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Kostunica and Sejdiu to participate at the UN SC session on Kosovo

KosovoCompromise Staff

Russia and a pack of Western countries, following several days of heated discussions, finally managed to reach a compromise over the Kosovo Albanian request to take part in the December 19 debate on the Kosovo status, and decided to allow the province's president Fatmir Sejdiu to speak at the session "in private capacity".

The session, which will be addressed by Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica, will be held behind closed doors and far away from the public eyes.

"I'm particularly pleased by the show of goodwill and of result-oriented approach by everybody," the current president of the Security Council, Italian Ambassador Marcello Spatafora said, adding that a meeting will be held behind the closed doors to allow sides to fully concentrate on the issue in question.

"But nobody knows what is going to happen at that meeting," Spatafora told reporters in New York, explaining that the meeting will focus on the report on fresh round of talks between Belgrade and Pristina, which failed to produce a mutually acceptable, compromise solution.

Sejdiu will directly address the UN's most influential body for the first time since the international community took charge of the troubled province in 1999.

"We consider that it is critically important that I be given the opportunity to present the position of the Kosovo Unity Team, which I lead, especially following our serious engagement in the Troika-led process, which has just concluded," Sejdiu wrote in a letter to the current President of the Security Council.

However, Sejdiu will speak at the meeting in "private capacity" under the Rule 39, which says that "the Security Council may invite members of the Secretariat or other persons, whom it considers competent for the purpose, to supply it with information or to give other assistance in examining matters within its competence".

Russia, China and Indonesia had sharply objected the U.S.-led initiative, which led to the compromise proposal.

The outcome pumped the optimism in Russian ranks, as Moscow's Ambassador to the UN Vitaly Churkin voiced his satisfaction by the fact that the Security Council has accepted his proposal for the format of next week's meeting.



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“We proceeded from our position of principle that the parties should continue negotiations on the future status of Kosovo and that the international community should support them, “ said Churkin. “So the Council will have this opportunity to hear the two sides and to give, we hope, the message of continued political effort.”

But British Ambassador John Sawers blamed Russia for “trying to prevent the representative of Kosovo of speaking at the Council.” “Russia tried to prevent that, but in the end gave in, in return for a private meeting.”

“Russia knew we had the votes, so the Russians came up with this proposal to have Kosovo speak for itself, but only in a private meeting. What prevailed was the sense that if we can resolve through consensus, let's do it... we can have it without resort to the vote,” French deputy representative Jean-Pierre Lacroix said.

Earlier this week, Russia urged the Security Council to support a fresh round of negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, saying “the parties benefited from period of intensive dialogue, overlooked by Contact Group’s “Troika”.

Moscow called for “close engagement of the Contact Group in support of continued negotiating process between Pristina and Belgrade in order to reach agreement on Kosovo’s future status”, but the motion was immediately rejected by the U.S. and Great Britain.

“I do not believe the Council, as far as I can judge, is going to be able to reach agreement on way forward, in which case other organizations will have to take their responsibilities”, said Sawers. The British position was immediately backed by the U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, who underlined that stances of Moscow and West “fundamentally differ on this issue”.

“We think negotiations have been exhausted”, Khalilzad said.

But Churkin rejected the possibility to withdraw the Russian proposal, saying the Moscow’s elements are still on the table in the Security Council and “very much alive”.

He said that a unilateral declaration of Kosovo's independence would be legally invalid, because that is a conclusion stemming from the U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244.

“Resolution 1244 does not allow self-proclamation and such a decision would be illegitimate,” Churkin said.

He went on to say that to make that decision invalid would not require a new U.N. Security Council resolution, but only the head of the U.N. or his representative in Kosovo should announce its illegitimacy.



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The ambassador pointed out that the EU could not send a mission to Kosovo without the appropriate decision by the Security Council, "because every international mission must have a mandate from the Security Council."

Churkin also said that he expected "a very interesting conversation" at the December 19 debate, but added he did not "guarantee there will be a unanimous stand."