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Ischinger hints at neutral status for Kosovo, Belgrade and Pristina reject

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The EU envoy in the Contact Group's mediating troika Wolfgang Ischinger spent the last few days in the U.S. briefing American and EU diplomats on his latest idea for the Kosovo status, which includes a neutral status solution for the province, with a simultaneous push for more constructive ties between Belgrade and Pristina.

Ischinger briefed U.S. officials on Tuesday and a day later flew to New York for a round of consultations with EU diplomats in a push for approval of his fresh plan – a result of the Western view that chances for a compromise deal between Serbia and Kosovo Albanians are slim.

Speaking to the reporters in Washington, Ischinger said his proposal has nothing to do with the status issue, but rather sets the stage for institutionalized economic cooperation, trade, border control and fight against the organized crime.

Reacting to media reports on Ischinger's statements, Serbian Minister of Kosovo Slobodan Samardzic said that the idea of founding Kosovo's neutral status on the agreement between East and West Germany made in 1972 is directly opposed to provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 1244.

"Kosovo cannot have neutral status, because the province of Kosovo is an integral and inalienable part of Serbian territory," Samardzic said.

Samardzic explained that functional ties between Serbia and its province should be established as soon as possible, but only after the essential autonomy of Kosovo is clearly confirmed.

For that very reason, at the November 20 meeting in Brussels, Serbia will explain how essential autonomies efficiently function in the world today, Samardzic added.

The latest Ischinger hint was also rejected in Pristina, as province's president Fatmir Sejdiu said "nothing short of independence would be acceptable for Kosovo Albanians".