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Botsan-Kharchenko: Serbia's sovereignty must not be neglected

KosovoCompromise Staff

Russian envoy in the Contact Group's mediating troika Alexander Botsan-Kharchenko has said that Serbia's sovereignty could not be scrapped in the search for a solution for the status of Kosovo, adding that it was "an argument made of armored concrete."

Unlike the U.S., Russia is looking at the Kosovo issue from the viewpoint of international law, and believes that Serbia's sovereignty cannot be ignored, Botsan-Kharchenko said.

Botsan-Kharchenko also warned that a unilateral scenario was dangerous for the Balkans, because "the Serbs will not agree to the separation of Kosovo," and "the EU will get a division of the province," which was contrary to the troika's task of achieving a multi-ethnic Kosovo.

According to him, "the Americans believe that Kosovo is already de facto independent," and that "for some reason, an agreement is to be made within the Contact Group and the U.N. Security Council as well that Kosovo is a unique case."

"Positions within the EU are terribly different," Botsan-Kharchenko said, illustrating the difficulties the troika was encountering in its work, adding that statements of predetermined independence "do not stimulate the Serbian-Albanian dialogue, to say the least."

The EU representative in the troika, Wolfgang Ischinger, said in Berlin that the troika expected an agreement on future cooperation between the Serbian and Albanian sides, if the status issue was not resolved.

"The troika's efforts are aimed at reaching an agreement on cooperation, if nothing else," Ischinger told reporters in Berlin, and added that "a status agreement would be ideal."

"Of course a status agreement would be ideal, but unfortunately that is something we cannot expect" before the end of the talks on Dec. 10, the German diplomat said, adding that it would be "useful" to reach an agreement on mutual cooperation.

U.S. scholar Robert Hayden, professor at the University of Pittsburg, blamed the current deadlock in the talks due to the fact that the Kosovo Albanians have no interest to take part in ongoing negotiations simply because they were already promised independence by the United States.



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Hayden, who runs the Center for Russian and Eastern European Studies at the Pitt, rejected the possibility that two major players in the process which could lead to province's future status – U.S. and Russia – might find a common grounds on this issue, saying that “things are moving in the directly opposite course”.

The lack of agreement between big powers and the return of Cold War rhetoric makes it even harder to believe that Belgrade and Pristina might come up with mutually acceptable solution to the status issue, he said.

“Kosovo Albanians had taken a position in negotiations based on independence as a sole solution, so we have to ask ourselves a question why do we have negotiations at all. Negotiations could have, however, led to softening of their stances towards other solutions, but baring in mind that the U.S. have promised them the outcome they wanted in a case that no mutual agreement is reached, talks have lost their purpose”, Hayden said.

The Pittsburg scholar also said that the overall atmosphere surrounding talks on the future status of Kosovo leads to conclusion that the newly elected province's prime minister and a former leader of the separatist guerrilla movement Hashim Thaci could declare independence unilaterally, but added that such a move would almost certainly raise the question who would recognize that decision.