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

STATEMENT
by
H.E. Mr. Hashim Thaçi
Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo

New York, 04 December 2014

Honorable Chairman of the Security Council,

Honorable Representative of the Secretary General of the UN,

Honorable Ambassadors of Member States of the Security Council,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me first to express my gratitude for the opportunity to address you at the end of this year and inform you about the progress achieved in Kosovo in recent months and the challenges ahead of us.

The year 2014 marks the 15th anniversary of the end of the war in Kosovo. This was immediately followed by the establishment of a UN protectorate. 15 years seem to be a long time but compared to many frozen conflicts that burden international relations in all continents, I believe that we can freely conclude that the United Nations in Kosovo indeed has had one of the most successful missions in its entire history.

Kosovo is today a free and stable democracy with a growing economy, with a constitution and modern laws that guarantee the rights of all citizens, and especially the rights of minorities. Kosovo has established a genuine decentralization of power.

Kosovo has formally already entered into the EU integration process by initiating the signing of the SAA (Stabilization and Association Agreement), which only few years ago had been considered very difficult task.

Thus, thanks to dialogue with Serbia and the historic Brussels Agreement, Kosovo has been transformed from an importer of security resources to an exporter of global initiatives for peace and tolerance.

On this occasion, I would like to extend my thanks to the EU Member States, the United States, but also to our neighbors in Serbia for their courage and commitment. This was courage and commitment for the future of our children when we decided to normalize relations between our two countries and when we decided to look to the future of the two states as neighbors who aspire the ideals of the family of Euro-Atlantic nations. You are already aware that in all of the meetings we have had here at the Security Council, the north of Kosovo has been a constant point of crisis, with concern for a possible escalation of violence and with the uncertainty of what laws are in force and which Constitution is applied there.

We are aware that Kosovo Serb citizens have feared and have distrusted the Government of Kosovo, because of everything that has happened in the past decades. But let me also tell you that this year has been the year of the cementing of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Kosovo.

The participation of the Serbs from the northern part of Kosovo for the first time in the national elections, organized under the laws of Kosovo, as well as the Serbian leadership participation in negotiations for the creation of governing institutions after the June elections, is a good omen and a great hope that even this painful chapter is starting to be solved. And this is based on the wishes of the people

of Kosovo, because Albanians, Serbs and others all share the same dreams, the same hopes and the same rights to a secure future, with a focus towards the economy and the creation of new jobs.

The citizens of Kosovo today, be they Albanian, Serb, Bosniak, Turk or Ashkali, are not interested in nationalistic speeches and their old ethnic dreams. They want jobs; they want progress and they want to see peace after decades of discrimination, war and uncertainty.

Thus the year 2014 will be marked in Kosovo's modern history as the year when the entire territory of Kosovo, the north and the south, participated in the democratic process and worked together to create institutions that are responsible to reflect and work for the welfare of the citizens of Kosovo. I would like to thank the missions of OSCE, UN, EU, the US and civil society organizations that helped us organize excellent elections with the highest democratic standards on June 8th, elections that have seen participation of all communities in Kosovo.

Honourable Chairperson,

Ambassadors,

Ladies and gentlemen,

There are five major developments that I want to emphasize in my appearance before you here today on behalf of the Republic of Kosovo, which will confirm that, along with us, you can also be proud of this joint success in Kosovo.

(1) - The first one as I mentioned earlier is that Kosovo in the span of six months has organized two successful elections, local ones at the end of 2013 and national in June of 2014. These were candidly considered by international observers as free, well organized and democratic elections.

These elections brought the election of Serb mayors in the north that are now integrated into the Kosovo legal system and above all enjoy the legitimacy and are accepted by the whole community that lives in the north. The results in the national elections were even better because they were tallied throughout the entire territory of Kosovo. Kosovo today can already be considered an established democracy capable of completely organizing elections independently and respecting the results.

(2) - The second thing I wanted to mention to you is that, after the national elections of June 8th we had a political gridlock which never turned into or became a violent crisis.

While there have been violent protests occurring in neighboring countries, police violence and delegitimizing of independent institutions such as the supreme and constitutional courts, Kosovo has proven that whether we are in opposition or in government, whether we are in the majority or the minority, the political class respects the Constitution and obeys the laws, respects the decisions of the Constitutional court and respects the country's president, Mrs. Jahjaga. Our president happens to be the first woman president in the entire Balkans. All of this is a sign of Kosovo's political emancipation.

We had our share of disagreements during the months after the election. We could not find a common ground between the winning party and the opposition.

We had moments of uncertainty but they never produced violence or threats to our common goal which is to be future members of the EU family and NATO alliance.

I am happy to inform you that by respecting the decisions of the Constitutional Court and thankfully the role of the President as a facilitator, the two largest parties in Kosovo, the Democratic Party of Kosovo and the Democratic League of Kosovo, along with parties representing minorities, have reached an agreement to form a government. I do believe that this formula of grand coalitions as the one in Germany today or elsewhere guarantees the stability of the government and provides Kosovo with a fantastic opportunity to enter the next stage of development – from a state-building phase into an economic development stage.

Of particular importance is the fact that this coalition has been achieved by Kosovar parties themselves, without outside interference, which is a great achievement if we compare it to the previous UN protectorate period or the initial years of independence when the international community played an active role in the creation of Kosovo's institutions. And now finally we have a process and a local result that makes us proud that Kosovo has passed a test of political maturity.

(3) - The third point I wanted to mention is that the political stability has also helped Kosovo succeed internationally.

