



UNOSEK/PR/3  
Friday, 03 March 2006

## **Martti Ahtisaari urges Pristina and Belgrade leaders to remain continuously engaged in the future status process for Kosovo**

**Vienna** – UN Secretary-General Special Envoy for the Future Status Process for Kosovo Martti Ahtisaari today completed a five-day visit in Serbia and Kosovo, following the first round of direct talks held in Vienna on the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> February between Pristina and Belgrade delegations.

“I arrived in Pristina at a time the Government here is going through major changes. I have made it clear that I believe and trust that the changes will not affect the status process and, should there be any impact, it would only be to accelerate the process. We have no time to loose” the Special Envoy said, adding: “We have a lot of things to do to improve the situation on the ground. Progress has to be made on both central and local levels.”

“The decentralization talks held in Vienna were a good start and I urged the leaders I met in Belgrade as well as in Pristina to remain continuously engaged”, Mr Ahtisaari said. He confirmed that another meeting on decentralization would take place in Vienna on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March, that would focus on local financing and on inter-municipal cooperation and relationships. “I encouraged the leaders to look into the future, instead of dwelling on the past. After all, the process is about the future status of Kosovo”, he added.

In the meantime, the Special Envoy will send a team of experts to Belgrade and to Pristina next week to have further in-depth discussions.

“I have been leading the process with a ‘bottom-up approach’, in other words, starting the process by dealing with practical and ‘status-neutral’ issues”, the Special Envoy explained, adding: “Apart from decentralization, we will run parallel discussions on Cultural and religious heritage, Minority rights and Economy.”

The Special Envoy said he had sent a questionnaire on Minority rights to both Belgrade and Pristina on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February with a deadline on March 3rd. “ I have receive some responses from both Belgrade a Pristina. And I will study them carefully before I take further action”.

The Special Envoy appealed to the Serbian leaders to encourage the Kosovo Serb leaders to participate in Kosovo institutions. Mr Ahtisaari also invited the members of the Kosovo Serb community, as well as those of the other minority communities, to

“participate in the new efforts that are taking place” to improve everyone’s life in Kosovo. “It is required that the minorities take part in the joint efforts. If you people don’t participate it will be very difficult for any administration to create conditions where people can live better together”, the Special Envoy told the Kosovo Serb leaders and the local Kosovo Serb population during a field trip to the a multi-ethnic municipality of Lipjan/Lipljan.

In Belgrade, Mr Ahtisaari met separately President Tadic of Serbia, Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica, Deputy Prime Minister Miroljub Labus and Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic. In Pristina, he had meetings with Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu, with the Pristina Negotiating Team with leaders of the minority communities and representatives of the civil society. He also held meetings with SRSG Søren Jessen-Petersen and with representatives of the international community: KFOR, the EU and the Contact Group.

The Special Envoy confirmed his intention to come back to the region in a near future. Meanwhile, Mr Ahtisaari will go next week to New York to report on the status talks to the Secretary-General and the Security Council. He will also proceed to Washington to meet US officials as well as representatives of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, before he meets the EU Foreign Ministers in Salzburg next Saturday.