



Security Council

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Letter dated 15 April 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefing provided by Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, the Niger, Norway, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam in connection with the video-teleconference on “Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)” convened on Tuesday, 13 April 2021. Statements were also delivered by His Excellency Mr. Nikola Selaković, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and by Ms. Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 by the President of the Security Council addressed to Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council, which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, this briefing and these statements will be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Dang Dinh Quy**
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, Zahir Tanin**

I am pleased to be with you today and to brief you on essential developments during the past six months.

Against the systemic challenges of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, early legislative elections were prepared and successfully conducted across Kosovo on 14 February. Prior to the election, during less than a year and a half, three separate Governments held power in Kosovo. This fact alone helps to illustrate the amount of political turbulence that prevailed, which made the results of February's voting all the more significant for the population.

Turnout was high, including a nearly three-fold increase in voting among the diaspora. The winning party, Vetëvendosje, received more than half of all the votes cast. An examination of the demographics of the voting revealed a strong desire for change across Kosovo society. The expectations expressed were for a shift in the responsiveness of a Government to the real hopes and needs of its voters and for greater equality of opportunity, accountability and the rule of law.

Accordingly, expectations across Kosovo will remain as high as were the results. Throughout the past months, despite the limitations caused by the pandemic, I and my team have been engaged with many leaders in Pristina, as well as in Belgrade. Yesterday I met Kosovo's new Prime Minister, Albin Kurti, who shared with me the major priorities of his Government and assured me of his understanding of the strategic importance of advancing the dialogue with Belgrade. I spoke just this morning with Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić, who highlighted to me the importance of the dialogue for peace and stability and reiterated his hope that this dialogue should be intensified in order to produce results beyond those previously accomplished.

Emerging dynamics, including the requirement to elect a new President, contributed to the necessity of the general election, as the former President had resigned after his indictment by the Kosovo Specialist Prosecutor and the forthcoming trial at the Kosovo Specialist Chambers. Last week, Vjosa Osmani was elected President of Kosovo, becoming the second woman to hold this high office. Indeed, leadership by women continued to grow overall by this election, with 43 women, or 36 per cent, elected to the 120-seat Kosovo legislature. Kosovo's legislature thus joins others in the Balkans region by ranking at the high end of female elected representation. Women also now hold two of three Deputy Prime Minister positions and lead five of 15 ministerial portfolios.

I know, from my discussions in both Pristina and Belgrade, that each side is aware of how central the quality of their relations will be in achieving the aspirations of their constituencies for progress along the European path. Only a meaningful and sincere dialogue and forward-looking policies will evolve these relations and allow mutual interests to be met. Under the stewardship of the European Union, ample technical and political support stands ready for the continuation of the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue, aiming towards a comprehensive agreement. As many European and other international officials have done, I urge leaders to be mindful of the impact of their public statements. Gains to public trust in this process are as fragile as they are essential. With a strongly mandated Government now settled in Pristina, we should expect to see difficult subjects treated with seriousness and diligence.

As always, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) supports the process unequivocally, while at ground level we will continue

to work by all the means available to us to promote an environment conducive for progress.

As in other places throughout the world, Kosovo remains under relentless pressure from the spread of the COVID-19 virus. This latest reporting period witnessed two dramatic spikes in infections, one in November and another that just began in March and is continuing. Although additional containment measures were reintroduced, beginning just last week the running average of new infections is reaching its highest point since the pandemic began. As of today the virus is known already to have infected more than 100,000 people in Kosovo and has caused over 2,000 deaths, one of the highest per capita rates. As part of the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility scheme, a first delivery of 24,000 doses arrived in Kosovo at the end of March, marking only the beginning of a vaccination programme. It will be essential to accelerate vaccine-related support to Kosovo, given the alarming infection rates and the spread of more virulent strains of the pathogen.

Our Mission adjusted early to be able to continue operations, including by providing staff and families with around the clock, fully equipped medical support and testing. We will shortly be vaccinating all United Nations staff and dependents, thanks to strong support from the Secretariat. In line with these efforts, we have been in a position also to assist the authorities and especially vulnerable populations, including through the distribution of essential items. My communications staff helped to design United Nations-backed information campaigns, providing health-related information and news in non-majority languages, while the entire United Nations family in Kosovo has worked to channel assistance to health providers and institutions.

