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Pristina, Belgrade delegations hold second round of direct talks on decentralization in Vienna

Vienna – Delegations from Pristina and Belgrade today held a second round of direct negotiations on decentralization under the auspices of the Secretary-General Special Envoy for the future status process of Kosovo, Martti Ahtisaari, and chaired by his Deputy, Albert Rohan. Talks focused on local finance, inter-municipal cooperation and cross-boundaries cooperation.

“These issues, compared to the ones that we discussed on 20-21 February, were more difficult because the deeper you go into the discussions, the more complicated the issues become”, the Deputy Special Envoy said, adding: “Nevertheless we had very constructive, issue-oriented discussions, without polemics. This is the way we should proceed to resolve problems. There are, of course, profound differences in the approaches from the two sides. However, we tried in a status-neutral way to find common ground on some of the issues.”

The Deputy Special Envoy said everybody agreed that financial subsidies from Belgrade for municipalities in Kosovo are acceptable under the condition that they are provided in a transparent manner and limited to areas within the competencies of the municipalities.

The delegations also agreed that Kosovo municipalities have a right to form inter-municipal arrangements of functional cooperation within their areas of competency under the condition it would not lead to an additional layer of government between the municipalities and the Central authorities, Mr Rohan said.

The Deputy Special Envoy said nobody disputed the legitimacy that there are issue-oriented links between Belgrade and Kosovo municipalities in specific areas such as education or health care. Mechanisms will have to be established in due course, Mr Rohan added.

The Deputy Special Envoy announced that UNOSEK would put the various aspects discussed into a paper where those areas acceptable to everybody will be clearly identified, as well as the areas where it is necessary to pursue discussions for a compromise solution. The paper will then be transmitted to the parties, who will meet again in Vienna to discuss it on the 3rd of April. Later on in April, Mr Rohan added, another meeting should be held on the question of the re-drawing of municipal boundaries.