

Speech: “These sessions do not reflect Kosovo as it is, but Kosovo as it was.”

Thank you Mr President and thank you Special Representative Tanin for your briefing.

Let me join others in welcoming Ambassador Citaku and Minister Kuburović to the Council.

It's been less than three months since this Council met to discuss the situation in Kosovo. As the Secretary-General's report makes clear, it has been a comparatively quiet period; one that doesn't warrant this Council's attention so soon after our last session.

This period of calm is welcome; a de-escalation in tension between Kosovo and Serbia, whether in this Chamber or in the region, is something I'm sure we'd all like to see sustained.

We particularly welcome the withdrawal of the proposal to transform the Kosovo Security Force into an army. We encourage the Government of Kosovo to continue to engage with communities in Kosovo and NATO partners on any such moves.

Despite the stability of the reporting period, we are concerned by the slow progress in the EU-facilitated dialogue. We all know that the future of Kosovo will be determined in Brussels, and not in this Chamber in New York. So it's vital that both sides re-engage and live up to their commitment to the Dialogue following elections in Serbia and forthcoming elections in Kosovo in June.

As Kosovo prepares to go to the polls, let me say that we look forward to free and fair elections and to a government that reflects the will of the people. Once formed, there is plenty to do; including continuing efforts on issues such as the Association of Serb Majority Municipalities. In that effort, they will have the UK's fullest support.

Mr President,

While not captured in the report from UNMIK, it's important to recognise in this Chamber the progress Kosovo has made internationally since we last met. Diplomatic relations were established with Brunei and Samoa, and Kosovo opened its first Embassy in Africa, in Senegal. And in a further sign of ever increasing international integration, Kosovo became the 181st member of the Worlds Customs Union; a move that will bring economic benefits for all who call Kosovo home.

This is progress that we rarely hear about in this Council. Instead, every three months, we are transported back nearly twenty years to a time of ethnic

division; a time of fluid lines on maps. But in truth, these lines have long since been set. These sessions do not reflect Kosovo as it is, but Kosovo as it was. So let me reiterate that it is long past time for the Council to decrease the frequency of these sessions.

And just as these sessions must adapt, so too must UNMIK, so that it better reflects the present situation. We recognise the important work that UNMIK has done over many years for the benefit of Kosovo, and we welcome its activism on the Women, Peace, and Security agenda during the reporting period. But it's time for the Mission to take a step back. As such, we are disappointed at moves to increase the budget of UNMIK this year, particularly after numerous calls in the past two sessions for a downscaling of the Mission, and especially given that additional funds are earmarked for projects that focus on issues on which EULEX is already engaged.

Mr President, given the pressures placed on the peacekeeping budget, and given Kosovo's continued move away from instability and insecurity, the United Kingdom thinks it is long past time for UNMIK to undergo some form of reconfiguration. We look forward to receiving proposals from the Secretariat in due course.

Thank you Mr President.

Plans put forward to develop teachers' leadership skills – Kirsty Williams

Updating Assembly Members on plans for a new National Academy for Educational Leadership, Kirsty Williams set out how the new organisation will be arms length from the Welsh Government with the ambition of preparing all leaders in the Welsh education system with the right skills and knowledge to benefit pupils.

The former chief inspector for Estyn Ann Keane has been working with a range of experts to look at how the academy can be established. Her 'shadow board' has made a range of recommendations, including:

- Allowing fair access for teachers to develop their leadership skills.
- Using the latest evidence and research on how leadership in schools makes a difference.
- Developing current leaders in schools while identifying future leaders.

Kirsty Williams said:

“The quality of our education system cannot exceed the quality of our teachers and leadership is central to this.

“Our challenge, as noted by the OECD, is to ensure a national approach to leadership, and make it a prime driver of our education reforms.

“The evidence shows leaders in our school can make a huge difference. I want us to have the right leaders with the right skills to raise standards and set the highest expectations for all our young people.

“I have instructed officials to start scoping the timescale and resources needed to establish the Academy by spring 2018 at the latest. I expect this to be an agile organisation with a small strategic board and led by a chief executive.

“I want to thank Ann Keane for her work as we set up the academy. In a short space of time Ann and shadow board have made good progress on this issue.”

Ann Keane said:

“I am very pleased that the Cabinet Secretary has accepted the recommendations of the shadow board. They are the result not only of our deliberations but of engagement with head teachers and other leaders in the education sector across Wales and an understanding of what happens in other countries.

“We will be sharing more detailed proposals for the Academy in meetings around Wales over the next few weeks to make sure that what is planned for the Academy enables equity of access to high-quality leadership development for leaders and aspiring leaders who work in education sectors in Wales, for the ultimate benefit of learners.

“The Education Secretary wants the academy up and running by 2018. The body is part of a range of Welsh Government reforms including changes to initial teacher training, proposals to revamp teaching standards and new accreditation criteria for initial teacher training providers.”

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SNP.

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Law to improve and protect the health of the nation is passed

Welcoming the passing of the Bill, Minister for Social Services and Public Health, Rebecca Evans said:

"This is a landmark day for public health in Wales. The Public Health (Wales) Bill is a radical piece of legislation which will improve and protect the health and wellbeing of the nation.

"Once law, the Bill will make a real difference to people in Wales. Children will be protected from the harms of second hand smoke and the dangers of intimate piercing; better planning of public toilet provision should mean older people, people with disabilities, and people caring for young children won't be put off leaving the house; while anybody undergoing a special procedure will be able to have confidence that the person carrying it out has safe working practices.

"All of us will benefit from the requirements on public bodies to assess how their decisions will affect people's physical and mental health, and the move to make the planning of pharmacy services more responsive to the needs of communities.

"I would like to thank all of the partners who worked with us to develop the Bill, and Assembly Members, whose constructive scrutiny has strengthened the final legislation. This radical new law will have a significant, lasting positive impact on health in Wales."