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Press Briefing by UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari and his Deputy Albert Rohan after their first visit to Kosovo

**Unofficial transcript of the Press briefing given at UNMIK Mission HQ in Pristina
by UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari and his Deputy Albert Rohan after their
first visit to Kosovo.**

Martti Ahtisaari: We decided to come as soon as it was possible to start our work. It is less than one week since we got the message from the Secretary General that he wanted us to carry out the future status talks. You have seen I hope my Terms of Reference. It is very...which the Secretary General normally gives to his Special Envoys or Special Representatives. I have been asked to consult as widely as possible in this process, not only with the Security Council members and the Contact Group members, but also the relevant regional organisations, relevant regional actors and other key players. And one of my tasks is also to support the SRSG Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen to ensure greater commitment and result from the Standards implementation. And the pace and duration of the future status process will be determined by the Special Envoy on the basis of consultations with the Secretary General, taking into account the cooperation of the parties and situation on the ground. The Guiding Principles of the Contact Group have also been published as a Security Council document, so I hope that those are available, if you haven't seen them I'm sure the UNMIK office here can make them available to those who haven't seen them. I think it is important to take note that the Contact Group members include four permanent members of the Security Council. So therefore, the guiding principles are an important framework for the work of myself and Albert Rohan, who is my Deputy.

Here we have had meetings with the SRSG and senior UNMIK officials after our arrival. We met the Kosovo Negotiations Team led by President Rugova, including the Assembly President Daci, Prime Minister Kosumi, PDK President Thaci, ORA President Surroi and coordinator Blerim Shala. I also had a lunch where we continued our discussions when we met. I have also held meetings with the Commander of KFOR and I had a briefing from KFOR this afternoon. And I also met the representatives of the Contact Group just before coming to see you. I have had today meetings with the Kosovo Serb representatives as well as representatives from other minorities. And yesterday afternoon, I paid a visit to Decani Monastery where I held talks with Bishop Teodosije and Father Sava.

I would like to make few general points before I answer questions from you. I have emphasised to all my interlocutors that we are talking about status with standards. In other words, progress is needed on the standards and I think it is also important that stability will be maintained during this process. There has been lot of statements made on the timing of this exercise, how long will it take. Before I came here, I said that there seem to have been four schools of thought: those who said that it will take 3-4 months, and I am prepared to offer my job to anybody who said that; those who said it will take 6 months; those who said, third group was who said 12 months; and those said that there should be no time limit put into this exercise. I think first of all, as I read from my Terms of Reference, it is very important to realise that timing will depend on the parties, how they move forward, how they cooperate. There are no fixed time limits in this exercise, but I have assured that we will move as fast forward as we can.

It is also important that, for that reason that we came here, we have asked all our interlocutors to come with position papers, not only strategy papers, policy declarations, but also concrete proposals, how things should be organised, how things have been improved from the earlier reporting, and how we might move forward.

In the final analysis it is not me, I have also made it perfectly clear, it is not me, neither us, who will decide the timing, the Secretary General has an important role, and finally it is up to the Security Council to decide how the future status will look like. This is in the spirit of our consultations here, I have been given papers by those that I have met and I have asked for more from them.

We are going to establish, or we have actually established our headquarters in Vienna, thanks to the generosity of the Austrian government, we will have an office in the heart of Vienna, we are using the UN offices temporarily, for the time being. We will have meetings already on Monday when we return on Sunday to Vienna, and I have asked those Liaison Officers that have been given to us from some of the Contact Group members to be available there on Monday for further consultation. I hope to be able to travel next week myself to visit some of the capitals that I haven't been among the Contact Group members, and that process will continue.

We are so close that you will be seeing us here fairly often, and we have also indicated that we will invite people to come to Vienna for talks with us, whether it is the UNMIK representatives, SRSG was kind enough to make himself available in New York on two occasions, and in Brussels already we had a lengthier meeting when we were all there, both Albert Rohan and our assistants. So that consultative process will continue. We will continue tomorrow to Belgrade and then we will cover Montenegro, Albania and Macedonia, and on Sunday we will return to Vienna. Thank you very much.

Albert Rohan: Just if I may add two sentences. You know, when we talk about the Standards so much, this is not something particular to Kosovo. Principles like the rule of law, democratic institutions, or the respect for human rights and for minority rights, are the basic principles of any democratic society. And therefore they are so important. And

in that context, the protection of ethnic groups will be one of the major concerns of any settlement, and of all ethnic groups, the Serbian ethnic group as much as of the smaller minorities in Kosovo. And of course another priority concern will be that the return process has to move forward, every refugee must be able to come back to their homes. And finally, it is very important that all the parties engage constructively in the status process and engage also through their presence in the emerging institutions in Kosovo. I think this is necessary so that they can take care and safeguard their interests. Thank you.

