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Press Conference by UN Special Envoy for the Future Status Process for Kosovo Martti Ahtisaari, in Pristina

Martti Ahtisaari: Ladies and gentlemen,

I have just met with the Team of Unity and submitted to the members my proposal for a Kosovo status settlement and I have informed the Unity Team how I plan to proceed in the weeks to come.

The aim of the Settlement is to lay the foundations for a future Kosovo that is viable and stable, a future Kosovo where members of all communities – Albanians, Serbs and other communities – can live a dignified, safe and economically more sustainable life, and a future Kosovo which contributes to the security and stability of the region.

To that end, the Settlement lays out specific provisions for the protection of non-Albanian communities, including their guaranteed representation in the Kosovo Assembly, the Government and the Judiciary. A number of new Kosovo Serb majority municipalities will be established with additional competences, in particular in the areas of education and public health. More than forty key religious and cultural sites will have Protective Zones to ensure that the Serbian Orthodox Church will remain a living religious community.

Everyone in Kosovo agrees that the dire economic situation needs most urgent attention. The Settlement outlines provisions designed to promote sustainable economic development, including Kosovo's ability to apply for membership in International Financial Institutions.

Recognizing the need for a continuing international involvement in Kosovo, the Settlement proposes the establishment of an International Civilian Representative to supervise the implementation of the Settlement, and KFOR will continue to provide a safe and secure environment by supporting Kosovo institutions for as long as necessary.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this proposal is the result of one year of intensive negotiations with the parties: in the course of last year, UNOSEK held 15 rounds of direct talks between Belgrade and Pristina negotiating teams, and our experts visited Belgrade and Pristina 26 times to talk separately to the parties on various issues. The last meetings took place in Belgrade on December 10th and here in Pristina the following day.

We have also consulted extensively with key international partners, and of course in particular the Contact Group, the EU and NATO. They have been involved in every step taken and they have been supportive throughout the process.

Given the intensive consultations over the last year, the Settlement package that I have presented to both parties today represents a compromise proposal. Nevertheless, in the coming weeks, we intend to engage the parties in further consultations. I am prepared to consider constructive amendments and I am willing to integrate compromise solutions that parties might reach.

This consultation phase is important. I want to give both parties the chance once again to make their points. I will then finalise my Settlement proposal for submission to the Security Council. At that stage I will also elaborate on the status issue.

I thank you.

Questions/Answers

Fatmir Aliu, Koha Ditore: *Mr. President, by letting Serbia keep directly or indirectly part of Kosovo, do you think that you are awarding it for ethnic cleansing?*

No.

Fatmir Aliu, Koha Ditore: *Directly through the new municipalities, with creation of new municipalities and 40 protection zones which have been required in your proposal, do you think that you are awarding it for the ethnic cleansing that happened in 1999, Sir?*

Martti Ahtisaari: No, I think for everyone whose task is like mine — to present the plan for the settlement of a status issue — we have to look at the situation on the ground. And as I said this is a compromise. We have engaged in the lengthy negotiations in Vienna. And we have to be careful in using this sort of terminology, because many things have happened in this society that should not have happened. I hope that as a result of this process, we can make a new beginning. It will take some time. I think we have to be realistic as well that to talk about Kosovo as a model multi-ethnic society will take a long time, but it is important that we make a beginning. Thank you.

Tina Kraja, Associated Press: *Mr. Ahtisaari, do you feel you have exhausted all the possibilities of reaching a compromise solution and when do you plan to present the plan at the Security Council?*

Martti Ahtisaari: Obviously, I haven't given up, because otherwise I wouldn't continue with this consultative process, which I hope to use [during] this month of February. We will see. I hope to get the parties to Vienna to start this process on that,

on the 13th. I have also offered that if Belgrade and Pristina would like to see my colleagues before that in case, in sort of clarifications on this lengthy document -- I think we have 58 pages at the moment -- for what it contains, not to start the consultations yet but to facilitate the consultative process, my colleagues are prepared to go to Belgrade and Pristina. So, I hope that we can carry out this in good spirits and see what the end result is. But at the end of the day, I will have to finalize my proposal to the Security Council, and I try to do that without any unnecessary delay.

