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Statement on Kosovo by Contact Group Ministers New York, 27 September 2007

Contact Group Ministers, together with the UN Secretary General, EU High Representative, the European Union Presidency, European Commissioner for Enlargement and the NATO Secretary-General met in New York on 27 September to discuss the Kosovo Status Process. They heard a report from the EU/Russia/US Troika. A representative of UNOSEK was also present.

Ministers reiterated that an early resolution of Kosovo's status is crucial to the stability and security of the Western Balkans and Europe as a whole. Ministers reaffirmed their resolve to seek a negotiated settlement endorsed by the UN Security Council. Ministers expressed their appreciation for the continued efforts by UNMIK and KFOR to contribute towards a multi-ethnic, peaceful and democratic Kosovo. They endorsed fully the UN Secretary General's assessment that the status quo is not sustainable. It has damaging consequences for Kosovo's political, social and economic development and for the underlying stability of the region. A solution therefore has to be found without delay.

When they met in New York in September 2006, Contact Group Ministers encouraged the UN Special Envoy to prepare a comprehensive proposal for a status settlement. The proposal, submitted after 14 months of negotiations, has been accepted by Pristina and rejected by Belgrade.

As a further effort to achieve a negotiated settlement, the Contact Group established a Troika whose task would be to facilitate a period of further discussion between the parties. The Troika process will be concluded by the Contact Group report to the UN Secretary General by 10 December.

Ministers expressed full support for the Troika process and welcomed the quick pace of activity and the constructive atmosphere of the first rounds of talks. Ministers reiterated their view that the Contact Group's Guiding Principles of November 2005 should continue to set the framework for the status process, which is based on UNSCR 1244.



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The next step in the Troika process will involve direct talks between the parties in New York on 28 September. Contact Group Ministers welcomed this move to face-to-face discussions. Ministers urged both sides to approach the remaining negotiations with creativity, boldness, and in a spirit of compromise. Furthermore, any settlement needs to be acceptable to the people of Kosovo, ensure standards implementation with regard to Kosovo's multi-ethnic character, and promote the future stability of the region. Ministers underlined that any future status settlement should focus on developing the special nature of the relations between the two sides, especially in their historical, economic, cultural and human dimensions.

Ministers urged the parties to take seriously the opportunity created by the Troika process to secure a negotiated settlement. The onus is on each of the parties to develop realistic proposals. Although the Special Envoy's Comprehensive Proposal remains on the table, the Contact Group is ready to support any agreement reached between the parties. Ministers reiterated that striving for a negotiated settlement should not obscure the fact that neither party can unilaterally block the status process from advancing. Ministers supported the continued engagement of the UN, and welcomed NATO and EU readiness to play a leading role in the implementation of a status settlement for Kosovo and to continue the necessary preparations for these responsibilities. Ministers welcomed the active approach adopted by the EU in the light of the European perspective of the Western Balkans region.

Ministers noted and welcomed the undertakings made to the Troika by both sides to refrain from provocative words and actions and call on the parties to honour these commitments. Political developments in Kosovo and Serbia should not interfere with the parties' constructive engagement in the Troika process. They expressed their hope that elections, due in Kosovo on 17 November, would take place with full participation of all communities and against a calm and orderly background.

All those present at the meeting will remain closely engaged with the process and fully supportive of the Troika's efforts.