Questions and Answers

Q (Associated Press): How do you plan to conduct your mission of finding a solution to Kosovo status? How do you plan to conduct your mission?

Martti Ahtisaari : The way how we are proceeding at the moment. First of all, I think it was very important even if we had a fairly good idea of what the thinking here was, and in Belgrade, in the neighbouring countries as well, in the region. We know also what the Contact Group is thinking about and the framework they have provided in the guiding principles. But it is important for me particularly, to establish a personal contact with the leaders in Kosovo. And therefore, these contacts will be continued. As I said, we will be meeting both here and I can see we will have meetings in Vienna. Sometimes it is easier to concentrate on the issues if you travel a little bit. We will see how we do that. But we are very flexible and one of the main reasons why I wanted to establish the Headquarters in Vienna is it is a closest place, traffic wise. It is easy to travel to the region. So the dialogue has started and it will be continuing.

Q (VOA): Who is going to negotiate for the Kosovo Serbs? is it Kosovo Serbs themselves or Belgrade the. And where is the American representative? Where is the American representative? Is he going to be together with you or not?

Martti Ahtisaari: I must say that I was very pleased that we had a good representation today from the Kosovo Serbs. And we had a good discussion with them. They made their points clear. As a matter of fact, we used more time that we had originally allocated for that meeting. What will happen in the future the future will tell. I can't tell you more than that has happened so far. Now when you say "Where is the American representative?" it sounds a little bit as "where is the beef"? But, and you may perhaps refer to that, there has been discussion about the participation of some of the Contact Group members in the team that I have been establishing in Vienna. And we have, we know already that there going to be a EU representative. We have met him in Brussels already and he will be coming to a meeting on Monday in Vienna. We will have the American Liaison Officer, and they are called Liaison Officers. They represent either their government or the Council, Commission and Secretariat in the case of EU. I will treat them as full members of my team and they will be located in our Office facilities in Vienna. I expect NATO to send a Liaison Officer there and I expect also that we will have a representative of the

Russian Federation also coming. I am actually planning a trip - I haven't been to Moscow yet so I am planning a trip and we are working on the dates and I think that will happen soon. It perhaps understandable that they wanted to discuss with me before they actually say who is joining us.

Albert Rohan: It might be found a symbolism that the two countries which are holding the presidency of the EU next year, namely Austria and Finland, are conducting this process but it is a pure coincidence and we are here representing the United Nations, of which the United States is a member, an important member, and of course we have also very close contact with the Contact Group. We have been in Washington and we have just met the representatives here. So there is a very intensive interplay between us and the various countries.

Q (Express): Mr Ahtisaari, in several speeches you had since 1999, Kosovo's independence wasn't seen as a good solution to your view. Does your regional approach to the Balkans opposes yet creation of new states?

Martti Ahtisaari: I have been reminded for what I have been saying in my life on the regional issues. If you refer to the statements that were made immediately after I participated in the efforts to create this in Kosovo in 1999 and soon thereafter, I think to put it into the context of time. At that time I still believe that in 2000 it was appropriate to say that it was not a time to move forward. We will see how this process will go forward. As I said timing of this, I am not going to start speculating what sort of status will be there when we end this process. The Kosovo delegation has made very clear what their preference is. Others have had different views. I think you are very familiar with the general thinking of these issues. After this first round I think we have to sit down and see how we will process from there onwards. But in general, the Security Council would not have authorized the Secretary general to move forward on the basis of Kai Eide's report and the Security Council deliberations, had it not be realized that the present situation cannot continue and we have to look at the future status. Whatever the final outcome will be, I think it is widely recognized that there has to be an involvement of the international community for quite some time.

Q: [In Serbian, on the possibility of a partition of Kosovo]

Martti Ahtisaari No I do not. I think you can look at the guidance of the guiding principles of the Contact Group. I really urge you to look at that document because among others this is an important group of countries representing the views of the international community. I think the opinions are very clear there that there should be no partition [inaudible] and I think one has to take very seriously what the four members of the Security Council are saying, together with others who are part in that problem.

