



Joint Press Conference of UN Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Marie Guéhenno and SRSB Harri Holkeri

SRSB Harri Holkeri

I guess no introduction is needed for the guest standing here with me: you have been on his heels in the past few days.

He has had intensive internal and external meetings with people across ethnic and political spectrum. And he has also taken a field trip into in Kosovo and a trip to Belgrade.

I now would like to give the floor to Mr. Guehenno, Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General, Department of Peacekeeping Operations

I am very pleased to meet you today after five-day visit to Kosovo. This visit is really meant to show the strong commitment of the United Nations to the people of Kosovo, to support the hard work of the mission and of SRSB Harri Holkeri and his great leadership. I have spent more time probably in this mission than I usually do in any peacekeeping operation because this is indeed a crucial time and Kosovo is very much on the agenda of the Security Council and of the international community. I have tried to make the best use of those five days. I have met with, I would say almost with all segment of the society. I met with political leaders, religious leaders, I met the civil society and I also had the possibility to visit KEK, which gave me a sense of what needs to be done there, in a very crucial area, the production of energy. I went to Mitrovica. I went to a returns site. I also had the privilege of visiting a KPS police station fully staffed. And that was a very impressive experience.

With the SRSB we traveled to Belgrade, where we had very constructive discussion with the Prime Minister Kostunica. Let us not forget that Milosevic is no longer in power there and constructive engagement is possible, is actually necessary. I think the way the two working groups of the direct dialogue met a few days ago and is the very successful meeting that then took place, is an indication that constructive dialogue can indeed pay. As you know those two meetings were on very important but also very sensitive issues, one of the meetings was on missing persons and the other on energy. And other meetings will follow and this is an indication that we can make progress there too.

Coming back to my visit to Kosovo, I would say this is not my first visit. I was here for the first time four years ago. Progress is visible. It is visible in the functioning of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government. It is visible in the provision of security. Four years ago there

could not be security without a very strong and visible presence of KFOR all over the place and this is no more the case. And when one looks at the statistics of crime, the improvement is quiet remarkable. Progress is visible in the beginning of returns. Progress is visible in houses that have been rebuilt.

At the same time I don't think that any sound bite can catch the complexity of Kosovo. I wouldn't be realistic if I did not also acknowledge that much remains to be done. There are quiet significant challenges ahead of us. I would say that there is obviously the economic challenge, because one needs to build a sustainable economy. But there is, as a foundation of all that, there is the hearts and minds of the people. Some progress has been made there but it is clear that very big divides still remain. They are visible, for instance in the senior level of the civil service where there is still very few minority representation. They are visible in the perception of the people when you talk to them. And there a big effort is needed.

I think that's what the Standards are all about. And the implementation plan that we are working on with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government and all stake holders. The Standards are not some kind of artificial exercise; they are a goal in themselves. They are the way to make sure that indeed the hearts and minds do change. That Kosovo becomes a sustainable society where there is rule of law. Not just in the letter but in the spirit. Where the law is seen as the instrument to further human rights for everybody and where there is transparency, where there is more co-operation on returns, active co-operation to make returns happen. I think there is a lot at stake there and it goes way beyond political issues. It is the issue of a prosperous Kosovo, which retains its people, which attracts fine capital, which is a vibrant place, where tensions have subsided, where everybody can live with mutual respect, where there is trust, where all communities can feel comfortable and that they are respected.

I think that I would be dishonest if I did not recognize that there is still some hard work that needs to be done. But when I look on what has changed in the past four years that gives me a lot of hope, because the difference, the change is visible and if we continue on that trend and if we now with all our hearts and minds begin to change on that, I think that there is hope. My meetings with all the leaders of Kosovo and the commitment that they made when I talked to them, to work to that effect with the people of Kosovo, I think, is a real encouragement.

I would take any question that you would have.

Questions

Q: Mr. Guéhenno if you just could tell us is Mr. Holkeri in a good way going to fulfill Kofi Anan's wish to be the last SRSG in Kosovo? Is that a realistic prospect?

Mr. Guéhenno: I think that the international community has many challenges ahead. I mean I personally have to look after close to 20 missions around the world. So I think that everybody wants Kosovo to be a less in need of the international community. I think that SRSG Holkeri is helping Kosovo making tremendous strides. I think, as I said, in the coming period there is still a lot to be done. It is too early to tell what the situation will be 18 months from now, what it will be. I think what we have to look at is at the trend, there has to be gradual change and that's why every quarter the international community will review the progress made and what needs to be done.

