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Belgrade Pristina held sixth round on decentralization

Vienna – Delegations from Belgrade and Pristina today held another round of direct negotiations on decentralization in Kosovo, under the auspices of the Secretary-General Special Envoy for the future status process of Kosovo, Martti Ahtisaari.

The meeting, chaired by UNOSEK Senior Advisor Bernhard Schlagheck, focused on competences of municipalities, in particular health care, education, police and justice, and cross-boundary cooperation.

“I can say that we have managed to clarify matters further,” said Mr. Schlagheck to the press after the meeting, adding “to some regret, both Belgrade and Pristina delegations in a number of areas only reaffirmed their positions. In the major stumbling blocks, we made no distinctive progress.”

However, “in the area of the police there have been some movements to close the gap,” he went on to say, “and both sides showed a willingness to work through UNOSEK in order to reach further common ground on specific aspects.”

To that end, Mr. Schlagheck said that UNOSEK’s missions will be traveling to both Belgrade and Pristina in the near future to discuss related matters further. UNOSEK expected that the respective delegations would consult with the political leaderships with a view to refining their proposals, and prepare the ground for UNOSEK’s missions.

Prior to the talks, the Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari met with both delegations separately. He urged the parties to be more flexible in their approaches: “these talks are a test on both sides to see if they mean what they say”, he underscored.