Q [in Serbian on the Contact Group]

Martti Ahtisaari First of all, I haven't been to Belgrade for now a long, long time. I used to visit Belgrade on numbers of occasions but there has been a long interval. I am not going to start making any prediction on what our discussions will bring. I have taken of course note of what the different parties have been saying. I think it is important also to realize that if the views are not changing this is going to be a difficult task. No one was so far said that, or congratulated us, that we have actually received an easy task. I think we have to start a dialogue. We have to talk to both, Kosovo delegation here and Belgrade from tomorrow onwards, and see where we are then. One has to also look at economic aspects that are involved in this. I know that the World Bank and the European Commission are looking at these issues. But one can *[inaudible]* diversely economic aspects and the economic prospects for Kosovo entirely from this exercise. It is not my main concern but I have to be aware what could be done for the benefit of Kosovo in utilizing the natural resources that are available here, provided that the funding would be made available and the situation would be such that it would provide the possibility to exploit professionally and effectively those resources. It would also have an important element for the energy sector in the whole region. The resources here are impressive and they are not at the moment utilized in a fashion that would benefit the people in Kosovo and not in the region either.

Q (RTK): You said the dialogue would be based on cooperation dialogue is going to be based, to take into account the cooperation on the ground. Can you elaborate; what if there is no cooperation?

Martti Ahtisaari I do not think that should assume, neither you or I, that there not going to be any cooperation. I have been well received here, and I have had a good dialogue with all groups. And I have listened patiently all opinions that have been expressed by different actors. But finally, when I say that the status means 'status with standards', we recognize there is a need, as my Deputy Albert Rohan explained already, that we are talking about general European standards. Whether we would *[inaudible]* status or not, those are important elements in developing in a democratic society where everyone can live freely and without fear, a society that provide the necessity protective mechanisms to everyone, whatever group they might belong to. So we are starting the process. I am not so surprised that statements are being made, that positions are being taken. I would be surprised if that were not the case. If I didn't believe, or the Secretary General did not believe, that it was not worthwhile to make this round, I do not think he would have appointed us.

Q (Tanjung): (on possibility of violence like in March 2004)

Martti Ahtisaari I do not think that you can say that there are some automatic reaction that if something wrong happens in a society that automatically certain things will happen. I have appealed to everybody that I have seen that stability would be maintained

during these status discussions. I do not think that any disturbance in this process would help anybody. I have been involved in other processes recently as you are well aware and it has been possible to appeal to people who have been at odds for tens of years to make them cooperate and I hope that this spirit can be established. It is good that everyone start realizing that the present situation will not continue as it is. There has to be a change and that is what we are probing with this process.

Albert Rohan: May I add that, in the guiding principles of the Contact Groups it is referred to this aspect. The Contact group calls on to all parties from unilateral steps and to reject any form of violence. And then it adds: "Those advocating violence will have no role". So the whole international community really rejects violence. As the President said: whoever would take this kind of measures, it will be totally counterproductive.

Martti Ahtisaari Of course I have to say, when one reads a little bit further, the CG is actually rather generous in providing the Special Envoy. They say that the Special Envoy can take appropriate action with his United Nations mandate to suspend or exclude any individual or group if he judges that their actions conducive to progress. I think that has to be seen not as part of my terms of reference but as a clear indication that important members of the Security Council that they are supporting this sort of [*measures?*] if actually it would become necessary. I hope that will not be the case.

Q (in Serbian, about possibility to have sort of Rambouillet talks, where nobody leaves before an agreement is found)

Martti Ahtisaari There are of course direct negotiations already taking place on technical issues, and I will definitely encourage that. Those technical discussions will continue. If you are referring to the more political discussions, the time will show. I do not think you can force people to talk directly if they do not so want. But we will see. I think it is far to early for me to start speculating when it would start. As I said, I just finished in August another process where we succeeded in getting the parties to start talking bilaterally and it took some time before we did succeed in that. But I have been in process when it has taken years to get the parties to talk directly to each other and we have had to be involved in sort of trilateral works, running from a room into another and bringing messages. Then time at certain moment came when parties were prepared to talk. I do not think we can force these processes. We have to see how it goes.

Q (Koha Ditore) Mr Ahtisaari, are we talking about a future status or the final status? And one technical question: are you going to have liaison officers or the United States , and the Russian Federation are going to send sort of Special Envoys?

Martti Ahtisaari My terms of reference are in that sense rather clear. They talk about "future status". Whether the future status is the final one, we will see. But the terminology is that sense is very clear. I hope it will be the final one. But the terms of reference are clear in that sense that they talk about "future status", "determining the future status of

Kosovo". That is what the Secretary General has asked us to do. Liaison officers: I welcome the fact that I can have the support... First of all, it is extremely important that we know, both of us, that the CG is firmly behind us, and wants to support us. And for that purpose, we have established the mechanism that there are going to be liaison officers in our offices in Vienna. We are working out the details. If you ask me: "Are they going to be Special Envoys?" there may very well be a situation where I may even request that these men, and some others, to support our efforts because it is good to know that the international community is behind us. That is very important. That is very reassuring as well. Not only those who sit in the Security Council but wider circle of the international community as well. So I can't exclude that I might even ask, that over and apart from these Liaison arrangement, I may ask the Liaison person that, could his government help me solve that matter. And then that might lead to them sending somebody. Whether this somebody is already part of the established... whether he is a liaison officer, but it may very well in some cases be somebody else. So I do not think one should exclude, but of course, the important thing is that we can have an intimate working relationship with these entities that are providing the liaison officers to us.

