



KOSOVO

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Unilateral decision on Kosovo issue will be destructive for the Balkan region

By Alexander Vatutin, The Voice of Russia

As December 10th — when the Troika mediators in charge of the Kosovo settlement, including the United States, Russia and the European Union, is to submit to the UN Security Council a report about the results of its work — is approaching, the situation is becoming more and more tense in the Kosovo Province. Moscow has repeatedly warned though that a unilateral granting of independence to the Kosovo Albanians will be destructive not only for the Balkans but also for the other parts of the world.

And this is exactly what Russia's deputy foreign minister Vladimir Tikhonov said while touring the Balkan states recently. He underlined how important it was to observe Resolution No. 1244 of the UN Security Council, which provides for the preservation of Serbia's territorial integrity. A formula that would be acceptable to both the Serbs and the Kosovo separatists should be based on the Security Council's resolution. Moscow is of the opinion that any artificial time limit for the settlement of the Kosovo problem is inadmissible.

Russia's Western partners in the Troika mediators are ready in advance to discuss Kosovo's independence, which makes the situation at the talks nervous enough. And this is exactly what Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said, speaking at the UN General Assembly:

"When individual countries, including the ones that are represented in the mediation Troika, make public statements to the effect that no matter what the talks may result in, Kosovo's independence is inevitable, one of the negotiating sides faces the temptation to make no concessions at all. Should the situation remain as it is, nothing will turn out. We are against such "prompts". The parties concerned must find a solution to their liking. There's no other way... The settlement of the Kosovo issue must be based on international law."

And it is exactly the ignorance of the international law standards that make the local extremists speak about Kosovo's independence as if it were an accomplished fact. But those who favour the so-called "Kosovo scenario" are not well aware of the fact that the Kosovo issue may create a dangerous precedent for nearly 40 territorial disputes in many parts of the world.

And the Republic of Cyprus that remains divided into the Greek and the Turkish communities for 50 years now is a good example. Turkey is ready to realize the "Kosovo scenario" there as well, which means that it is ready to declare the



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independence of the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, bypassing the UN resolutions. Thus, this may trigger a chain reaction of separatism Russia warns against. Therefore, patience is needed for resolving the Kosovo issue, and finally, a mutually acceptable compromise will be reached.

The Secretariat described this fact as undemocratic and expressed hope that invitation will still be sent. The issue will be put on the agenda of the Assembly's plenary session due to be held on 29 October, news agency *Regnum* reported.

A million voiceless people

Together, the four new and emerging countries represent more than one million people.

" - They are one million human beings who are left voiceless," says a representative from Tiraspol, "but the Council of Europe just doesn't seem to care. And yet they want to teach us about democracy?"

" - They are making it harder and harder for themselves all the time, when they won't take the opinions of the affected populations into account, and will only listen to one side of the story: Moldova's."

This is not the first time that the unrecognized countries are being silenced and excluded from international events. Earlier this year, the United States blocked entry to Abkhazia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was not allowed to attend talks at the United Nations on the future of his own state.

At the same time, however, the U.S. State Department vigorously defends the right of Kosovars to be present at all international venues where their desire for independence and statehood is discussed. This is despite the fact that Kosovo's claim to statehood rests on much shakier ground than Transdniestria's: Unlike Transdniestria and Abkhazia, the Kosovars do not yet have a "de facto" country to call their own.