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Slovenian PM: Unilateral independence means division within the EU

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Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Jansa said on Monday that a potential unilateral declaration of Kosovo's independence could lead to a new rift within the EU.

Since Belgrade and Pristina "unfortunately will not reach a solution through negotiations, there may be a unilateral proclamation of Kosovo's independence, which would be backed by international factors," Jansa said.

According to him, this would face the EU with the difficult issue of how to shape "a common stand on Kosovo" or otherwise lead to a new division within the union in the foreign policy field.

"This will be the next really big challenge for the EU," the Slovenian Prime Minister added.

The issue of Kosovo's future status, which will most likely be resolved in the first few months of 2008, is the EU's main challenge, and a matter that is increasing tensions in the entire region, Jansa went on to say.

Slovenia will take over the EU rotating presidency as of January 1, 2008.

Several EU countries – such as Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Greece and Cyprus – are against Kosovo's independence, while many more are against unilateral steps in the Kosovo process.