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NATO and Russia disagree on Kosovo process

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The NATO alliance and Russia have expressed divergent views on the Kosovo status at the Friday NATO-Russia Council meeting in Brussels, held on the margins of the meeting of the Alliance's foreign affairs ministers, particularly on the need to continue the negotiations process.

While NATO Secretary General Jap de Hoop Schefer and US Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice argued that the Troika process was over and that an agreed solution was hardly possible, Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov called for the pursuit of negotiations.

"We believe that the Troika did a good work (...) Belgrade was very flexible and very constructive about all the points", Lavrov said, adding that Pristina failed to adopt a similar stance.

Lavrov called all those who were in favor of a unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo "not to camouflage the discussion in a dishonest way", a hint at attempts by some European countries and the US to find legal loopholes in the UN Security Council resolution 1244 in order to push for Kosovo's independence through the small door.

The Russian minister also said that Moscow would react to a unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo "on the basis of international law" and that he was expecting other international actors to do the same.

A solution for Kosovo must be based on international law, the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act, Lavrov warned.

Otherwise, he said, Kosovo would become a precedent which could lead European security through a "slippery road downward".

Rice, on the other side, said that it was "time to take the next move" which could involve "tough decisions" after the end of the Troika process.

She said that Russia must recognize the "reality in the relation between Belgrade and Pristina".

But, before that, there should be a strong commitment to "implement the principles of the Ahtisaari plan", she said.



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NATO ministers agreed in a final communique that Kfor should remain in Kosovo on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 1244, no matter the status decision, unless the Security Council decides otherwise.

“We renew our commitment to maintain Kfor’s national force contributions, including reserves, at current levels and with no new caveats”, the communique said.