



UNOSEK/PR/14

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Belgrade, Pristina further discuss Decentralization, Cultural heritage and Community rights in Vienna

Vienna – Delegations from Belgrade and Pristina held further discussions on September 7th and 8th on Decentralization, Cultural heritage and Community rights in Vienna, as part of the direct talks held under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General Special Envoy for the future status process of Kosovo, Martti Ahtisaari. Deputy Special Envoy Albert Rohan chaired the meetings.

“On all three issues, the discussions were extremely constructive and subject-oriented”, Mr. Rohan told the media at the end of the two-days talks. However, he added: “Not much progress has been achieved and we cannot talk about a breakthrough in spite of the good and constructive talks”.

On the seventh round of decentralization, Mr. Rohan expressed his appreciation that “from the Kosovo side, a number of concessions had been made prior to this meeting. The same is unfortunately not true of the other party. We have discussed in extenso the major sticking points, which are the competencies in health care, higher education, local police and justice, the relationships between Kosovo-Serb municipalities and institutions in Serbia. There were some minor advances but there was no big leap forward.” Both sides have agreed to meet again on 15 September to discuss exclusively the issue of new municipalities.

The Deputy Special Envoy described the discussions on the Cultural and religious heritage as “good and centered on the question of the protective zones.” He added that both sides agreed on the need to establish an implementation and monitoring instrument, which would supervise the implementation of the arrangements in this field. Mr. Rohan said the Serbian Orthodox Church handed over a list of their wishes in the area of taxation and duties privileges, that would come in addition to the privileges that all confessions in Kosovo enjoy. This list will now be considered by Pristina who, the Deputy Special Envoy recalled, has agreed in principle to accommodate those specific requests. Mr. Rohan also said that Belgrade assured UNOSEK that, following an agreement on the protective zones, they would be ready to return the archeological artifacts removed from Pristina in 1998-1999.

The Deputy Special Envoy said both delegations for the first time discussed issue by issue the most important aspects of the protection of communities on the basis of a comprehensive proposal by Pristina. “We saw that there are quite considerable conceptual and operational differences between the parties, Mr. Rohan said. “Here we have to do a lot of work”, he added, citing “items like the representation of communities in thin municipal assemblies, in court, in Government, the question of the use of language and the “vital interest” mechanism, which should prevent those communities which are in a minority position to be outvoted by the majority.” The Deputy Special Envoy asked the Belgrade delegation to submit in writing their views in this matter.

The Deputy Special Envoy said that UNOSEK would continue working on these practical issues “as long as there is chance for progress.” He added that Mr. Ahtisaari and UNOSEK work in this matters in close contact with the Contact Group, from which they have full support and confidence.