In accordance with our mandate, the Mission continues to engage on the ground across multiple sectors and areas of work, anchored by the agenda set forth during the United Nations-Trust Building Forum, held in 2018. These include programmes and projects to empower women and youth in politics and society, to promote innovation and catalyse civic activism and to expand multilingual education, to mention only a few. Through our youth, peace and security programme, we have continued to promote youth advocacy and cooperation, including sessions with officials from 19 ethnically mixed municipalities, and online campaigns by change-makers sharing experiences of the pandemic. We engage regularly with Kosovo authorities and civil society organizations on the monitoring, protection and promotion of human rights, as well as to promote accountability and effectiveness in the justice system. We carry on forging legal aid mechanisms for vulnerable communities, such as the UNMIK-supported Legal Aid Centre of the Kosovo Law Institute, which most recently opened a new branch in Mitrovica.

With the special importance and sensitivity attached to religious freedom and tolerance, we closely monitor all incidents affecting places of worship and work together with communities and authorities to ensure their safety. This is part of a shared responsibility for promoting inter-ethnic trust and reducing the risk of tensions.

In the COVID-19 context, we have developed systematic monitoring of the human rights ramifications of the pandemic as well as of the policies adopted to combat it. We urge the Government to make progress in clarifying the fate of missing persons through specific and active engagement with the Pristina-Belgrade working group on missing persons. We promote access to legal and medical services, alongside training and opportunities, for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and gender-based violence.

In each of those engagements, we rely upon an efficient network of complementarity and cooperation with international partners, among and beyond the United Nations family.

Kosovo's new Government faces great opportunities alongside great challenges. Prime Minister Kurti leads a strong majority Government. He has foreshadowed a people-centred approach to governance, stressing the advancement of justice, addressing endemic corruption and improving the social and economic outlook of all. No less, this equates to an important opportunity to transform public narratives, which have held hostage the aspirations of a new generation. Opening the door to the future requires a transformation and changing the priorities, which are reflected in both words and in deeds. Reducing tension also requires that ruling and opposition parties alike prove their capacity to cohere on wider interests.

The dialogue with Belgrade is not a formula imposed from without; it is a building block of progress that must come from within. As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, I have felt first-hand the public's frustration with the pace of change, as compared against the potential that exists for a future less burdened by nationalist sloganeering and ethnicity-based scapegoating. There is an opportunity at hand, and UNMIK remains committed to supporting the steadfast leadership needed to seize it. The voters in Kosovo raised their voices for breaking with the past, and I hope that the members of the Security Council will add their clear support for the realization of a more peaceful, more prosperous future in Kosovo and the region.

I thank the members of the Council most sincerely for their attention and for their continuing support for the work of UNMIK.

Annex II

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Geng Shuang

I wish to thank Special Representative Tanin for his briefing and to welcome Serbian Foreign Minister Selaković, whom I thank for his presence and statement at today's meeting. I listened very carefully to Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz's remarks.

The Kosovo issue is essential to peace and stability in the Balkans and to Europe as a whole. It is important that Serbia and Kosovo work within the framework of the resolution 1244 (1999) to find a solution acceptable to both parties through dialogue and consultation. In this process, Serbia's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity should be fully respected.

Over the past six months, relations between Serbia and Kosovo have been stable in general. Progress has been made in energy transmission and border management. China welcomes this positive development. Due to the political turmoil in Kosovo, dialogue between the two sides has been stalled since December of last year. China looks forward to the resumption of dialogue as soon as possible and appreciates the willingness on the part of Serbia for the talks. The results of the previous dialogue must also be implemented. Kosovo should follow the Brussels agreement and make effective efforts as early as possible to promote the establishing of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities. As the coordinator of the Serbia-Kosovo relationship, the European Union should play a facilitating role in that regard.

