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

STATEMENT

By

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Mr. President,
Distinguished members of the Security Council,

It is a great honour for me to address the Security Council today and present the latest developments and progress in the Republic of Kosovo. During the last three months, there have been many important developments contributing to peace and stability as well as to strengthening a multi-ethnic and democratic Kosovo.

Today I am pleased to inform you on Kosovo's internal strengthening of statehood; further integration in the international community; successful negotiation of a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union, and the continuation of our inter-state Dialogue with Serbia. I will take this opportunity also to raise a number of concerns on behalf of the Government of Kosovo.

Before addressing these issues, let me first thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, and the current member states of the Security Council for supporting peace and progress in Kosovo. For Kosovo citizens, UN still remains a symbol of hope, peace and international justice.

Two decades ago, this distinguished chamber has repeatedly discussed and acted upon, by being the main UN institution to address the human rights violation and crimes against humanity committed by Milosevic regime. This Council has witnessed the apartheid period in Kosovo, and has highlighted state-sponsored crimes and ethnic cleansing committed by Milosevic regime. Despite many challenges, fifteen years after the war, Kosovo today represents a successful story of state-building and peace-building, which would not have been possible without the active support of the international community.

Mr. President

Over the past three months, Kosovo has continued maintaining political stability, has maintained economic stability, and has strengthened further its democratic governance. One of the main developments in the recent months has been the successful organization of parliamentary elections in Kosovo. The international democratic community, including a special European Election Observation mission, has applauded the June 8th elections for being credible, well organised, transparent, and in line with the highest European standards. In particular, these elections also mark an important turning point because for the first time Kosovo Serbs that live in the four northern municipalities have participated in electing their representatives for the Assembly of Kosovo.

Currently, Kosovo is on the phase of consolidating the new Assembly. In the process of the consolidation of new institutions, the Constitutional Court of Kosovo has been a crucial body in ensuring democratic and constitutional basis for forming the new legislative and executive institutions in Kosovo. Therefore, Kosovo soon will have its new government in place and the composition of government will be inclusive, multi-ethnic, and committed to continuing comprehensive reforms. Here it is important to highlight, that while the formation of institutions is on the way, Kosovo has maintained and continues to maintain high level of security and stability.

Distinguished member of the Security Council,

This July 25th, Kosovo successfully initialled a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the European Union. The SAA will be the first contractual agreement between Kosovo and the EU, and it will provide a clear framework for reforms and political engagement with the EU in the integration process. The next step will be the adoption of the SAA by the Council of the European Union and formal signing of it. This crucial step in our EU integration path signifies Kosovo's comprehensive progress in democratic governance, human rights protection, economic reforms, ethnic relations, and strengthened statehood. This deal seals the strategic orientation of our country and set in motion our desired path to become a fully-fledged and equal member of the European Union.

Beyond the political benefits, the SAA will open the EU market to our small and medium enterprises, which will generate new jobs and economic growth in Kosovo. Kosovo, on its path to joining the EU, will continue to show high level of political and institutional responsibility. We will undertake all necessary reforms in the areas of the rule of law and alignment of our legislation with that of the EU. In the EU integration path, Kosovo has shown progress in fulfilling the remaining criteria for Visa Free Travel in the EU Schengen zone. The visible progress in the EU integration path shows that Kosovo's European future is secure.

Parallel to consolidation of domestic institutions, Kosovo has shown progress in strengthening its international position. In the past two months, the Togolese Republic and Solomon Islands have recognised the independence and sovereignty of Kosovo. We are committed to strengthen our bilateral relations with all 108 countries that have recognized Kosovo's independence and statehood. The unprecedented and overwhelming international support for Kosovo's statehood shows that declaration of independence has been a legitimate and legal act, with wide international acceptance, which has contributed to regional peace and stability. So, Kosovo is gradually getting its rightful place in the family of free, democratic and peace-loving nations.

Moreover, Kosovo has shown progress in the membership of international and regional organisations. Kosovo has become a full member of the Venice Commission, which is part of the Council of Europe, as well as has joined two important regional organisations, the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) in Rumania, and the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI) in Croatia. Membership of Kosovo in these regional bodies has strengthened Kosovo's regional role and will be in service of constructive regional cooperation. In the near future we intend to apply for full membership to the Council of Europe, an important regional body for strengthening democracy, human rights and democracy. Kosovo deserve its place in the Council of Europe, because of our geographic position, democratic performance, and commitment to human rights protection and the rule of law.

Kosovo will continue further its agenda of full membership in the international community. This will be the best interest for our citizens, as well as an opportunity to contribute to regional and international peace and stability and take on international responsibility.

Mr. President,

Kosovo has been and remains highly committed to the EU-facilitated Dialogue with Serbia. We are dedicated to improving the relations between our two independent and sovereign States.. So far, substantial success has been achieved in the implementation of the first agreement reached between Kosovo and Serbia in April 2013. However, more needs to be done. In the recent months, there have been some incidents in the Serb-populated northern part of Kosovo, which have impeded the implementation of technical and political agreements and have not contributed to the normalization and improvement of everyday lives of people. Here I am refereeing to the placement of barricades on the bridge over the river in Mitrovica, and the recent aggressive rhetoric of local Serb leaders in the north against the EULEX work in strengthening the rule of law in Kosovo.

