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UN and EU discuss Kosovo mission

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UN Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping Jean-Marie Guehenno held a round of discussions with high-ranking European officials, in a move widely seen as an initial step towards the replacement of the UN-led mission in Kosovo with a possible new EU civil and security presence.

Guehenno met with EU's high-ranking diplomat Stefan Lehne, and two appointed chiefs of the possible European mission in Kosovo, Peter Faith who is set to take charge of civil part of the undertaking, and French general Yves de Kermabon who will overlook policing and security issues.

European diplomats in New York have said that the EU seems to be ready for intensive activity aimed at the establishment of the new mission in Kosovo, and that the latest meeting with the chief of UN peacekeeping operations presents just a part of wide preparations to take the charge over Kosovo issues from the hands of the world body.

UN and EU officials discussed the deployment of the European mission in the southern Serbian province, despite the fact that there is still no agreement on the future status of Kosovo.

Meanwhile in Vienna, UN chief in Kosovo Joachim Ruecker said on Thursday that he still hoped for a positive outcome of negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, significantly toning down his language compared to several previous public statements.

However, Ruecker told OSCE diplomats that clarity on the future status of Kosovo might turn out to be a crucial element for stability of all ethnic communities living in Kosovo, but also for broader regional peace.

“An agreed solution would be the optimal outcome, and the easiest to implement. Still, even if no agreement is reached, clarity on Kosovo's future, key to ensuring stability in the region, will have to be forthcoming”, Ruecker said.

In addition, the chief of UNMIK blamed Belgrade authorities for “exercising undue pressure” on Kosovo Serbs to keep them away from polling stations on Saturday's general elections in the province.



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On the other hand, the Serbian ambassador to the OSCE Miroslava Beham said that in the case of a unilateral declaration of Kosovo's independence, UNMIK should react immediately and proclaim the move invalid.

Beham also fiercely criticized UNMIK's work before the Permanent Council of the OSCE in Vienna.

The Serbian ambassador stressed that UNMIK had failed to carry out its tasks, regulated by the UN Security Council Resolution 1244, recalling that the administration's job was not to create a state within a state, but to enable Kosovo's autonomy within then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, now Serbia.

According to her, UNMIK was supposed to cooperate with the Belgrade institutions in the process of selling state and socially-owned property, and in other fields.

"The opposite happened, which widened the gap between the Serbs and Albanians, and that is why the two sides' positions are so far apart," Beham said, adding that the situation could change, and that resolving the Kosovo issue required a democratic process and democratic agreement.