Strengthening unity among ethnic groups is the only way to achieve peace and stability in Kosovo. The coronavirus disease pandemic poses a threat to the health of people of all ethnic groups on both sides. Both parties should turn the fight against the pandemic into an important opportunity to strengthen unity and cooperation and achieve peaceful coexistence. According to the report (S/2021/332) of the Secretary-General, with the political turmoil, pandemic prevention and control was relaxed, leading to sharp increase in infections. When Serbia provided vaccines to an area in Kosovo inhabited by Kosovo Serbs, the Kosovo authorities reacted strongly, which came as a surprise. The international community should make sure that vaccines are fairly distributed and that vaccine gaps are eliminated. It should also make sure that there are no man-made obstacles to vaccination. We should reach as many people as possible without any barriers. Vaccines are important for people's lives and health. Extensive vaccination should be done in a way that helps increase mutual trust among all ethnic groups.

China appreciates the work done by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) under the leadership of Special Representative Tanin. We support UNMIK's continued efforts to perform its duties as a coordinator, as stated in its mandate. China also calls on relevant parties to fully protect the safety of United Nations personnel and create favourable conditions for UNMIK to perform its duties.

Just now, we discussed the relevant meeting arrangement for today. We regret that certain incidents happened today. The Chinese delegation respects your decision that today's meeting be carried out in an informal way, and the backdrop of the relevant party does not have any special meaning. At the same time, I wish to reiterate that the goal of the Security Council discussions on the Kosovo issue is to increase mutual trust between the two sides and promote a solution to the Kosovo issue within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999) as soon as possible. Creating confrontation and problems runs contrary to the intention of the Security Council's discussion on this issue and is not helping its resolution. We hope not to see any similar incidents in future.

Annex III**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson**

We would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing. We also welcome the Foreign Ministers of Kosovo and Serbia to their first Security Council briefing on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and thank them for the statements.

Estonia commends Mr. Tanin for leading the work of UNMIK in helping to ensure Kosovo's democratic development and advance regional stability in the Western Balkans. We appreciate UNMIK's support for women's participation in decision-making processes as well as for initiatives aimed at the youth and the fight against gender-based violence. We particularly commend the supportive activities undertaken by UNMIK in helping Kosovo's local authorities and communities to alleviate the challenges caused by the pandemic.

We welcome the formation of the new Kosovo Assembly and the Government as well as the election of the new Kosovo President. Now that all institutions in Kosovo have been formed, the European Union (EU)-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina dialogue should continue without delay. In this regard, we fully support the efforts of the EU High Representative, Josep Borrell, and the EU Special Representative, Miroslav Lajčák. It is crucial that in the end all open issues be solved. We encourage Serbia and Kosovo to engage more with the civil societies, in particular with women and youth, as they can significantly contribute to the solutions on the issues at the negotiation table.

We urge both the Governments of Serbia and of Kosovo to advance on their European path. This will require taking forward reforms, guided by the Stabilization and Association Agreement and the European reform agenda as well as regional cooperation. We hereby stress the importance of strengthening the rule of law, in particular the fight against corruption and organized crime, and the need to promote socioeconomic development.

Kosovo has shown continued commitment to the Specialist Chambers over the recent period. We support the work of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office. Full cooperation with these institutions remains essential as an important demonstration of Kosovo's commitment to the rule of law. We would like to highlight that the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo maintained its operational capability and continued its monitoring and advising as well as operational activities, even during the coronavirus-disease pandemic. As cooperation with the EU has become increasingly significant in Kosovo, we would welcome a strategic review of UNMIK in due course.

Finally, we call on Serbia and Kosovo to engage in good faith, in a spirit of compromise, and to work on reaching a legally binding comprehensive agreement on the normalization of relations, in accordance with international law and the EU acquis. Such an agreement would contribute to the stability of the region and be crucial for both to take further steps on their respective European paths.

Annex IV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of France the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière**

[Original: French]

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his presentation. I also welcome the participation of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Kosovo.

