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November 29

Baden talks wrap up with no progress

KosovoCompromise Staff

The three-day, most likely decisive, negotiations round between the Belgrade and Pristina teams in the Austrian spa Baden have wrapped up unsuccessfully, with the Kosovo Albanian negotiators refusing any talk of status, buying time until December 10.

Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica said that the Kosovo Albanians had not even wanted to seriously negotiate the autonomy models offered by Belgrade, as certain countries had already promised them independence after December 10, when the Contact Group's troika is to submit its report to the U.N. secretary general.

He stressed that Serbia would label any unilateral acts invalid and that Serbia was an internationally recognized sovereign democratic state which would in no way agree to the questioning of its status.

Kostunica reiterated that the Kosovo issue should be resolved in the U.N. Security Council, where the process had begun, and that a new debate in the Security Council was to follow after December 10.

Kostunica described the current situation as "very serious," and conveyed Belgrade's readiness to continue the talks after December 10.

Serbian President Boris Tadic warned that a unilateral solution could lead to the destabilization of Serbia and the region, and that in case of a unilateral declaration of independence, Serbia's response would be more than clear.

"We do not want violence and we will not apply it, we want to defend our interests in a legal manner. We will abolish any acts of independence and use all legal and diplomatic means in defense of our legitimate state interests," Tadic said.

The Pristina negotiators expressed regret that no agreement had been reached in the Baden talks, and announced that Kosovo would soon proclaim independence.

They told journalists they would abide by the international agenda until December 10, but said that after that date they would take action in coordination with Washington and Brussels.

The Contact Group's troika voiced regret that the two sides could not agree on the future status of Kosovo, but also urged Belgrade and Pristina to continue negotiating.



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The devotion to peace must continue even after the Troika finishes its mandate on December 10, the troika underscored, calling on Belgrade and Pristina to keep communicating without prejudice on their status positions.

Russian envoy in the troika Alexander Botsan-Kharchenko said he believed the Troika had run the process the best it could, pointing out that Russia remained dedicated to a compromise solution.

"I believe that a compromise solution is the only one leading to sustainable regional stability," Botsan-Kharchenko said, adding that he advocated the continuation of the talks. EU representative in the troika Wolfgang Ischinger, however, said he did not think the negotiations would continue.

The three mediators are to visit Belgrade and Pristina on December 3, before submitting their report.