I take this opportunity to call upon the authorities in Belgrade to respect the agreements, which we have together reached, and not to promote destabilization of situation in these municipalities. The Government of Kosovo highly condemns all possible pressure on EULEX personnel, when it comes to arresting alleged criminals operating in northern municipalities. Beyond this, we share our serious concern that Serbian authorities have not upheld to implementing other agreements reached as part of the Dialogue. During this year, the Constitutional Court of Serbia has nullified the agreements on cadastres and mutual recognition of university diplomas. While Kosovo has undertaken all necessary legal changes to accommodate the technical and political agreements, the same is not the case with Serbia. We urge our Serbian counterparts to respect the agreements reached and undertake necessary constitutional and legal changes in order to ensure their normal implementation.

Despite these developments, we have expressed our will to advance with discussing new topics as part of the Dialogue with Serbia until we achieve full normalization of inter-state and inter-society relations. However, the Dialogue cannot continue endless and should come to a successful conclusion by signing a peace treaty that should be a deal for mutual recognition and establishment of permanent friendship and neighbourly relations between Kosovo and Serbia. This would be in the interest of advancing common peace, regional stability, and our jointed European future.

When speaking about the relations with Serbia, I would like to point out that two days ago an isolated incident took place in the north-eastern border with Serbia, where a private citizen of Kosovo confronted with Serb security forces across the border. We reassure Serbia authorities that this was an isolated incident and we regret that it happened. Our law enforcing agencies will strengthen measures in preventing any cross-border theft. Nether side should exaggerate this, and we should continue working together in building confidence and resolving peacefully and through dialogue all outstanding issues.

Mr. President,

Distinguished members of the Security Council,

The Special Investigation Task-Force for alleged war crimes in Kosovo raised by former Council of Europe senator Dick Marty has issued a statement in the end of July. Government of Kosovo has closely cooperated with this Task-Force throughout the entire process and will continue to cooperate until the entire investigations are over. Our commitment is also demonstrated by the actions taken in the Assembly of Kosovo to create a special chamber as part of Kosovo's legal system to address these allegations. This is the best proof that Kosovo is a state governed by the law and it demonstrates our willingness to undertake all necessary steps to fully cooperate with our international partners in this process. The Government of Kosovo appreciates the work of the Ambassador Williamson, which is an important step to bring to an end all the allegations and other accusations.

Mr. President,

As I am addressing you all here, there is a town of Raska in Serbia, where a massive grave has been discovered that holds the bodies of around 350 Kosovo Albanian civilians killed during the war in Kosovo. These innocent civilians have been killed in Kosovo, transported by Serbian security apparatus to Serbia to hide traces, and have been buried in a massive grave, above which buildings are constructed. This is not the only massive grave of civilians killed during Kosovo war discovered in Serbia. While we acknowledge Serbia's efforts for cooperation on this matter, we appeal to Serbia to undertake more affirmative actions to move ahead with the excavation and identification of bodies in the massive grave in Raska. Serbia should show more willingness to cooperate with Kosovar and international authorities in identifying the bodies of over 1700 other missing persons. Any delay in resolving the fate of missing persons prolongs the pain of the families of missing persons, it is an inhumane practice, and does not contribute to inter-ethnic reconciliation between Kosovo and Serbia. I would to bring at your attention that there have been around 15,000 Albanian civilians killed only for ethnic reasons, and all these crimes against humanity have been proved and documented during the ICTY.

Recently we have joined the UK-led international campaign on ending sexual violence in conflict. During the Kosovo war there is a considerable number of women who have experienced sexual violence by the Serbian state and security apparatus, which to date have remained unaddressed by international or domestic transitional justice mechanisms. Besides taking certain legal measures, very soon a petition will be addressed to the UN Secretary-General to urge the UN to undertake all necessary measures to bring justice to these women who have silently endured pain and suffering since the war times. Addressing the past sexual violence against women during Kosovo war is a matter of justice and reconciliation, and we are committed to deal with it.

Mr. President,

Let me conclude by expressing the gratitude of the people and Government of Kosovo to the United Nations for supporting Kosovo over these years in consolidating peace and building state institutions. Since the declaration of independence in 2008, the role of UN in Kosovo has gradually reduced and the presence has downsized. This has been in accordance with the evolving circumstances and the local needs. Today Kosovo has democratic, functioning and multi-ethnic institutions and has successfully implemented the Ahtisaari's proposal under an international supervision.

As the EU has taken a greater role in the region, it is of critical important that this Council considers ending the UNMIK presence in Kosovo, as this would be timely, cost-effective, and in line with UN's commitment to empower local ownership and successful exit strategies. We recommend this chamber to reconfigure the UNMIK presence from its current mission to a UN Political Office in Kosovo, which could take a new role in supporting Kosovo institutions in strengthening domestic capacities for more responsible engagement in the international community.

In the meantime, the UN should seriously reduce the budget and number of staff of UNMIK, especially for the northern municipalities where UNMIK is mainly focused, since it has no role in the implementation of the agreements reached as part of the EU-facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. The guarantor of the implementation of these agreements remains the European Union. The excessive financial costs of UNMIK could be distributed to other UN agencies in Kosovo and around the world and used for different projects that would improve the life of the citizens.

Thank you for the attention!