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Merkel calls for a push towards compromise

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel during her visit to the U.S. called on the Belgrade authorities and the Kosovo Albanians to make an effort to find a reasonable solution to the problem.

She underscored that the negotiations on the status of the province, guided by the three Contact Group mediators, were entering “the crucial phase.”

”The talks are in progress and are entering the crucial phase. We are urging the Serbian and Kosovo sides to make an effort and reach a reasonable solution to the problem. And we will do all we can to help,” Merkel said after a meeting with U.S. President George Bush at his ranch in the Texas town of Crawford.

Merkel’s visit to the U.S., just two days after French President Nicolas Sarkozy visited the same ranch, is considered to be the last round of top level consultations before the three mediators submit a report to the U.N. on December 10, on the course of the four-month status negotiations between Serbia and the Kosovo Albanians.

Merkel, Sarkozy and Bush all refrained from any potentially inflammatory language over Kosovo, pressing both sides involved in talks to make the last push towards a mutually acceptable solution.

Meanwhile, German ambassador to Serbia Wolfram Mass has said during the weekend there is still “room” for an agreement on the status of Kosovo, and that any solution that is not the fruit of agreement would be much worse than a compromise.

Maas told the Belgrade media that “at the moment, there is no solution or proposal for the status of Kosovo within the EU that is labeled as ‘has to be’.”

”We are all hoping for an agreement, and Germany aims to do everything to see that kind of solution come to life,” Maas said, and added that no one would benefit from leaving the Kosovo issue open.

Claiming that other solutions will be found if a compromise is not reached in Kosovo’s case, Maas said he did not know and did not wish to speculate how they might look, but also said that “whatever would come would be worse than any agreement.”

Asked whether Germany would back the proposal to give the status talks a chance after December 10, Maas said that the troika’s mandate ended on that date, along with



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“that phase of the negotiations,” and what would happen afterwards could only be speculated.