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## **UNMIK and Sweden sign Memorandum of Understanding on Repatriation**

PRISTINA – Principal Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Kosovo (PDSRSG) Larry Rossin and the Swedish Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy, Barbro Holmberg, today signed a Memorandum of Understanding on issues relating to repatriation of refugees and failed asylum seekers from Sweden to Kosovo.

Addressing the media during the signing ceremony, Rossin said, “This is not a new agreement; it is an additional agreement to one that we have already with Sweden since late 2004. Given the good and effective cooperation we have had with Sweden in facilitating the return of people from Kosovo who now are able to come back to Kosovo, we were able to change this agreement in order to ease the process and to shorten the period of advance notification that allows people to return.”

“This is a tribute to the progress in Kosovo,” Rossin said, referring to the advances in the security situation and stabilisation of the social environment in Kosovo that makes it possible for more people to return in a quicker period of time. At the same time, he said: “It is important to realize, as we do, that the situation in Kosovo is still not completely stabilized. There are still areas in Kosovo where return of people who had to leave overseas in earlier periods is difficult.”

“However, what we are increasingly going to need to do is to distinguish between people who had to leave Kosovo during periods of conflict, who may have specialized circumstances making their return a complicated process; and people who are still leaving Kosovo from communities that are stabilized in the meantime and who should be able to return to Kosovo in a more efficient process,” he added.

The PDSRSG expressed appreciation for Sweden’s leadership in placing human rights at the forefront of its asylum policy. More specifically, he noted: “Sweden has been a very generous recipient of people from Kosovo who have had to leave Kosovo during periods of conflict to find refuge from violence and oppression. Sweden has also been a generous donor in Kosovo to creating better conditions that can allow the return, not only of people from third countries, but also internally displaced persons.”

The Memorandum of Understanding signed today provides a platform for structured future cooperation between UNMIK and Sweden on voluntary repatriation as well as on forced returns of rejected asylum seekers.