

Speech: Post-Conflict Reconciliation in Kosovo

Thank you very much Mr President and thank you to the SRSG for your briefing and for all the good work you and your team continue to do in Kosovo and in the region. And welcome to his Excellency the Foreign Minister and also to her Excellency the Kosovo Ambassador to Washington.

We fully support UNMIK Mr President and we recognize the important role UNMIK has played in post-conflict stabilization and reconciliation. The situation in Kosovo has indeed changed dramatically since the mission's inception two decades ago. We believe that the Security Council needs to use its resources effectively and it needs to refocus UNMIK's efforts so that the means deployed by the United Nations are tailored fully to the situation on the ground.

To this end Mr President, the United Kingdom supports and looks forward to a strategic review of the mission. I would recall for members that the European Union and other regional organizations are also very closely involved in Kosovo and in the region and the EU's role is vital, I think, to enabling true peace, security and stability on the ground.

With the efficiency and priorities of this Council in mind, we actually welcome the reduction in frequency of UNMIK discussions. The Foreign Minister singled out my country so I will take a few brief minutes to respond, if I may. It's important that the cycle of discussion in the Council reflects reality on the ground and we all agreed this at the point at which we took the decision. And it's also important that the reporting cycles of the Secretary-General reflect the frequency of Council discussion.

But on the Foreign Minister's specific points, let me say Sir that we offered four options to reach agreement with your country and all four were rejected. We also made it very clear that we would hold a meeting on Kosovo in the Security Council if there were progress on normalization. Sadly, there wasn't progress on normalization. Instead I am sorry to say that the Serbian government orchestrated a protest outside our embassy in Belgrade which is simply not an acceptable way of conducting diplomatic relations.

Mr President as we reflect on the progress Kosovo has made since UNMIK's installation in 1999, there is an example of how far Kosovo has moved forward that I'd like to raise. This concerns the Kosovo Police. The Kosovo Police is a professional organisation that, since its inception in 1999, has taken responsibility for ensuring the maintenance of rule of law in the long term. Its officers are well-trained and they are keen to cooperate internationally in our joint efforts to combat serious and organized crime and terrorism. So the United Kingdom hopes Mr President, that the Kosovo police is voted into Interpol at the General Assembly next week and we urge other members to support their bid. This is not about political point scoring. This is about our collective security and our collective fight against organized crime.

Kosovo's inclusion would facilitate information sharing among law enforcement in the Western Balkans and beyond. And this would enhance all of our stability, including Serbia's. It is time that we stopped transnational organized criminals cooperating better than our own police services.

If I may Mr President, I would just like to add at this point that I knew Oliver Ivanović and considered him a friend. We too hope that the perpetrators of his murder will be brought to justice. Oliver worked tirelessly to try to normalize the state of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. I think the greatest tribute that both countries could pay to Oliver would be to continue his work without conditions.

Mr President, we continue to encourage Serbia and Kosovo to make progress towards a sustainable solution through the EU-facilitated Dialogue. We agree with both speakers that progress on the Dialogue is vital for stability, security and prosperity in the two countries and the region, but I am sorry to say Mr President that this is not always the way in which the Dialogue is approached and we would like to see much more progress. We would like to see faster progress and we would like always the two sides to keep in mind that any proposals they put forward really do enhance stability on the ground and enhance the safety and security of all their citizens.

We have had a number of rounds of dialogue in the past Mr President. In this century alone there was an attempt in 2006 under UN auspices to resolve the status issue that recommended Kosovo be independent. That was blocked. There was an attempt in 2007 between the EU, the United States and Russia to the same end, and that too was blocked. Now we have the EU-facilitated Dialogue. I cannot stress too strongly Mr President how important it is that that dialogue makes real progress if the region – and Kosovo in Serbia in particular – are to realize prosperity, security and stability.

Mr President, the people of Kosovo and Serbia have elected their leaders to best represent their interests. We urge these leaders to do so. Provocative acts and rhetoric from both sides are deeply unhelpful, antagonistic and should be stopped. They're contrary to the spirit of normalization and they simply make finding common ground more difficult. We believe Mr President that both countries need now to focus on a deliverable and sustainable normalization agreement through the EU-facilitated Dialogue which enhances security and benefits the ordinary people of both countries. The United Kingdom stands ready to support such an agreement.

Thank you Mr President.