This year was a year in transition in which there were elections in Serbia, our partner in dialogue, as well as the European Parliament, and as I noted in Kosovo. There was also a change in EU commissioners, but despite all of this, the international recognition of Kosovo continued as an undeniable element of the Balkan policy architecture. On this occasion I would like to thank the countries of Tonga, Lesotho, Togo and the Solomon Islands which recognized the independence of Kosovo, bringing the number of recognitions to 108. Our diplomacy called this a year of multilateral inclusion during which Kosovo became a member of the Venice Commission of the European Council and many regional organizations such as SEECP, RACVIAC, MARRI and others.

The dialogue with Serbia has continued. At the technical level we achieved many successes in the normalization of relations, although I have to be honest, much remains to be done. Serbia has signed an agreement with Kosovo which ensures the normalization of relations but there is still much resistance to its full implementation. I know it is not an easy task because I also have been called a traitor for signing the agreement and I do understand that the Serbian leadership has had challenges in accepting this reality – but this should not serve as an excuse and the implementation of agreements in practice should continue.

Again today I want to reaffirm that Kosovo will implement every letter and every obligation that we have taken in order to integrate the Serb minority. I often meet with Serb leaders in the north and we expect them to take real responsibilities in the new government. I also expect that Serbia will finally turn a new chapter and have a modern and European attitude towards Kosovo. I say this because there is still a tendency to block and prevent Kosovo from joining the international arena, which does not help either Serbia or Kosovo.

Allow me to inform you and say it with a special pride that Kosovo also became a member of the International Olympic Committee. The youth of Kosovo, starting from the world judo champion, Ms.

Majlinda Kelmendi, to the thousands of young people who have dreamed of representing the colors of Kosovo in the international arena, will now have the opportunity to compete anywhere in the world as equals with other athletes. Just imagine that only 6 years since Kosovo became independent, we already are a part of the Olympic family and will have Kosovo flag flown at the Rio Olympics.

On behalf of the Republic of Kosovo and its institutions, I would like to particularly thank all of the member states of the International Francophone Organization for supporting Kosovo's recent ascension. The organization offered its strong support during its recent summit in Senegal in November, unanimously supporting Kosovo's membership as an observing member in the large francophone family. Through Kosovo's membership in this community, Kosovo will reflect its cultural values and standards and the best practices in terms of international cooperation.

(4) - The fourth point I wanted to make is related to global developments and the respective role of Kosovo.

The global fight against terrorism and the spreading of religious radicalism has also affected Kosovo in the same way it has most countries of the world. There are also marginal groups in Kosovo, as in all European countries, which are recruiting and advocating for the participation of Kosovars on the side of ISIS in Syria and Iraq. This phenomenon is a concern but the Government has taken important steps in order to bring such tendencies to a halt. We have arrested several dozen suspected militants as well as those who inspire them including some imams who are believed to incite hatred.

We have already prepared the Law against Kosovar participation in foreign wars and are working actively to promote Kosovo as a global dialogue platform for religious tolerance. I want to thank the Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, as well as the U.S. Department of State who in their reports this year have praised Kosovo's role in promoting religious tolerance.

Kosovo is an example of peacemaking and the building of a genuine democracy after genocide and war.

And yes, I am aware of and I strongly condemn the occasional attacks against the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Bishop Teodosije and other Serbian priests are an essential part of Kosovo and Serbian churches are an important base of our common heritage, but let me tell you that *not* every incident that is reported here has religious or ethnic connotations. Often these are acts of vandalism by provocateurs or attacks for economic benefits. And there are fewer interreligious incidents in Kosovo than in many neighboring countries. I know one thing: that Kosovo will not be 100% free if all of its citizens are not able to speak openly, to move fearlessly and practice their religion freely. But I can promise you here today that Kosovo is and will remain free.

(5) – And the last point I will discuss here with you today is our commitment to future projects. I also thank you for your patience and the concern you have expressed in participating in this discussion.

Kosovo has achieved phenomenal success in the World Bank index of doing business facilitation. In the last 6 years Kosovo has been the country with the highest economic growth throughout Eastern Europe with an average growth of 4.5%. Kosovo is a country with the lowest public debt throughout the Balkans, which does not exceed 10% of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product). Kosovo is a country with

the most internet connectivity throughout the Balkans. Close to 90% of the population has access to high- speed internet, a result of our young demography but also a result of a large diaspora and the need to be in touch with our families. We are now in the final stage of bringing in foreign investors in the tourism and energy sectors and for the past 8 years we have built 1,500 kilometers of roads and highways as well as 120 new schools.

Thus the old image you may have for Kosovo has now changed and is changing every day. In digital diplomacy, in culture and in sports, in the making of peace we have demonstrated innovation and vision. Nevertheless, we still have many challenges ahead of us. We will establish the Kosovo Special Court in order to shed a light about the raised allegations for war crimes. Kosovo has faith in justice.

We are working to combat corruption and organized crime. These challenges also have a regional element of cooperation and the exchange of information.

Thus I ask you today to recognize Kosovo's progress and our willingness to face new challenges.

In order for Kosovo to have a complete and irreversible success, you need to confirm this progress that we have made for all these years since the late and much respected Sérgio de Mello began UNMIK mission in Kosovo. The new reality requires courage from you in order to open a new relationship, a normal political relationship between the UN and Kosovo.

I am convinced that, thanks to your understanding, that will happen very soon and Kosovo will be an equal member of the United Nations family.

I thank you for your attention.