen in international media that several American and Kosovar artists organized an art event in order to pay homage to the women raped by Serbian forces during the Kosovo war in 1998-1999.

The World Health Organization concludes that 20000 women have been raped and assaulted by the Serbian state during the war in Kosovo in 1998 – 1999. Fifteen years after the war, the tragedy of rape as a war crime in Kosovo has not been addressed by mechanisms of international justice. The time has now come for international justice for Kosovo for the Kosovo women victims of the genocidal crime.

Therefore, I call on all members of the UN Security Council to support the petition signed by more than 150,000 citizens of Kosovo, which seeks international justice for Kosovo women raped during the war. International humanitarian law, CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) and UN resolutions on this matter make a clear call that issues of sexual violence in conflict must not remain unabated and unpunished any longer. Kosova calls for justice.

Your Excellencies,

As you may recall this past winter we had a huge flow of Kosovars who left Kosovo to seek asylum in EU member countries.

I am happy to report that we took strong measures that decreased significantly the numbers of Kosovars emigrating. While the number of Kosovars claiming asylum in Germany in March reached 11,147, by June the number fell to 1,373 and July the number was in the hundreds and no longer the thousands. Similarly, while the number of Kosovo asylum seekers in Hungary reached 14,000 in March, in June the number was less than 300.

Our efforts to inform the Kosovo people were aided by European police forces that started monitoring the Serbian border to Hungary where the illegal flow of migrants was most rampant.

Kosovo may have stemmed our numbers, but we are concerned about the fate of tens of thousands of Syrians who have left their country in the most tragic of circumstances. Kosovo is a country in which almost half of the population has experienced being a refugee and we sympathize with the plight of those that are now filling the roads of our countries in search of peace.

A part of our success to stem the issue of asylum-seekers was also based on some good news we had on the economic front. A French consortium won the bid to build a 400 million euro ski resort in Brezovica, greatly aiding the Serbian community living there and bringing fresh investments to the whole of Kosovo. We also agreed for investments in our energy system and with the help of the World Bank and USAID we are completing a transaction for over 1 billion euro in new power generation that will create more employment and exports from Kosovo. This project has started many years ago, but as complex negotiations now draw to a close, this will also be a pillar of a new stage of economic development. Kosovo is today the country with the highest average economic growth in the Western Balkans in the last 7 years and we are the country with the lowest debt to GDP ratio in the entire Eastern Europe. We face enormous challenges but we are bravely seeking to translate our political freedom into more economic opportunities for Kosovars.

Mr. President,

Allow me to highlight the other key development which you have heard about today in this room.

Kosovo has applied for membership to UNESCO. We initially requested from New York to pass on our application to UNESCO as the UNESCO Secretariat advised, but we understand that the UN does not want to play a role in exchanging correspondence and has left it to the member countries of UNESCO to decide on the merits of Kosovo's membership. We have heard several questions posed

here, and allow me to answer a few of them:

1. Is Kosovo eligible to become a UNESCO member before becoming a UN member?

The answer is an absolute yes; Kosovo is eligible to become a UNESCO member before becoming a UN member state, provided that it secures a two-thirds majority of votes in the General Conference. The voting takes place upon recommendation of the Executive Board. We will know of the final outcome in November. Many countries, from Austria to Vietnam, became members of UNESCO long before they joined UN.

The second question is: would Kosovo's membership to UNESCO endanger the ongoing dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia on the normalization of their relations?

Kosovo is already a member of two UN specialized agencies, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. UNESCO would therefore not be the first international agency or organization that Kosovo has joined since the initiation of the technical dialogue with Serbia in March 2011. So, despite what Serbia claims, the membership of Kosovo in international bodies will only advance stability and will strengthen the dialogue that seeks normalization. The isolation of Kosovo will certainly not bring normalization between Kosovo and Serbia.

And thirdly, I must also answer the question on whether the UNESCO Heritage sites are safe in Kosovo?

I can confirm that they are safe, or safer than they have been in the last 1000 years. They are protected by a very consolidated and modern legal framework approved by UN Envoy Ahtisaari, endorsed by the Secretary General of the UN and adopted by the Kosovo Parliament. Our police force protects 95% of the sites of the Serbian Orthodox Church. NATO forces have entrusted us and are satisfied with the safety of these sites. Thousands of tourists from Japan to Rwanda are visiting the sites today and they provide good income for the people of Kosovo. I invite you members of the Council to visit Kosovo as soon as possible to witness yourself the positive and safe situation. Our government has also engaged in interfaith dialogue and the Secretary General has noted this as a positive contribution to reconciliation in several reports.

