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Ischinger: Talks entering a “decisive phase”

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The EU representative in the Contact Group troika Wolfgang Ischinger said on Sunday that the Kosovo status talks were entering a “decisive phase” with rounds in Brussels and, next week, in Vienna.

«This weekend in Brussels and next weekend in Vienna we will see if we can make some real progress (...) in that sense this will be a decisive phase,” Ischinger said.

“I expect both sides will explain their proposals, but I cannot foresee whether these proposals will contain elements which could represent a basis for a compromise”, he added.

“The sides do not have to convince us (in the troika), but to convince each other”, the EU representative argued.

Ischinger said there have been some “encouraging elements” in the talks so far, but added these were “not enough”.

He said the two sides must understand they are too far away one from the other and that much remains to be done, including “some painful decisions for one side or for both sides”.

Ischinger praised the work of the troika, adding that its work was “a miracle in itself”.

“Without help from the troika, the two sides would not be able to create a momentum for compromise”, Ischinger said.

He said he was optimistic about the prospects for a possible compromise after meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Moscow last week.

Ischinger also said he was fully misunderstood by the press on the question of an international conference to be held on Kosovo during the process.

« What I said is that the troika does not exclude the possibility of further meetings, including a conference-style meeting which would not mean much more than a meeting which would last more than one day (...) I have, however, never said that the troika had decided on imposing a solution on the sides », Ischinger argued.