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December 10: Deadline or not?

KosovoCompromise Staff

Several international officials on Tuesday voiced different opinions on whether December 10 was a deadline for finding a solution for the status of the Serbian province of Kosovo.

U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said in New York he was intensively working on solving current problems such as Kosovo.

"I am under no illusion that, whether it's the Middle East or Kosovo or Afghanistan or climate change, these problems will be solved overnight," he explained. "The solutions all involve a long road and hard work," Ban Ki-moon told a news conference following the opening of the U.N. General Assembly's 62nd session.

The foreign ministers of the Contact Group member states are to meet on the margin of the U.N. General Assembly on Sept. 27, while Belgrade and Pristina are to hold direct talks on the future status of Kosovo the following day.

In Moscow, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Tuesday that Russia was against artificial deadlines for the finalization of the Kosovo talks. "The issue of Kosovo's status will be brought back to the U.N. Security Council on December 10, and the Council will review a report on the finalization of the negotiations up until that moment," Lavrov said after a meeting with his French counterpart Bernard Kouchner.

"We are not setting deadlines for the creation of a Palestinian state, which the Palestine people have been waiting for 60 years, and we are not setting deadlines for the resolution of the entire complex of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In all those situations we advocate the continuation of negotiations - and the situation is the same with Kosovo," Lavrov said.

Kouchner told the same news conference that the negotiations on the future status of Kosovo must, however, not be dragged on indefinitely.

EU envoy in the troika Wolfgang Ischinger underscored that the additional Kosovo talks were "a chance given to Belgrade and Pristina," adding that "there will not be another one." "The troika's mission ends on December 10. Our mission is a chance given to Belgrade and Pristina, and I am afraid there will not be another one," Ischinger said.



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"I am not happy when I read news releases from Belgrade, which indicate that December 10, the day when the troika is to submit a report to the U.N. secretary general, is not a very important date. It is," Ischinger added.

On the other hand, former French foreign minister Hubert Vedrine said in Paris that a decision on Kosovo's status was not urgent, stressing that the consequences of such a decision for the region should first be weighted.

"They say a decision on (the future status of) Kosovo should be made urgently... I, however, do not see why it should be rushed," Vedrine told a news conference at the Foreign Press Center in Paris.

Vedrine advised "the decision makers" not to make a decision on Kosovo until they had weighed thoroughly the consequences that decision, whatever it may be, could have for Bosnia, Macedonia and other countries in the region.