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**Statement by Martti Ahtisaari, Special Envoy for the Future Status Process
for Kosovo, on the passing of the President Ibrahim Rugova**

"It is with deep regret and sadness that I learned of the passing of President Ibrahim Rugova. I wish first of all to extend my heartfelt condolences and sympathy to President Rugova's family and to the people of Kosovo.

Kosovo has lost a historic leader at this crucial time, as the negotiations on Kosovo's status have entered an important phase. He was the symbol of the aspirations of Kosovo's people and devoted his life to promoting the rights of the people of Kosovo through peaceful means.

I was very impressed by his vision for the future, his determination to work for a better Kosovo, and his leadership of the negotiation team. I have fond memories of our meeting in Pristina during my first trip to Kosovo after being appointed Special Envoy.

I expect the momentum generated by President Rugova to be sustained, and that Kosovo's political leaders assume the responsibility to remain unified and actively support our common efforts to realize Kosovo's status.

I reiterate my commitment to leading the status process to culminate in a political settlement that determines the future status of Kosovo."