

**STATEMENT BY ZAHIR TANIN, SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND HEAD OF UNMIK
SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE ON UNMIK**

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Mr President, Excellencies,

This quarter was dominated by the holding of an early general election in Kosovo, and ensuing lengthy negotiations, deal-making and bargaining to form a new government. As we meet today, these discussions are still in process.

At the outset, Mr President, allow me to make a few observations about this process.

First, the decision to call an early election was a deliberate one. A broken unity of understanding brought an end to the ruling coalition, however, those parties who sought a more decisive victory may have fallen short of their expectations.

Second, the transition phase has proved very challenging. The main coalition was unable to achieve an outright majority, some parties improved their share marginally, while the long-standing opposition gained considerably. As a result, we see a shift in the configuration of the political landscape of Kosovo, one of the most significant in many years. One factor that may have contributed to this shift is a tidal wave of change in the mind of many voters, particularly the younger generation, for whom jobs, access to education and economic opportunities, reducing corruption and strengthening the rule of law were prominent concerns. Ethno-nationalist rhetoric appeared less effective to galvanise the majority of the electorate into action than in the past. The new

political environment after the election is obviously affecting all parties positioning themselves for municipal elections, due in October.

Third, no doubt, the election was generally free, fair and competitive, despite the very short preparatory time and campaign. The official European Union observer mission noted this, while at the same time also mentioning the long-standing issues of updating the voting lists and ensuring the enfranchisement of voters outside of Kosovo. We recognise the important contribution of the EU observer team and other observers during the election, and also wish to highlight the role of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe in facilitating the vote in northern municipalities and providing technical assistance to the Central Election Commission. Importantly, there was no significant dispute of the results.

The overall turnout was 41%. While this is not dramatically different from the 2014 elections, it was notable that many new voters participated, with notable variations across Kosovo, ranging from below 30% in some districts to above 60% in others. In Serb areas, the turnout was the highest recorded in recent times. We should remember that Kosovo Serbs have evolved from a position of boycotting Kosovo elections, to partial participation, to active participation.

This election did not generate a momentum for change in the participation of women. While political entities observed the gender quota under the electoral law, women's representation in leadership remained limited. There are no female candidates for Prime Minister and few mentioned as likely in a future cabinet. Women's representation in electoral bodies also remained low, only 9% of Kosovo's Central Election Commission members.

Fourth, perhaps the greatest concern is that the election process itself consumed the energy of institutions during these past three months. In fact, a functional institutional vacuum has hampered progress on a full panoply of governance priorities. Important economic and social opportunities were missed during such a period, for example, from the resources which continue to be available through the European Stabilisation and Association mechanism. In late July, the International Monetary Fund cancelled the final instalment of its two-year funding arrangement, in the absence of a fully-authorized government to complete its review. According to Kosovo's Central Bank, foreign investments during this past year fell by nearly one third. The climate of political uncertainty during the last quarter, is tied inextricably with these facts.

Mr President,

I would like to draw your attention to another important development in the region, the initiative of President Vucic of Serbia for an internal dialogue on Kosovo, a matter I had the opportunity to discuss with him and with First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Dacic, last week in Belgrade. On the 24th of July, President Vucic expressed publicly that for Serbia's progress to be constant and sustainable, the Serbs should endeavour to resolve the Kosovo issue, and avoid leaving "this greatest of burdens" to the next generation. He also warned that if the historical conflict between Serbs and Albanians was not resolved, it would represent a joint failure of both, and that the effort required a "long, complicated and often painful process".

Kosovo Foreign Minister Hoxhaj welcomed the statement, while Albanian Prime Minister Rama also expressed his respect for this initiative, repeating that a lasting solution for Kosovo would be "in everyone's interest".

As history teaches, pursuing fair, difficult, and often painful compromise, demands strong leadership. It should be clear that such leadership is required from all, if we are to reach lasting peace, in the interest of all who live in the Western Balkans region. And I stress the region, because peace and stability in Kosovo is interwoven with peace and stability in the region and the normalisation of relations between Pristina and Belgrade. As we all know, the problems are regional in nature, and so, therefore, must be the solutions.