Mr. Holkeri: I have announced that I would like to make myself unnecessary here. My announcement is still valid.

Q: Mr. Guéhenno, when can we expect the final document of the implementation plan for the Standards, since you are in charge in a lot of things around that document. And Mr. Holkeri, do you believe that your four-point for privatization will help the process for privatization to begin or will it block the privatization?

Mr. Guéhenno: I think that value of that plan is that it has to be discussed, it has to be like a government program. It has to reflect a serious effort of all those who will make it a reality and so sometime has to be given for that, but at the same time I think a lot of time has been given and I know that it is the intension of the mission to complete that exercise soon or later to publish the plan. And let me say a word on privatization. I want to say how much we support the forceful action taken by the SRSG with respect to privatization. Privatization is very important for Kosovo. But privatization has to be done in a fair and transparent way, so as to make sure that Kosovo attracts investments, that people are confident, that this is a transparent way, where there is the rule of law, including in the economic area. I can only applaud the actions of the mission in that respect.

Mr. Holkeri: May I add that the four-point decision made by me a week ago or eight days ago, is fully on track. The first 12 companies have now been privatized and the third wave is going to take place and I am quite well aware that there are difficulties ahead. But the most important thing is that now the privatization goes on and we may have an opportunity to take a closer look for the future actions, hopefully as soon as possible. But what the chairman of the KTA Board is doing is moving on what effectively now is for the benefit of the citizens of Kosovo. Of course the privatization in itself doesn't solve all the economical problems, but it is one of the best options we have.

Q: Mr. Guéhenno, what is your estimation of the work of Kosovo institutions? Do you think that Mitrovica is a success or a failure of UNMIK? Do you think that Mitrovica can fulfill the eight Standards? And Mr. Holkeri, when are you going to take a decision for the elections?

Mr. Guéhenno: On the institutions, I think that on the whole a remarkable progress in the efficiency and effectiveness of the institutions. When I look at the number of laws and important laws that have been passed, I think that's quite significant. At the same time I think still now there are situations where there is not enough respect paid to all the communities in the institutions. For an institution to work, it has to be clear that everybody is welcome at all times. I also believe that when it comes to municipality, some municipalities work well, some work less well and that is an important test too because the test is really for everybody to be able to work with parties or with communities which may sometimes have a different opinion. The capacity to work as coalitions is critical for the functioning of democracy. The capacity also to build a civil service that is impartial, that is neutral, that does not reflect one party or one community, that is very important for an effective government and for an effective administration. I think there, there is still progress that needs to be made.

On Mitrovica, you asked me if it is a success story or not. As I said, I don't think that any sound byte can catch the complexity of Kosovo. Yesterday's meeting with the six presidents of the Mitrovica region, I think that's a success the fact that the six presidents can meet and when I listen to their concerns, it was clear that economy is a unifying concern and there they have similar concerns. And I told them frankly, if you can come as a united towards the international community to defend the interests of the Mitrovica region, you have a much greater chance of succeeding. That if each of you pursues a specific community based agenda, the unity is not yet complete, far from it. When I compare Mitrovica today, and Mitrovica two

years ago, the difference is visible. Then the checkpoints existed, many of them have disappeared. The possibility to move around is much greater. At the same time it is not what it should be. Serbs are still very hesitant to go to the south part of Mitrovica. And Albanians move to some parts of Mitrovica in the north. And the Albanian buildings in north have some measures of protection next to their buildings. It is not a simple picture that one can describe in black and white. It is a gray picture. I think we can continue to make progress. We need to build capacities, we need to make greater effort and when I say, we I mean international community in support of the administrations in the Mitrovica region. We can make more progress, but it requires again a change in the hearts and minds of the people, if that change is not there anything that one can do remains a bit superficial. So my answer to you question is not a yes or no. It is a qualified recognition that there has been progress but that much more needs to happen.

Mr. Holkeri: As far as the question for election is concerned, you are kindly requested to wait a couple of minutes.

Q: To what extent are you concerned about the security of the UN staff?