Zivojin Rakocevic, KIM Radio: *Belgrade's plan is division and they have the silent agreement of Moscow and Albanian extremists on the ground. Will you agree to this solution and to see another ethnic cleansing in the Balkans?*

Martti Ahtisaari: I sincerely hope what I said earlier already that no one, whether it's either in Serbia or here, would contemplate anything that would make this attempt even more difficult than it is, and therefore I think we have to move forward with the process. I sincerely hope that both Pristina and Belgrade will send their teams to talk in Vienna so that we can go through documents and see if there are any needs for any changes because I think it forms good basis for us to move forward.

Mark Modell, BBC: *Why you are so keen or have been so keen to avoid the word independence and is there any other destination?*

Martti Ahtisaari: Have you read the document already? I am sure it will be [made public]. We are not going to distribute it, but I think it is fair to say that we have given it to the parties and they can do what they like with it, and I think that a certain transparency is also important. It was also distributed today to members of the Security Council, by the German Presidency to all EU member states and by NATO to all North Atlantic Council members. Please read it. I advise you to do so. I think it is only fair. Somebody asked me the other day in Vienna: "Why didn't you print it, make a proper public document?". I said this is not final yet, and I think it's only fair that I am very clear on the status issue when I finally present the document to the Security Council. I am quite comfortable with this process, which has the support of all those whose support I need.

Christian Jennings, Daily Telegraph (London): *Mr. Ahtisaari, given that overall strategic and operational performance since June 1999, how confident are you that KFOR can maintain the safe and security environment here?*

Martti Ahtisaari: Let me put it this way: I am today much more confident than I might have been then, because the whole operation was starting. I had a meeting when I arrived here today with the SRSG and COMKFOR and I think that they are extremely supportive of what we are trying to do and I want to thank them for the excellent work they are doing here.

Unidentified journalist: *Mr. Ahtisaari, you said that consultations will continue and that this is not the final document, however this is a good basis for a good solution. Will the document that you have prepared make Kosovo an independent state? Yes or no?*

Martti Ahtisaari: When we were planning this trip this time there was a lot of discussion of whether I should I have a press conference at all. But I said, look, I'd better face the music and the questions. You will not get me to answer even if – I hope you will start asking some other questions. I said very clearly that there will be a clear definition of status when I submit my proposal to the Security Council, hopefully sooner than later. But we have decided to carry out this consultative process and before that is done you will not hear me saying — there may be others who may talk left, right and centre – but you don't hear me saying, and it is my responsibility to clarify that issue as well in due course. Bear with me, I don't like my position at the moment very much but I have to live with that. So, feel some sympathy for the poor fellow who is sitting on this side of the table.

Stojan Ivanovic, Beta Agency: *Mr. Ahtisaari, when you spoke of about 40 protective zones around religious sites, can you be more precise? Can you explain, is it about protective zones around live churches and monasteries or it is about protective zones around destroyed churches?*

Martti Ahtisaari: I yield to my distinguished colleague Albert Rohan on these issues, so you can get a detailed answer on that.

Albert Rohan: First of all, what is a protective zone? It is not a security zone. It is a zone around some of the most important religious sites here in Kosovo, which will not change the property involved of the land involved but will restrict certain activities, commercial, industrial activities, in order to safeguard a quiet religious life for the specific religious site, and also taking into account the cultural and the natural environment. For the most important of these sites, in particular the monasteries, an expert team consisting of us, our people, but also Council of Europe, UNESCO, with the participation of the Church, have established certain zones, piece by piece, site by site. They are different, according to the requirements. And there are others, about 20 or more of these sites, which have been specifically marked by this team. And the others, in particular those churches in town where you cannot have large zones, so there are zones of 50 metres and of 100 metres, and another over 20. So more than 40 sites have these zones which are different in size. Thank you.

Voice of America: *President Ahtisaari, we know that you don't want to talk or to get into that discussion, but that is what we are mostly interested in.*

Martti Ahtisaari: I know.

Voice of America: *Can you confirm that there are very clear significant elements in your proposal for the Kosovo statehood? Or better to say, are you proposing the independence of Kosovo from Serbia but not its full independence from the international community, if we can say so? And a very, very short follow up: Who are the Serbs that are willing to see you today here? Who confirmed and who refused to see you today in Pristina? Thank you.*

Martti Ahtisaari: First let me start with the latter one. We invited a long list of Serbs from different parts of the country. I also invited the representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church to come and see me and other non-Serb and non-Albanian community representatives, whom I normally saw when I came here. I simply wanted

to make myself available for them, that was the whole idea behind. So I can't answer your question. Not everyone that I have extended an invitation — I wanted to have a full coverage so that we could brief them on what we are doing. But I am thankful to those who have come, and I take it.

