



UNOSEK/PR/13

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Belgrade Pristina held talks on community rights

Vienna – Delegations from Belgrade and Pristina today held first round of direct talks on community rights in Kosovo, under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General Special Envoy for the future status process of Kosovo, Martti Ahtisaari.

The meeting began with presentations by the parties of their views on the principles for the protection of community rights, before moving on to more detailed discussions on community representation in institutions, mechanisms for protection of rights of communities as well as principle areas of community rights, such as language rights, media, and freedom of movement.

“The positions of the parties were conceptually far apart,” Bernhard Schlagheck, UNOSEK Senior Advisor, who chaired today’s meeting, told the media afterwards. “The Pristina delegation made actually concrete proposals on community rights, the Belgrade delegation presented its views that community rights in Kosovo should be addressed in the framework of status talks, without coming up with any concrete proposals.”

Mr. Schlagheck went on to say that UNOSEK now intended to continue to engage with the parties on the issues through expert level talks with a focus on detailed, practical proposals.

In answering to a question from a journalist about the absence of Kosovo Serbs from the meeting, Mr. Schlagheck expressed his regret, saying that while it was entirely up to them to make such a decision, “this decision is a missed opportunity to engage in a process which is of central importance for all of Kosovo’s communities, not least the Serb community.”

The Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari met with both delegations separately prior to the talks. He welcomed both parties’ decision to engage in talks on community issues: “These are central to Kosovo’s future,” he said, adding: “our objective is to create the conditions for a Kosovo that is truly multi-ethnic and in which the rights of minority communities are fully protected and promoted.”