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United Nations Mission in Kosovo

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## **SRSG Søren Jessen-Petersen visits Štrpce/Shtërpçë Municipality**

PRISTINA – SRSG Søren Jessen-Petersen, accompanied by DSRSG for Pillar IV Joachim Ruecker, today paid a visit to Štrpce/Shtërpçë Municipality. The main focus of the visit was to address the economic situation of the Municipality and its potential for development, especially in the areas of tourism and industry.

They met the Municipal Assembly President, his Deputies and Assembly members. Addressing the Assembly, the SRSG told members that Standards were “a matter of designing a society where the rule of law is observed.” The SRSG praised the President for setting an example of leadership in doing much for the municipality, and added that “it is very clear that there is no future for a society that is not multi-ethnic.”

Mr. Jessen-Petersen also told Assembly members that important progress had been achieved in the investigation of the killings of the two young Serbs in late August, noting that this was made possible through the co-operation of Kosovan citizens.

Also, during the Assembly session, DSRSG Ruecker used the opportunity to announce that the KTA had been able to convince the European Union to provide funding for reconstruction work to be done at the area’s ski resort. A tender had already been secured and he hoped that the repairs agreed on could be completed by the beginning of winter.

Later on, the SRSG met a group of internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in Štrpce/Shtërpçë. They expressed concerns about property rights and the SRSG noted that of the “98 per cent of decisions made by the Housing and Property Directorate (HPD) only 40 per cent had been implemented so far”. He agreed that much more needed to be done to resolve the issue. He further said that, in efforts to protect both legal owners and illegal occupants, many of whom were otherwise homeless, UNMIK was working with the HPD on establishing a rental scheme. Among other concerns raised by the IDPs were privatization of socially owned enterprises and their inability to access their documentation in their hometowns.

The SRSG also met officials of the INEX tourism company and paid visits to the Serbian Orthodox Church in the area, the local community TV station Herc and the dairy factory in Lahor.

On his way to Štrpce/Shtërpçë, the SRSG stopped at the site of the Memorial destroyed earlier today in the area. He condemned the destruction in the strongest terms. “Such acts do not help for the future... Violence is not the way forward”, said the SRSG, adding that Štrpce/Shtërpçë needed “peace to go on with its economic progress”. The SRSG further urged every citizen of Kosovo to condemn the act and expressed satisfaction that the Municipality President had immediately done so.