

16 February 2006

## **Special Envoy Mr. Ahtisaari's press encounter after meeting with the Foreign Minister of Germany in Berlin**

Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here today. As Minister Steinmayer said, we met in London and we agreed that I should come and pay my respects to the minister here in Berlin for the support that the German government has very generously given to me and my team.

This is a very interesting exercise where I am serving as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Future Status Process of Kosovo. We have a Contact Group with 6 countries in it - important countries they are - it's at the same time a support group for us. And all the countries in that group have been very supportive for our efforts.

I can inform you that we have got the confirmations now that the meeting in Vienna will take place next Monday and Tuesday on decentralization issues. This is one of the meetings where we start from the bottom up approach to the problems that need to be settled. When we talk about the protection of minorities, the decentralization of administration is a very crucial element of that.

I want to, after this meeting, have the delegations back as soon as possible to continue discussions. Because the agenda is long, we will make a beginning (with the issues that those delegations have prepared, the end result has to be our effort to try to create conditions where the minorities can live comfortably in the multi ethnic society, as Mr. Steinmayer mentioned.

My Deputy, Albert Rohan is at the moment in Belgrade to discuss with the Serbian Orthodox Church representatives. He had talked to Church representatives already while being in Pristina a few days ago. I hope that it will be possible for me to travel to Belgrade and Pristina, in the last week of February starting on 27th. And in the following week I intend to be in New York seeing the Secretary-General, and attend some administrative matters that I have to do as Head of this mission and hopefully brief the Security Council in informal consultations. I also plan to go to Washington to see the US Government but also to have discussions from economic issues with the World Bank and IMF. While we were with the Ministers in London, I had meetings with the European Development Bank there, because economic issues are vitally important and because

whatever happens I think we have to hope that the arrangement will guarantee that people in Serbia and in Kosovo can live in a more prosperous society.

Thank you.

*Questions: (not audible)*

I think you are right. I think it's impossible to create in a years time, in 2006, a society where everyone loves each other. I have a tendency in this sort of processes to say that if people start to tolerate each other it's a good beginning and I think we are talking about the change process that we want to put in motion. Certain things have to happen before we start talking about Status. In many cases we have to create mechanisms that will continue working for years, because I very often say that if all the standards that have been monitored - of which the implementation has been helped and monitored by UNMIK - if all those could be done before the end of the year, then we should start discussing the membership of Kosovo in EU. So we have to understand that in many standards, it is a continuation process: in some we have to get results during this year and decentralization, the creating conditions for multi-ethnic society is one of them. But these are long processes and there have to be mechanisms that guarantee that and that's our task.

*Questions: (inaudible)*

I think one of the most important things that I find as supporting my endeavour is the unity of the Contact Group. I would like you to re-visit the guiding principles that the Contact Group approved which were sent to the Secretary-General by the President of the Security Council - they were not approved by the Security Council but the President happened to be the Russians that month and they sent them to the Secretary-General - look carefully what is said there, re-visit again the first statement that came from the 31 of January meeting in London. There is an enormous unity there. There may be tactical differences among the Contact Group, but when it comes to the main issues there is unity, and I can assure you that. I have sat in a number of Contact Group meetings: once in Washington, once in Paris, once in Vienna and now the last one in London. So I think everyone wants to work in unity and try to find out a way to solve this long lasting issue. I have seen also what President Putin has said, but he has not spoken so much about Kosovo but other issues, other problem areas and that of course he has the right to do.