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Kouchner: No direct links between Kosovo status and Serbia's EU integration, but...

KosovoCompromise Staff

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner denied any direct link between the resolution of the Kosovo status and Serbia's EU entry talks, but warned that failure to reach an agreement on the first would make the latter more difficult.

"The two phenomena are not intimately linked," Kouchner said after meeting Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic in Paris.

"But it would be a lie to say that it would be easier to join the European Union if the Kosovo problem was not resolved. It will be more difficult," he said.

Jeremic called Kosovo status and EU integration of Serbia "two separate processes."

"Kosovo is important not only because of the preservation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country, but because of our national feeling of pride and belonging to the European family of nations," the Serbian minister stressed.

Jeremic said a negotiated settlement of the Kosovo question was the best way to ensure the integration of Serbia and the Western Balkans in general, with the European Union.