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Fourth round of direct talks in Vienna

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The fourth round of direct talks between Belgrade and Pristina is being held on Monday in Vienna, with series of meetings which are widely seen as crucial for the Troika process.

The meetings started off with a separate encounter between the Serbian delegation – led by President Boris Tadic and Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica -- and the negotiating Troika.

Pristina's delegation is led by president of the province Fatmir Sejdiu and its prime minister Agim Ceku.

Russia's envoy in the Troika Alexander Botsan-Kharchenko said that the talks were entering a decisive phase, adding that for the sake of preserving the negotiating process essential, progress had to be made.

“In the previous phase, it was good to see direct talks launched in good atmosphere, and now, given that this is the decisive phase, essential progress must be made in order to preserve the negotiating process,” the Russian diplomat said.

Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic said he believed the negotiating process would continue after December 10, with the support from the international community.

“I do not think a compromise solution can be reached by December 10, but I do believe some principled positions can be brought closer together,” he said.

Serbian Minister for Kosovo Slobodan Samardzic said that, during the fourth round, Belgrade will present arguments which would demonstrate that substantial autonomy is “not only a good solution for the Serbs and Albanians, for Serbia and Kosovo, but is also a functional solution”.

The Vienna meeting is providing the opportunity to discuss the parties' objections to the 14 working points that the Troika presented at the last round on October 22.

Belgrade has already presented its own 14 working points.

Its main objection was the lack of mention of the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and the need to resolve the issue in the Security Council. It sought to specify the nature of Kosovo's relationship with Serbia - as a province, not an independent actor - and to suggest possible Serbian competencies. The Serbian negotiations team also



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insisted on the fact that Kosovo's access to international financial institutions - while independent -- cannot be fully unrestrained due to Serbia's obligations as subject of international law, and that further European integration of the province should be made in cooperation with Belgrade.

Pristina is yet to present its objections, but in initial reactions, they were mostly dealing with a non-explicit mentioning of Kosovo's formal independence in the document. It feared the working points were stopping short of what it hoped for.