I am not going to start interpreting, you have to read the document yourself and draw your own conclusions. Bear with me, I made the decision to have this consultative process that meant that I had to refrain on the status issue before the final document goes to the Council but I want to assure you that there will be absolute clarity on that issue. But I can't be drawn, there is no point of asking that question because I have been around too long that you cannot drag me into that. I am sorry, and I said to some of my friends that I appear like an idiot here in front of you, but I am paid to do that as well.

Matt Robinson, Reuters: *Mr. Ahtisaari, Serbian President Boris Tadić says he cannot accept your plan, and Russia has repeated many times that it supports Serbia's stands. Do you have any words of advice for Russia and for the other Security Council members when they come to consider you package and to draft the Resolution?*

Martti Ahtisaari: First of all, have you seen the statement made by President Tadić?

Matt Robinson: *Yes I did.*

Martti Ahtisaari: You have. I think it's slightly more nuanced than you imply, but that's your task also to make it less nuanced. I hope you have also seen the statement of the Contact Group today. If you haven't, I want to read it. This is a joint Contact Group statement:

'On 2nd February 2007, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari presented his Draft Comprehensive proposal on the Kosovo Status Settlement to Belgrade and Pristina. The Contact Group encourages both Belgrade and Pristina to engage fully and constructively with the Special Envoy in this phase of the process. The Contact Group expects both parties to demonstrate responsibility, flexibility, and recognition of the need for realistic compromise-based solutions so that the process is brought forward on the basis of the UN Security Council resolution 1244.'

I don't think I have – of course there have been statements by the EU Presidency, - Germans have made a statement - I have seen the American statement so far, British statement, I don't think I have managed, while running from one meeting to another, to see all the statements, but I think there is strong support for this process that I am engaged in.

Unidentified Journalist: *Mr. Ahtisaari, Does the new round of negotiations between Kosova and Serbia, could change the political part of the package, I mean the Kosovar leaders may insist on independence?*

Martti Ahtisaari: We will see. I am not terribly optimistic on that score because, let's face it, the positions of the parties are extremely clear on both sides. On the status issue, I think it may be an overwhelming exercise. But there are practical issues

that, as I have said, issues dealing with decentralisation, protection of cultural and religious heritage, economic issues, protection of different communities, there are many, many other areas here. So there are still issues that we should go through, but everyone understands also what is there. But on the main issue, I think that might require so much time that I don't think I have years in my life to achieve that. I'll be 70 this summer.

Unidentified Journalist: Sorry, another guy has already asked my question. Thank you.

Ives Izard, Radio France: [Speaking in French] Can you tell us in French? No, you don't speak French?

Martti Ahtisaari: No. That's why I have a deputy. Because if I am ignorant, I have an excellent deputy who is in a position to answer your question. So go ahead.

Ives Izard, Radio France: Can you explain to us precisely where we stand, according to the document, on the process of independence for Kosovo?

Albert Rohan: [in French] As was explained by Mr. Ahtisaari, at this stage, we do not pronounce ourselves on the status issue itself. This time will come when Mr. Ahtisaari presents his document to the Security Council.

Martti Ahtisaari: That was excellent and I agree with him.

Unidentified Journalist: Mr. Ahtisaari, does your proposal conclude the status of Kosovo or whether we need to embark on a different process?

Martti Ahtisaari: My task as a Special Envoy of the Secretary-General is to make a proposal to the Security Council at the end of this process and, yes, I have to make the proposal. I am duty bound to do that. Now we have to – and that will be done after these consultations are over.

Unidentified Journalist: Perhaps I am repeating one of the questions. You've been involved in negotiating this conflict for many, many years. When would you like to see the "Resolution 1245" adopted by the Security Council? What is realistic and what would you like to see time-wise?

Martti Ahtisaari: 1244? Ah. Of course the older you become the more impatient you become, and I perhaps share this with the audience here as well, but we Finns are patient as well, so we have to go through the motions. But we are now approaching the final phase of this process and I can't foresee how long the matter will take in the Security Council. I hope the Council can agree on the resolution as soon as possible when my plan is there, but that's why it is important that my proposal goes to the Council so that it starts actually the process that hopefully leads to – I don't want to have any unnecessary or artificial delays of this.

Please go ahead.

