

7 August 2006

Press encounter after sixth round of talks on decentralization

Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be with you. We have just terminated our 6th meeting on Decentralization held as proximity talks. The focus was on municipal competencies, particularly health care, education, police and justice and on an additional section of the draft paper on principles of decentralization on cross boundary corporation. The meeting provided both sides with a further opportunity to convey their respective positions on all outstanding aspects in each area of the discussions. We tried to be focused on particular and concrete details in each area and I think I can say we were able to clarify matters further. To some regrets, I have to say, that both Belgrade and Pristina delegation in a number areas only reaffirmed their positions. It has to be said that there were some movements towards compromise in an area that came as sort of a surprise, at least to me, that was the police. I am not saying that we are just there, but I found it striking that there was some movement to close the gap on that very important issue, and I think we are grateful for that to the parties.

Apart from that, on the major stumbling blocks, we made no distinctive progress at all. But both sides showed the willingness to work further through UNOSEK in order to reach common ground on specific aspects. And to that end, UNOSEK missions will travel to both Pristina and Belgrade to discuss matters that have been broached today further.

We do expect both delegations to consult with the political leadership in Belgrade and Pristina with a view to refining their proposals and identify possibly compromise ground and prepare for UNOSEK travelling to the region.

Thank you very much.

***Question:** on stumbling ground*

Bernhard Schlagheck: Well it's basically competency of what we call asymmetric decentralization- that would mean competencies that only confer to some municipalities in Kosovo, I mean notable Kosovo-Serb municipalities, it would relate to police and

justice, but I said that we made some progress on police, that would also relate to education and health care matters.

Question: on progress on the police issue

Bernhard Schlagheck: We are discussing particularly within the decentralization framework. We are discussing particularly the role of Municipal Assemblies in selecting local police chiefs and here so far the position of the parties were rather far apart. I sense some willingness for both sides to move closer.