France welcomes the holding of the elections on 14 February in Kosovo, the formation of a new Government and the election of the President. Kosovo now has stable institutions, allowing it to respond to the challenges it confronts, in particular undertaking the essential reforms called for by the people. France and the European Union stand with Kosovo to assist it in meeting these challenges, from fighting the pandemic to the social and economic development of the country and strengthening of the rule of law, in particular the fight against corruption and organized crime.

The priority areas also include dialogue with Serbia, a question with implications for European security. France reaffirms its conviction that there can be no other path, either for Serbia or for Kosovo, than to come to a comprehensive, definitive and legally binding agreement. It is one of the conditions of European rapprochement for both Serbia and Kosovo. We fully support the efforts of the Special Representative of the European Union, Miroslav Lajčák. France is ready to provide its full support, as we did at the Paris summit of 10 July 2020, co-chaired by French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, which allowed for dialogue to resume after an interruption of 20 months. We call on the authorities of Kosovo and Serbia to seriously engage in the negotiations on the basis of the progress already attained, including during the year 2020 on issues of economic cooperation, displaced persons and refugees and missing persons. It is essential that all contentious matters be dealt with, including the most sensitive ones. We also wish to hear the Special Representative of the European Union, whose mediation role is based on a resolution of the General Assembly, soon brief the Council on his efforts.

We welcome the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). It helps promote security, stability, strengthened rule of law and respect for human rights in Kosovo and the region. UNMIK efforts must continue, in coordination with the initiatives of other regional and international actors, in particular the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. Those include in particular the fight against impunity for perpetrators of serious crimes. We call on all actors to continue to support and cooperate with the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and the Office of the Specialist Prosecutor.

In conclusion, I wish to underscore France's deep conviction that Serbia and Kosovo share a European future. The European Union is the leading trade partner, investor and donor in both countries. Its efforts to facilitate the conclusion of a comprehensive and legally binding agreement between Belgrade and Pristina will contribute to lasting stabilization in the Western Balkans and to European rapprochement for the two countries. We encourage the leaders of Serbia and of Kosovo to act as Europeans in seeking compromise. France will remain engaged on this matter, in support of the two parties and the European Union mediation.

Annex V

Statement by the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, T.S. Tirumurti

I would like to join other colleagues in thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zahir Tanin for his briefing on activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I welcome His Excellency Mr. Nikola Selaković, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia.

Let me begin by reiterating India's principled position of supporting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia. We believe all outstanding issues need to be resolved through peaceful negotiations.

We welcome the multiple rounds of expert-level talks between Belgrade and Pristina on financial claims and property since the resumption of the dialogue facilitated by the European Union (EU) in July 2020. While elections in the region and the coronavirus disease pandemic have had an impact on the talks, we are encouraged by the recent high-level meetings held by the EU Special Representative several weeks ago to establish the modalities for the continuation of dialogue. We hope that both sides will soon resume the EU-facilitated dialogue in good faith. It is important that both sides implement agreements already signed, including on the establishment of an association of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo, and find common ground to overcome disputed issues.

The question of missing persons is an important humanitarian issue, and we hope that, with the support of UNMIK, the authorities will be able to determine the fate of persons still missing. The voluntary and safe return of internally displaced persons and of refugees from other countries in the region is also essential in terms of confidence-building measures. UNMIK should continue, together with the other international presences, to encourage the Pristina authorities to address the problems of all communities.

We have taken note of the activities of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo during the reporting period.

In conclusion, I would like to express our appreciation for the fact that UNMIK has continued to implement its mandate of promoting security, stability and respect for human rights in the region. We call on all parties to fully cooperate with UNMIK and facilitate its work.

Annex VI

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason

I want to say welcome to both the Ministers, of Kosovo and of Serbia, who are with us today. This is the first opportunity that Ireland has had to address these issues since we joined the Security Council, so I want to begin by underlining Ireland's strong support for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

I would like also to welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/332) and of course thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin and his team for their important work and his briefing this morning.

As the Secretary-General's report sets out, and we have heard from several briefers this morning, Kosovo, like many of us, has had to face serious problems created by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic over the past year. We very much appreciate the valuable role UNMIK has played in supporting Kosovo in addressing those challenges — the procurement of medical supplies and personal protective equipment and expertise and through the assistance we know they give to the most vulnerable communities.

