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EU to send mission to Kosovo, offer Serbia faster candidate status

KosovoCompromise Staff

The heads of state and governments of the European Union concluded at their Friday summit in Brussels it was time for the Union to take a leading role in the resolution of the status of Kosovo and made a “political decision” to send an ESDP mission, but failed to reach a common stand on the legal basis for the mission or on the status of the province.

At the same time, and in the context of the resolution of the Kosovo status, the EU sent a message to Serbia in which it offers the opportunity to rapidly sign the Stabilization and Association Agreement and obtain EU candidate status – of course, under the condition of necessary full cooperation with the Hague tribunal.

The chairman of the European Council, Portuguese president Jose Socrates, said the EU leaders agreed to send the EU police and rule of law mission to Kosovo, but added that a legal basis for it will be discussed early next year.

Although French president Nicolas Sarkozy and British foreign minister David Milliband insisted that the “full agreement” was reached at the meeting, several countries showed they did not agree with the stances of the leading proponents of Kosovo’s independence.

Cyprus said it was opposed to Kosovo’s independence as well as to the sending of an EU mission on the basis of UN Security Council resolution 1244, Cypriot president Tassos Papadopoulos said after the meeting.

“We will not recognize a unilateral declaration of independence”, Papadopoulos said, and warned that the question of status must be resolved in the UN SC.

“We believe there is still space for agreement”, he added.

He underlined that the “resolution 1244 does not cover an EU mission” and that the only body which could interpret this resolution is the UN SC.

Romania also said it would not recognize Kosovo’s independence.

“We will not recognize Kosovo’s independence because we have serious reserves about the way in which such a status can be achieved, as well as towards possible consequences this would leave for the Western Balkans”, Romanian Prime minister Calin Popescu Tariceanu said.



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Speaking at a briefing after the summit, the Secretary-General of the Portuguese ministry of Foreign Affairs Fernando D'Oliveira Neves confirmed EU countries did not achieve a common stand on Kosovo's status.

“Different sensibilities are preventing us from taking a common stand ‘for’ or ‘against’ Kosovo’s independence”, Neves said.

“On the other side, we have succeeded in finding a common denominator for all members – which is an agreement on the EU mission (...) this was a surprise to us because we did not hope we could achieve unity on this issue”, the Portuguese official warned.

The agreement on sending the EU mission was one of the key points on which had insisted the ministers of foreign affairs of the European members of the Contact Group – France, Great Britain, Italy and Germany.

In a letter sent ahead of last week's meetings, Bernard Kouchner, David Milliband, Massimo D'Alema and Frank Valter-Steinmeier called for several key goals to be achieved and put in the summit's conclusions.

The majority of these goals has been achieved: an opposition to the continuation of Kosovo talks, taking a leading role in the resolution of the status, making concrete steps forward through an agreement on sending the EU mission, as well as the message to Serbia that its road towards the EU would speed up.

On other side, the pressure of the EU's “big four” did not succeed in two cases: there was no agreement on the “urgent” resolution of the Kosovo status, as well as on the proposal to take UN SC resolution 1244 as a basis for sending the mission.

Ambassador Neves also took a look at the negotiations process under the auspices of the Troika and argued that “the fact that from the start we had been speaking about negotiations on the ‘independence of Kosovo’ prejudged the development of the entire process”.

Reacting to the summit conclusions, Serbian officials said they were unacceptable, and that Belgrade would not trade Kosovo for faster EU integrations.

Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica said EU's conclusions are "offensive and unacceptable".

"A crippled Serbia cannot agree to violence in exchange for a prize of speedy EU admission," he said.

"It is unacceptable to talk about the Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohia as a



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future legal and democratic state, and so is the illegal arrival of an EU mission to the province, in order to implement the Ahtisaari plan to create a puppet state," the prime minister stressed.

He also warned that Serbia would not accept the decision not to proceed with further talks between Belgrade and Pristina, and to, by recognizing a unilaterally declared independence, violate the UN Charter and Resolution 1244.

Serbian Foreign minister Vuk Jeremic rejected any trade that would see Serbia accept EU membership in exchange for Kosovo.

"This Serbian government, quite simply, does not see the issue of the future status of Kosovo and Metohia and Serbia's EU future as matters that can compensate each other. In other words, it is out of the question to trade with our territory," Jeremic said.

Jeremic explained that Serbia "is fighting for its vital interests, and that the preservation of territorial integrity is most certainly a vital interest," adding that, "by fighting for the preservation of its territorial integrity, Serbia is fighting for its European future."

The chief of the Serbian diplomacy added that Belgrade will welcome an EU mission in Kosovo, but only once it obtains a valid UN Security Council mandate.

Serbian Minister for Kosovo and Metohia Slobodan Samardzic said that the latest EU conclusions imply "a certain process of a unilateral solution for Kosovo and Metohia or unilateral acceptance of independence, as well as giving a green light to EU member states to start recognizing the province as an independent state."

"This would cause grave consequences for the region and for Europe, and also for the relations between Serbia and the EU," the minister said.

"With that move the EU would jeopardize everything that was built from October 2000 until today in the relations between Serbia and the EU," Samardzic said.