Honorable members of the council,

I am only mentioning in length the issues related to our UNESCO bid because we are gravely concerned with the methods Serbia is employing as it tries to deny us membership and keep us isolated from opportunities in education, science and culture. Serbia's ambassador to UNESCO, Mr. Tanskovic, has recently in an interview to a Russian radio station called for a "wider Christian front" against Kosovo membership? This language, completely inappropriately calls for clashes between faiths and has clear racist undertones. The Kosovo war was not a religious conflict. It was a genocide committed by the State of Serbia that destroyed lives in 3 countries and led to 3 different armed conflicts.

We expect that we will have a clash of arguments with Serbia on the merits of our membership but we are refusing to engage in a lowly and unacceptable type of discourse, which promotes discord between religions and increases religious intolerance. We call on all members of the Security Council to support Kosovo's bid to UNESCO. You can do that even though you may not yet recognize Kosovo.

We will also seek membership to INTERPOL and the Council of Europe as two vital tools to promote and protect human rights and human lives.

Mr. President,

I heard some harsh words from Minister Dacic today. I understand he is in an election campaign and may need to use nationalist language, but the dialogue with Serbia has continued and is continuing to ensure normalization of relations in the context of the European integration process.

Next week we will meet again in Brussels and I hope that we will agree to close the package of important agreements. The first deal in telecom will ensure that Kosovo obtains an independent international dialing code. This will save millions of euros as we currently use Monaco, Serbian and Slovenian codes. The second agreement in energy is meant to stop, once and for all, the parallel distribution system in the north of Kosovo that was set up by Serbia. Kosovo law will now prevail in creating a competitive distribution market in the entire territory of Kosovo and taxes to Kosovo authorities will be finally paid. The third deal will ensure that a barricade put in the north called a "Peace Park" will not hamper the freedom of movement any longer. The fourth deal is expected to establish an association envisaged in Ahtisaari Plan: the Association of Serbian municipalities.

I assure you, Mr. President, that this Association will not have executive powers. We have highly decentralized municipal level of government and this will be the basis of our civic democracy.

We hope to sign these deals next week so the leaders of the Western Balkans can meet in Vienna for the next summit of our nations in the context of the Berlin Process.

All Western Balkan leaders will meet and discuss the practical formats of cooperation, either through joint infrastructure investments, or youth-to-youth exchanges or the demarcation of borders. Kosovo will play a role in several key processes: we will promote with Serbia a new highway that links Serbia with the Albanian and Montenegrin coast via Kosovo highways. This so-called Prishtina-Nis project will connect important parts of the Balkans. We will also sign our border demarcation with Montenegro. They are expected to become a NATO member soon, and with this act, Kosovo will have finished demarcation of $\frac{3}{4}$ of our borders, which is the highest in the former Yugoslavia. No other republic has managed to close these painful challenges with neighbours as we have done.

The better movement of Kosovars will also be helped with the decision of the Russian Federation to allow for Kosovo sportsmen to use Kosovo passports when travelling to Russia, and also Brazil, which has recently allowed all Kosovars to use their passports when travelling to Brazil. As Kosovo has recently become an Olympic nation, this is a welcomed move in the lead up to the Games in Rio. We hope for our first gold medal there from our judo champ, Majlinda Kelmendi.

Honourable President,

In the very end, allow me to call on you and the distinguished members to recognize the progress achieved. Are there still problems in Kosovo? Yes; there are, as there are in each of the ex Yugoslav republics. But is Kosovo safe today? Yes; it's safer than 80% of European capitals, according to INTERPOL statistics. We are fighting extremism, we are cooperating with the international community and we are trying to build a prosperous democracy.

More is yet to be done, but as someone who has seen war with my own eyes, you should be proud of yourselves for the success in Kosovo. This is why the mandate of the next SRSG should be marked with serious discussions of how you can transfer the resources spent in quiet Kosovo to the people in the Middle East and elsewhere, which are today facing the direst of existential threats.