Mr President,

As outlined in the Secretary-General's report, progress in the EU-facilitated dialogue has been slowed by political processes, whether in Belgrade or in Pristina, but also by partial implementation of agreements which were achieved more than four years ago. On the 3rd of July, European Union High Representative Mogherini hosted a meeting between the Presidents of Serbia and Kosovo, with a view towards moving this process forward. If serious negotiation over long-term interests remains the order of the day, it should be expected that, with political clarity in Pristina, dialogue can resume as soon as possible: not simply to implement the main agreements reached so far, but also to advance negotiations for the benefit of both sides.

During this reporting period, the 2017 Western Balkans Summit also took place in Trieste, Italy. It was the fourth annual summit within the Berlin Process, itself designed to further European integration for all the Western Balkans states. This process reinforces the inherently regional nature of the issues most directly affecting the future of Kosovo. Possibilities for developing a common market, expanding infrastructure, and dealing better with region-wide problems

and challenges were all on the agenda.

Mr President,

Political reconciliation, by itself, cannot overcome all divisions. It must be accompanied by societal reconciliation, by rebuilding trust and cooperation at all levels. Working to help foster greater trust among communities is one of UNMIK's main priorities: we are continuously exploring how the Mission can better contribute, within our existing mandate, towards improving inter-community relations. We do this together with governmental, non-governmental and international partners.

Obviously, rebuilding trust is not an event, but a long-term process of transforming mistrust into co-existence, and ultimately genuine cooperation. Wherever we are able, we are focused on promoting new cooperative activities among municipal and community leaders and institutions, supporting the work of energetic local actors. I would like to highlight some of our most recent initiatives to enhance inter-community trust-building.

At the end of June, I co-hosted with High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, an international round-table in Geneva, to bring attention back to the many unresolved cases of persons missing from the Kosovo conflict. This continues to be a serious obstacle to societal reconciliation. Within this framework, we have managed to strengthen the involvement and participation of the missing persons' family representatives and to advocate for far-strengthened commitment from the Pristina and Belgrade delegations, as well as reinforced support from the international community, particularly the UN, to determine the fate of the 1,658 persons still unaccounted for.

Also in June, our mission hosted the first UN Kosovo Youth Assembly, attended by over 140 young leaders – 60% of them women – representing all of Kosovo’s ethnic communities. The event was the result of close cooperation with UNICEF, UNDP, OSCE, the EU and the Kosovo Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. It demonstrated the vibrancy of Kosovo’s civil society and presented a prominent public picture of the progress that can be made. Based on Security Council Resolution 2250, participants developed a Roadmap on Youth, Peace and Security for Kosovo, which also addressed young women’s empowerment, to help serve the wider strategy being developed by the Kosovo authorities.

UNMIK remains active in its engagement with municipal governments, among which I can say that strong efforts are being made to tackle the matters of importance to their constituencies. At the end of July, we facilitated a meeting among ten municipal leaders in the south-eastern part of Kosovo, led by the Mayor of that region’s largest municipality. Many practical issues were debated, including economic cooperation, and the particular exposure of that region to radicalisation and the dangers of extremist ideologies. We will be developing similar initiatives in other areas of Kosovo during the coming months. Our efforts to strengthen intercommunity trust-building are aimed at very practical levels, not only building on existing frameworks, but working to innovate new ones based on the particular concerns of local communities.

Mr President,

Kosovo has continued to make steps toward demonstrating its commitments to justice and the rule of law in the international sphere. After a series of final legal steps, including approval of its Rules of Procedure, on the 5th of July, the Specialist Chambers, a mechanism to tackle some of the most difficult and painful post-war chapters, became operational in The Hague. It is now ready to receive filings and indictments, with full cooperation from all relevant Kosovo institutions.

Mr President,

After three months of election campaign and post-election uncertainty, it is important for Kosovo to move forward seriously and responsibly, and for the international community to work together to continue to provide essential support. In this spirit, we will continue to engage with all our partners towards our common goal of promoting peace and stability.

I thank all members of the Council for your attention and your continued support.

Thank you.

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