We attach particular importance to UNMIK's work on the promotion of gender equality in Kosovo, including through the women and peace and security agenda, as well as its engagement with young people through the youth, peace and security agenda and programme. We see this work as especially important right now given the increasing levels of gender-based violence in the context of COVID-19 — we have seen that right across the globe. We commend UNMIK's initiatives to support survivors from all communities in Kosovo. We also welcome that Kosovo has incorporated provisions of the Istanbul Convention into its legislation. What matters now is that this be followed up with the actual implementation of concrete policies.

Ireland welcomes the advances in the political representation of women in Kosovo — a female Minister is with us today — following the recent elections, where we know that the percentage of women elected to the Assembly exceeded the quota set in the general election law. The significant progress by women in the political arena must also see itself translated into the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peacebuilding in all its dimensions in Kosovo, including in the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue. In this context, we know that barriers faced by women need to be addressed in order to deliver sustainable and inclusive peace. We know the corollary is true: the involvement of women improves the prospects for that sustainable and inclusive peace.

The Security Council has a responsibility, we have a responsibility, to strongly support efforts to advance the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. The dialogue facilitated by the European Union (EU) has a particularly important role to play in this regard, and we fully support the efforts of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission Josep Borrell and of EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajčák in advancing this process.

A comprehensive, final and legally binding normalization agreement is essential for the European perspective of both Serbia and Kosovo and for wider stability in the region of the Western Balkans. Now that a new Government and President are in place in Kosovo, there is a real opportunity for renewed momentum in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. We urge that a concerted and a sincere effort be made over the coming months to progress the EU-facilitated dialogue.

Let us recognize it: domestically, the 2020 was a challenging one for Kosovo — both in terms of political turbulence and the impact of COVID-19 — but we hope that the coming months will see a reinvigoration of the EU reform agenda, in line with the findings and recommendations of the European Commission's 2020 Kosovo report.

The pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for Kosovo's rule of law institutions. Ireland strongly encourages the Government to take into account in all rule of law reform issues highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular with respect to vulnerable groups and their access to justice.

The people of Kosovo have voted for change and for an agenda of rule of law and anti-corruption reforms — we heard that this morning. We urge the new Government to build on the work already done and to deliver further progress in this area for all the people in Kosovo.

In this context, I also wish to underline Ireland's support for the Kosovo Specialist Chambers. The Chambers have important work to do. It is also key that the authorities in Kosovo adhere to their commitments to the court.

UNMIK has played an important role in assisting the people of Kosovo to build a peaceful and normal life and advance regional stability. We wish Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin and his team all the best in the next phase of their mission and look forward to further briefings of the Council on this issue.

Annex VII

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Michael Kapkia Kiboio

Kenya's delegation thanks Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zahir Tanin for his briefing on the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

Kenya commends UNMIK for the important role it continues to play in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo. We welcome its continued constructive engagement with Pristina and Belgrade as well as its multiple approaches to engaging communities, including through capacity-building programmes, conferences, round tables, workshops and other forums.

We further commend its support for the participation of women and young people in decision-making processes and cross-community dialogue. Indeed, the deliberate inclusion of women and youth in all aspects of the dialogue is critical to the attainment of sustainable development, peace and security.

Kenya appreciates the efforts of UNMIK, the United Nations Kosovo team and the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes aimed at containing and responding to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in Kosovo. We particularly commend the work being done in promoting public education, empowering women and youth to participate in preventive action and in providing assistance to vulnerable communities across Kosovo. We urge the international community to continue supporting these efforts, including by ensuring vaccine availability for all.

Kenya commends the successful February parliamentary elections in Kosovo despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We take special note of the high level of women and youth participation in the elections, which saw an increased proportion of women deputies, surpassing the established 30 per cent threshold, as well as the election by Parliament of Ms. Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu as President.

Kenya supports the European Union-facilitated dialogue, between Belgrade and Pristina. As noted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/332), lasting peace, stability and socioeconomic development in Kosovo and the region are contingent on sustainable progress in the dialogue. We are therefore encouraged by the statements issued by both parties on the importance of advancing the dialogue and urge them to explore all peaceful avenues for its resumption.

