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## SRSJ Joachim Rucker addresses the UN Security Council

PRISTINA – Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Kosovo (SRSJ) Joachim Rucker, in a closed session of the UN Security Council today, provided an update on progress in Kosovo. President Fatmir Sejdiu accompanied the SRSJ in the Security Council.

“The past few months have provided for a dynamic political period in Kosovo,” Mr. Rucker said. He observed that the UN Special Envoy’s proposal for the status of Kosovo presented on 2 February has been “generally well received” by the Kosovo Albanians and welcomed by the Kosovo Negotiation Team. “The primary focus has since been on the proposal’s decentralization provisions, granting additional competencies to future local authorities,” he said, and added: “This is generally viewed by the Kosovo Albanians as a difficult but acceptable compromise to accommodate the Kosovo Serb minority population.”

On the other hand, the Kosovo Serb reaction to the proposal has been generally negative, in line with the views expressed by political leaders in Belgrade and largely neglecting the proposal’s comprehensive provisions to protect Kosovo Serb rights, interests and identity, such as decentralization and protective zones for religious and cultural heritage sites.

“Not without success, the political leaders are intensifying efforts to reach out to Kosovo Serbs and reassure them that the status proposal contains a host of arrangements carefully designed to fully protect their rights, interests and identity,” Mr. Rucker said. “The Kosovo Albanian leaders of the Pristina Negotiating Team, which includes leaders of the Opposition, have made significant efforts to encourage patience among the population, and have made consistent calls for maintaining calm and trust in the process,” he added.

The SRSJ expressed his concerns about the potentially destabilizing effect of any delay in the process that could make a sustainable solution impossible.

Mr. Rucker assessed sustained commitment by the Kosovo institutions to standards implementation in a range of priority areas, including in areas of vital importance to minorities. “The political will of the PISG to implement reforms remains steady, and putting these reforms in the context of integration into the European Union has now been a powerful impetus to further progress,” he said.

However, the SRSJ noted that in too many cases efforts at implementation have not been translated into improvements in the living conditions of the Kosovo Serbs. A major reason for this is the unwillingness of many Kosovo Serbs to participate in the institutions or accept the opportunities offered by the government and municipalities.

“All too often, their non-participation in the institutions appears linked to the stance of Belgrade, which has continued to threaten Kosovo Serb civil servants with cutting off their salaries if they remain on the legitimate payroll of the PISG,” Mr. Rucker said, “Belgrade has continued to make statements discouraging returns and politicising security incidents, which

creates an objectively unjustified climate of fear and demonstrates continued lack of respect for UNSCR 1244. I once again urge the Representative of the Serbian Government to support the participation of the Kosovo Serbs in the PISG.”

The SRSG stressed that everyone in Kosovo deserves clarity about the future, to have the certainty of knowing where they stand and what their position is in relation to the institutions that organise their society. “The Kosovo Serbs need this clarity in order to gather the strength to take the decision they must take: to accept the hand extended to them by the Kosovo institutions and become an engaged part of Kosovo’s society,” he said, “The Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo’s other communities also need clarity on status to feel secure that the future they and their leaders are building is permanent and is sustainable after nearly eight years of international administration.”

Mr. Rücker concluded that keeping momentum in the status process would allow the international community “to take advantage of a window of opportunity”. He expressed trust that the Security Council’s “continued engagement will ensure that this opportunity to stabilize the whole region and remove the obstacles for its journey to Europe will not be missed”.