



UNOSEK

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

Press Release

www.unosek.org

UNOSEK/PR/5
Monday, 3 April 2006

Pristina, Belgrade delegations discuss in Vienna a document prepared by UNOSEK on the “Principles of Decentralization”

Vienna – Delegations from Pristina and Belgrade today held a third round of direct negotiations on decentralization under the auspices of the Secretary-General Special Envoy for the future status process of Kosovo, Martti Ahtisaari, and chaired by his Deputy, Albert Rohan. Discussions focused on “Principles of Decentralization”, a document prepared by UNOSEK based on the first two rounds of discussions.

“We went through a whole range of issues pertaining to decentralization,” the Deputy Special Envoy said at a press conference after the meeting. “Besides the general principles, we discussed the competencies, including health care, education, social policies, financing of local government, inter-municipal relations, and cooperation between municipalities in Kosovo and Belgrade”.

Mr Rohan said that common grounds found during the previous two rounds of discussions were confirmed. However, he added that the meeting also “established that there are considerable differences between the concepts of the two sides”. He said he expected “additional inputs from both sides in the next few days” to finalise the document.

The Deputy Special Envoy announced that UNOSEK will send an expert team to Belgrade and Pristina in the week starting on 17th April for further consultations before the last round meeting on decentralization on 4th May, which will focus on the re-drawing of municipal boundaries.

Commenting on other aspects of the process, Mr. Rohan said UNOSEK is working on basic provisions on the protection of the religious sites of the Serb Orthodox Church. A paper will be sent to the parties soon, outlining some open questions which have to be discussed at a meeting which he hoped would be convened in Vienna in early May.

The Deputy Special Envoy said that consultations are also taking place on the minority rights and the economic issues, which will be addressed in direct dialogues.

Prior to the direct talks, Special Envoy Ahtisaari met both delegations separately. He once again urged Belgrade to encourage the Kosovo Serbs to participate in the Kosovo institutions and expressed his deep concern on the recent CCK directive about Kosovo Serb salaries.

During the meeting with the Kosovo delegation, he noted the efforts made by the President and Prime Minister in reaching out to minorities, and underscored that dramatic improvement of situation on the ground is essential for Kosovo status aspirations.

Noting one female member among the delegates, the Special Envoy said that he would like to see more women representation in the negotiation process.