Unidentified Journalist: Mr. Ahtisaari, do you expect that your final proposal for the Security Council would be unanimously supported by all Security Council members, or otherwise, would you be happy because you couldn't convince Pristina and Belgrade to sit together and to discuss this plan?

Martti Ahtisaari: First of all, we should not draw any conclusions that we don't get the parties to come to Vienna on the 13th, I hope they do. We have nothing final yet, so I can't tell you, but invitations are out now. I've left the invitations to Belgrade and Pristina as well. So we will see. Of course I hope that there is as much support in the Security Council as possible. I must say that I have been impressed of the fact that despite perhaps slightly different emphasis in the Contact Group that the Contact Group has been able to be united, and again has come up with a joint statement, like today. It's a clear indication that Contact Group members, which include four permanent members and Germany and Italy, Germany being the current president of the European Union, that they had been able to be united in urging those parties to come to these consultations. Let's not overlook that. Whether it can be entirely unanimous, we have to see. I can't look at the crystal ball and I don't want to engage in speculation on these sort of issues. I try to do my work and then I expect the Security Council members to do theirs.

Zana Efendija, RTV21: Mr. Ahtisaari, in what way will the package be published, because we know that 90,000 euros are at disposal. In what way will the package be published in the media because as far as I know there are at the disposal some 90,000 euros?

Martti Ahtisaari: I must confess that I do not understand who has the 90,000. I congratulate whoever has it. But for what purposes, is it in the Government budget or where? I can only say that when we have given these to the parties, I think there is going to be an open process. That is what I have understood, and it is being printed already and I think it will be made available for the media by the Unity Team. We simply have only given it to those entities that I said. So I think we can assume that it is going to be a public document, and it can be discussed and debated in different forums. Then, today hopefully, it should be available on our website.

Hua Jiang (Ahtisaari's spokesperson): The website is www.unosek.org so the fact sheets and the executive summary are available on the web, thanks.

Martti Ahtisaari: Fact sheets are there on different topics, it is not a one to one. I am sure that you have both, but it is going to be available there in English, in Albanian and in Serbian, so you should visit the website. We have tried to facilitate this process as much as possible.

Vision Plus-TV (Albania): Mr. Ahtisaari, your mission seems to have been concluded on the 2nd of February. I would like to ask you, how much do you believe in the long-term stability of Kosovo? Thank you very much.

Martti Ahtisaari: I want to dispute your conclusion: my mission is not concluded today, we are starting the final phase of consultations. And the whole idea behind the proposals is clearly to create a stable society, a stable society that will contribute to the stability of the region – that is behind the whole exercise.

Ilir Krasniqi, Kosova Sot: Can you tell us please, or to be more precise, when will you submit your proposal to the Security Council?

Martti Ahtisaari: I cannot give you a firm date because of the consultative process. I would like to utilize the whole month of February for that. Then we will have, hopefully, a separate meeting at a slightly higher level, then I have to finalize that. But I would be extremely happy, to put it that way, if I could get my proposal in its final form to the Security Council before the end of March. You will see later whether I succeed or not.

Hua: I am afraid we are really running out of time. We have got two more meetings to come, so I can only take two more questions?

Unidentified journalist: Why do you avoid answering the question on division of Kosovo, is it or not division of Kosovo?

Martti Ahtisaari: With all due respect, no one has asked me so far about the division of Kosovo, so you are the first one, and there I have to go back to the original statement of the Contact Group that they will not accept any partition of Kosov. This is the very clear guideline. If four permanent members in a Contact Group plus Germany and Italy say this, than we better take it seriously.

Unidentified journalist: Could you describe the extent and limitations of the application of double majority, which some opponents to the plan in Pristina are presenting as a way for the Serbian minority to block independence. I mean are there limitations on the application of that?

Martti Ahtisaari: Yes, it can't be used, in that sort of, it is limited and I will ask Albert Rohan to add to that. Our lawyers are not here, but Albert Rohan can answer you more firmly, but it is clear it's only limited to those issues that are vital for the minorities

Albert Rohan: The whole purpose is that to prevent that those communities which are in minority in Kosovo should not be outvoted on matters which are of crucial importance to them therefore one calls it the vital interest clause, and what we say is that certain laws, for instance on the use of the language or on the protection of cultural heritage, or of local elections and others, and we have listed them in the document, can only be passed with this double majority. That's what it is.

Martti Ahtisaari: Once again my apologies that I have not answered your central question but bear with me I will come back and answer it.