Q (Reuters) : Are there any specific past international precedents you could drawn on deciding between Serbian State sovereignty and the Kosovo Albanian people sovereignty?

Martti Ahtisaari There may very well be. I will, as I mentioned earlier, we are still in an approach of putting our team together. And [*we will also use ?*] their expertise on a very short term assignment looking at, for instance, different legal or political aspects of this process. So in that process we will definitely visit your question as well. I can't name any at the moment, but I am sure there may very well be. It may be on the other hand that this is a *sui generis*, or special case, and that we be looked at as such as well. But we will definitely visit this question as well.

Q (Russian News Agency Moscow): Mr. Ahtisaari what do you think, is possible to solve Kosovo problem in so to say the Bosnian way. I mean to establish some Republika Srbska of Kosovo and some enclave like this?

Martti Ahtisaari: I have been travelling lately, so I haven't actually been able to follow the latest development in case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, because Bosnia-Herzegovina plan seems to be [not clear] as well. I saw only the headlines, I haven't been able to look at that. I don't think that we should look necessarily at Bosnia-Herzegovina as an example. I still believe, but I am slightly biased because, as you may recall, I was the Chairman of the Bosnia-Herzegovina working group in the Yugoslav conference from 92 onwards to latter part of 93, before I ran for Presidency in my country. And I still feel that we had a marvellous plan [for] which we didn't get enough support, which looked totally different than the present day Bosnia-Herzegovina today. So I think we have to look [at] Kosovo on its own.

Q (Dana): I am wondering, would you increase the participation of the women leaders in the talks, regarding both sides, Serbian and Albanian, as regarding your side, on the basis of UN resolution 1325?

Martti Ahtisaari: Are you talking about my own team or the...

Danas: I am talking about [not audible]

Martti Ahtisaari: Yes, can I start from my own office in Finland, because there the men are in minority. There are a few odd fellows there. I am afraid that as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Crisis Management Initiative, which is a Non-Governmental Organisation that I established, we will be accused of discriminating against men. But I have to confess that the women are much more competent than the men. So that is the policy why, they haven't been chosen because they were women. I am fully aware because some of my former colleagues in the UN have been working with the gender issues, are still working at the moment, and I have been recently interviewed: why are there so few ladies in the peace processes? It is very difficult. I am hoping that my young colleagues will in the future be in a position to assist in the peace processes, I think it would be an extremely welcome thing. There are not too many available either. Either they are on a so senior level that it is very difficult to put them into this sort of framework. May I say that my young team has done an extremely good work, so I know that they can contribute. If I look around in the meetings, there are not too many ladies unfortunately in the audience. I hope that we can slightly increase from the present numbers in my own team. It very often depends also what is the availability. Can somebody move, in some cases it is a question that person can't move for family reasons, or other reasons, there are many constraints. But at least it is not a question of my attitude in this, my own office is a good example that I would welcome, definitely welcome, more women participating in the process.

Q (Austrian magazine Profile): Mr. Ahtisaari, given the very far apart positions of the concerned sides, the very different and contradicting ambitions, is it conceivable that your efforts may just fail or that you or the Security Council has to impose a solution on one or both sides?

Martti Ahtisaari: I am not saying that how long this will take. Because you remember perfectly well that I was involved in one process where I started in 1977 and it was ready in 1990. I don't intend to spend that much time with this particular issue, and I don't think my Deputy either. So bear with me. It is useless to start speculating. We have to get in touch, give a chance also to our interlocutors in different capitals to have a chance to start a dialogue with us and then we will see how far we are. Actually there have been processes where people have been much further apart than this one. Let us not make it the world's most difficult issue. But of course there is a possibility that we may fail, or the international community may fail, that is why perhaps they chose two retired persons to carry this out. We at least don't have any career problems, we don't have any ambitions except to perhaps return [to] our respective homes, my colleague is actually living [at] home so he doesn't have even that problem.

Albert Rohan: I am glad to hear from President Ahtisaari that he is not contemplating 13 years or so, I don't know how we would look 13 years down the road. But you know, we are totally, we are realists of course. And we know that this is a challenge and the problem is very difficult, and it is like squaring the circle and all that. But on the other hand we also know from experience that for every problem there is a solution and sooner or later every problem finds a solution. And if we can help along, then we are just satisfied. Thank you.