

Contact Group Statement on the Situation in Northern Kosovo

August 4, 2006

The Contact Group wants to see Kosovo's status resolved in a way that ensures the rights and security of all citizens and lays the foundation for a peaceful, democratic and multi-ethnic society. We are concerned about the situation in northern Kosovo where recent developments have raised tensions. The members of the Contact Group call on Belgrade, Pristina and Kosovo's residents to take steps to ensure northern Kosovo remains a stable region where the rights of all are respected. The international community will be increasingly engaged in northern Kosovo -- both before and after Kosovo's status is determined -- to help ensure that these goals are met.

To this end, the Contact Group believes that:

1. No matter what the future status of Kosovo will be, Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs will need to develop practical arrangements for northern Kosovo that promote effective governance, economic development and mutual trust. We call on Pristina and Belgrade to reach early agreements on these arrangements in the context of the future status negotiations led by UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari.
2. Decentralization of local government can help communities in northern Kosovo preserve their identity and protect their rights. In particular, decentralization can facilitate transparently-provided assistance from Belgrade and provide local governments with greater autonomy to respond to the specific needs of their constituents.
3. The protection of property rights, freedom of movement and the return of displaced persons are issues of great concern for both Serbs and Albanians in northern Kosovo. The status settlement should provide for their full implementation.
4. Solutions need to be found for the city of Mitrovica. New arrangements, now under discussion, should be functional, realistic and guarantee the rights of all residents.
5. Recent statements by municipal assemblies in northern Kosovo suspending cooperation with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) are cause for concern. We call upon Kosovo Serbs to participate in

Kosovo's institutions where they can most effectively advocate their own interests.

6. After status is determined, an international presence will be established in Kosovo to supervise implementation of the status settlement and ensure the rights of all of Kosovo's people. This presence will pay close attention to northern Kosovo and will assist in the implementation of the settlement's provisions there.
7. KFOR will remain in Kosovo after status is determined to ensure a safe and secure environment.
8. Both Belgrade and Pristina should take immediate steps to reduce tensions in northern Kosovo, particularly to encourage responsible leadership and build confidence among communities.
9. Renewed attention should be paid to the economic revitalization of northern Kosovo. Spurring economic development will require cooperation between Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian communities.
10. The Contact Group reaffirms its previous statements that there will be no partition of Kosovo.