Mr. Guéhenno: Well it has been very disturbing to see this series of explosives found in various places. We are with the UNMIK police, with the KPS, with the KFOR, we are obviously taking every information that we can have on such threats seriously. I think that we believe that for the moment the situation remains under control. But one can never exclude some isolated act and very dangerous acts. We are taking every precaution that we need to take, to protect our people, they are there to help and they should never be threatened.

Q: Is there freedom of movement in Kosovo for the Serbs?

Mr. Guéhenno: There again, the answer is not a no or a yes, I think it varies. I think that now there is improvement in the freedom of movement for instance in the Pristina Region. I am told that Serbs come to Pristina from neighboring places with less apprehension than they would have done in the past. At the same time I do know that for instance in Peja region, there is a lot of apprehension, and I was told by Serbs that they don't move much around the places where they are, which are really enclaves. And this is a source of concern for the international community to see, for instance, when it comes to returns. I went to a return site in 2002 when I was with the SG Kofi Annan, and as I told you I was again in a return site yesterday. I mean these two return sites, were both very isolated in the country side, and it is not quite a coincidence, its because in those isolated situations there was not too much friction and contact with the Albanian community, but these people don't move much around the place where they have returned and that is not right. That needs to change. I have to note with concern that the greatest number of murders, and the number of murders has gone down, but one murder is always one murder too much. The greatest number of ethnically motivated murders happen, for instance, in the Peja region, where there are communities close to each other. So the answer to your question is that there is some improvement in the freedom of movement, but we are far from the situation where we should be. And it's is fundamental to make decisive progress, we are far from where we should be.

Q: Which Serbs come to Pristina? *(Not clearly audible though).*

Mr. Guéhenno: I was told that, specifically for instance, Serb staff members of the mission and I also know that some Serbs come to Pristina discreetly, but they do come once in a while to Pristina. Some Serbs now have cars with the KS plates, which they would not have had

before. So there is some limited improvement there, and I think that's a reality that's been told to me by several people. But as I said this is far from enough compared what needs to happen, far, far from enough.

Q: What about the parallel structures? UNMIK says they are not acceptable, OSCE has made a very big report. What steps have been taken by UNMIK and UN authorities to dismantle them from Kosovo?

Mr. Guéhenno: We do believe that it is absolutely wrong to have different centres of power. Kosovo has to be administered by Kosovo and you cannot have different lines of reporting and we will stand firm on that. When I see parallel judiciary, for instance, that is something that is fundamentally wrong and it needs to change. We also have to make sure as those parallel structures disappear, that the capacities are there, when we talk about health, about education, we have to make sure that the provision of public services is available to everybody and to all communities. Otherwise it would be a bit hypocritical to attack parallel structures if those capacities are not available for everybody. So we have to work on both fronts.

Mr. Holkeri: We thank the Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. We are privileged that he has given more time to Kosovo than normally to any other peacekeeping operation. We are very grateful for that and it strengthens the good relations over the Atlantic. We are working together, we understand each other, if I could say better than before, even though our relations were very good.

I would now like to make an announcement.

There have been a lot of comments in the press about the elections. I have two announcements to make in that regard.

Firstly, I have decided on the election date: it is going to be on Saturday, 23rd October.

Secondly, I have decided to accept all the recommendations of the Election Working Group, including the one about the closed lists.

I have noted that some members of the civil society have supported the open lists.

But after extensive consultations, and keeping in mind the discussions in the Election Working Group, which worked for 18 months, in my considered opinion, the closed lists are the most appropriate option for Kosovo at this time.

Experience of open lists from 2000 elections showed that there were a lot of invalid votes because of confusion at the time of the voting.

The closed lists will ensure women's participation in the Assembly of Kosovo, which currently has one of the highest percentages of women representatives. In the 2000 elections, only 8% of women were elected in the open lists system.

And also as experience in some countries, including my own, shows that the open lists tend to favor those who have high public profiles.

That is the easiest way to go to the elections in a way already known to most of the Kosovars.

On another issue I would like to make one clarification: I have noted that some media reports mentioned that I had suggested in Belgrade on Friday that privatization should be one of the new topics for Pristina-Belgrade direct dialogue. That is not true. That's a falsehood. I would like to say this issue never came up during the discussions with the Prime Minister Kostunica on the day.

I would like to once again thank our honoured guest from New York and we will continue our deliberations when we meet next time. I think it will happen on the other side of the Atlantic. I would like to bring a(*inaudible*) of improvements from here in Kosovo to our friend in DPKO.