



# UNOSEK

United Nations Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Future Status Process for Kosovo

Press Briefings  
unofficial transcript

[www.unosek.org](http://www.unosek.org)

18 July 2006

## **Press Briefing after Second Vienna round of talks on the protection of religious and cultural heritage in Kosovo**

**Petr Ivantsov, head of UNOSEK Political Affairs Division:** Thank you very much. As you know a second meeting in the area of religious and cultural heritage. The first meeting took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> of May and in the interim there were a number of expert meetings and visits of expert groups both to Kosovo and to Belgrade. The meeting focused on what was left unresolved from the first encounter on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May.

While in the first meeting we addressed the issues of the Church, so to say: its status in Kosovo in the sense that the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo is an integral part of the Serbian Orthodox Church. It dealt with the issues of the security, of freedom of movement, of access to the churches premises, of economic activities of the church and the privileges it should enjoy in this respect.

It also addressed the issues of protective zones, which differently from security arrangements are designed to protect the natural and historic environment around the religious sites and also to help preserve the monastic way of life. It also stressed the need for an implementation and monitoring methods.

What was discussed today is the follow up in a sense of the issues that were unresolved last time. Those were two but actually we only had time for one.

The issue that was prominent today was the issue of protective zones, mainly around Serbian Orthodox churches and monasteries in Kosovo.

The discussion was conducted on the basis of proposals made by international experts who visited Kosovo between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of June and who have conducted a survey of some 15 sites. Following this exercise reports were submitted both by the Council of Europe and UNESCO and the parameters of the protective zones were outlined. Of course those were recommendations and those are recommendations that were sent to both sides.

Both Pristina and Belgrade delegations had an opportunity to present today their proposals. The exercise was technical because we are looking at the parameters of concrete zones. The zones differ, the proposals differ, they differ both from what UNOSEK and what the international experts suggested and of course they were different between themselves. I cannot say that there is an agreement reached, or that there is no agreement reached at this stage. We have the proposals of the two sides, we have our recommendations, we will sit down with the international experts and try to see if we can arrive at a reasonable compromise from these suggestions.

The intention is to continue today's meeting, probably following the meetings of the leaders of Belgrade and Pristina, which is to take place later this month. We also have requested the sides to send us their proposals with regard to the implementing and monitoring mechanism and we also intend to continue discussion on this scheme.

This is in a nutshell what happened. There are no obvious breakthroughs and the discussion will continue.

### **Question**

*Q: Koha Ditore: Which were the two other topics of the program that were not discussed?*

**Petr Ivantsov:** There were actually more than two. There was protective zones, there was the mechanism for monitoring and implementing the agreements in the area of cultural heritage, there was an issue of archaeological artefact that were taken on loan by Belgrade from Pristina in 1999 and there was an issue - but this was a very technical issue - we want a list of special requirements of the Church in the area of taxation and custom duties. We only had time to discuss one issue and that was protective zones. It was time consuming and even there we didn't really manage to complete the discussion.