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October 29

Troika meeting in Vienna

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The mediating Troika of the Contact Group is meeting in Vienna on Monday in a closed session devoted to preparing the next round of direct talks between Belgrade and Pristina, scheduled for November 5.

The Troika is trying to bridge the differences expressed by the two parties by taking into account their objections to the 14 working points presented by the mediators.

Belgrade and Pristina media are reporting about Troika's intention to present a new document, based on the objections.

The Tanjug news agency has reported that the proposal – suggested by EU envoy Wolfgang Ischinger – might resemble the 1972 treaty between Western and Eastern Germany.

Meanwhile, the Pristina media have reported that the Contact Group's mediating troika is preparing a new draft status for Kosovo, which makes no mention of its independence from Serbia. The Pristina officials claim they have no information of this new proposal.

Pristina negotiating team spokesman Skender Hyseni said he was not aware of the major forces authorizing the troika to put together a new proposal. He declined to comment on Pristina's potential reaction if the international mediators did propose such a document.

“This is highly hypothetical and we do not wish to answer hypothetical questions,” Hyseni said.

The Kosovo government also denied having information on the matter, but government spokesman Avni Arifi said that a change in the Ahtisaari plan would be unacceptable.

“From the first day we have been saying that the Ahtisaari plan must be acknowledged only as a whole,” Arifi said, adding that “the Kosovo negotiating team will not accept anything less than independence, regardless of possible pressure.”

According to the Pristina daily in Albanian Koha Ditore, the starting point of the new proposal is are the 14 working points of the Troika.

All Pristina negotiators advocate Kosovo's independence but are not united on a unilateral declaration of independence. Kosovo Prime Minister Agim Ceku and leader



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of the opposition ORE party Veton Suroi favor a proclamation of independence immediately after December 10.

Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu and opposition Democratic Party of Kosovo leader Hashim Thaci have said that Kosovo should not act without prior agreement with its international partners. According to public opinion polls, Thaci and Sejdiu are most likely to win the coming November 17 parliamentary and local elections in Kosovo.