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Ischinger criticizes U.S. stand on Kosovo

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The EU envoy in the Contact Group's mediating troika, Wolfgang Ischinger, criticized the U.S. on Thursday over announcements that it would recognize Kosovo's unilaterally declared independence, adding that the EU should send Serbia positive signals as soon as possible.

The German diplomat also criticized all statements "which create the impression that the result of the talks has already been determined."

Ischinger opposed the possibility of extending the troika's mandate after Dec. 10, when it is to submit a report to the U.N. secretary general.

"The decision to give the troika a 120-day mandate is a means of healthy pressure on all sides. Even if we had 1,200 days, it would not be any easier to make a decision," Ischinger said.

He also pointed out that "meanwhile, Russia is also becoming aware that further waiting does not increase the chance of reaching a peaceful solution for the status problem."

According to him, the EU should send Serbia a signal as soon as possible that would show it is ready to support Belgrade's further association with the union.

The German diplomat went on to say that further visa benefits could be "a positive signal for talks on the future of Kosovo."

At the same time, Ischinger warned that "Serbia must not be put in a position to choose between association with the EU and Kosovo," and said that "the current Serbian leadership has chosen Kosovo."

He believes "the EU, Serbs and Kosovo Albanians" have a common interest, because Kosovo "cannot function as an island in the Pacific."

Ischinger highlighted that Kosovo needed "access roads, energy, trade, and human connections - not only toward Albania and Macedonia, but also toward Serbia, to the benefit of both the Kosovo Albanians and Serbs."

"And if a state creation that is economically unable to survive is formed, the final cost will be paid by the EU," Ischinger warned.