Annex VIII**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin for his briefing, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Selaković and Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz.

Mexico recognizes the important role played by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in stabilizing the region, facilitating confidence-building measures and providing assistance to vulnerable communities and ensuring their access to health care, as well as its work in responding to the health emergency due to the coronavirus disease pandemic and in promoting the full and effective participation of women and young people in peacebuilding.

We reiterate our support for cooperation between the United Nations, UNMIK and other international and regional bodies on the ground, such as the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force, within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999).

The peaceful settlement of disputes is a core principle that has been a historical priority in the Mexican diplomatic tradition. We therefore call on the parties to make dialogue the vehicle for the settlement of the final status of the Kosovo region, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 1244 (1999). We urge the parties to participate constructively in the dialogue facilitated by the European Union, through the Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and other Western Balkans regional issues, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, as that constitutes a fundamental space for discussing issues of mutual interest. Mexico reiterates that any peace process must include the full and effective participation of women.

We follow with attention the reports on the safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons. A political solution acceptable to the parties will allow progress in the efforts being promoted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in the return of the more than 200,000 internally displaced persons in the region and the implementation of reconciliation and reintegration initiatives and programmes, both in the Kosovo region and across the Balkans.

The strengthened rule of law and greater accountability are critical aspects in the prevention of human rights violations, conflict and violence, in inclusive development, and in reparations and reconciliation processes. They are catalysts for sustainable peace and prerequisites for respecting human dignity and the defence of human rights. In this regard, Mexico calls for full cooperation with all bodies and institutions mandated to address transitional justice issues, including the Kosovo Specialist Chambers, in the performance of their work.

We call on the authorities in the Kosovo region to work to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the population and the economy and to redouble efforts to consolidate the rule of law, combat corruption and uphold human rights frameworks and principles. Mexico encourages the parties to avoid actions that increase tensions, and to seek, constructively, without preconditions, by peaceful means and through dialogue, a mutually acceptable solution that contributes to respect for the rights of minorities and the maintenance of peace and security in the region.

Annex IX**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Niandou Aougi**

[Original: French]

I thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his excellent briefing.

My delegation has followed with interest the early parliamentary elections in Kosovo on 14 February 2021, which resulted in the election of new authorities in that country. In order to consolidate these achievements, it is important that appropriate measures be adopted to prevent any form of political instability and to deal with the negative effects of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), both of which hinder efforts to combat corruption and guarantee the independence of the judiciary.

I would like to acknowledge the key role played by international actors in the delivery of 100,800 doses of COVID-19 vaccine, which represents the first batch of the 720,000 doses needed to vaccinate 20 per cent of the population.

While the resolve of Belgrade and Pristina to engage in dialogue is to be welcomed, their differences over the principles and foundations of the negotiations remain a major concern. We therefore urge both parties to do their utmost to create the conditions for the normalization of their relations.

Furthermore, in accordance with resolution 1325 (2000), we welcome measures to promote the women and peace and security agenda, including initiatives aimed at the full and equal participation of women in the peace process and the possibility of appealing decisions by the Government Commission for the verification and recognition of the status of the victims of wartime sexual violence. Furthermore, in the context of the fifth anniversary of resolution 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security, we welcome efforts to engage youth in building peaceful and inclusive societies.

In conclusion, my delegation calls on the parties to engage constructively and strengthen confidence-building measures so as to foster stability and sustainable peace.

Annex X**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Mona Juul**

Let me first thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing. We welcome the opportunity to engage in this Security Council discussion, as Norway was among the first countries to recognize the Republic of Kosovo as an independent State, in March 2008. Now, today, we are pleased to commend Kosovo's institutions, political organizations and voters for organizing and holding legislative elections in February.

We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Prime Minister Albin Kurti on his election and the appointment of his newly established Government.

We note that the report from the Secretary-General (S/2021/332) describes slow progress in fighting political instability, including combating corruption and ensuring the independence of the judiciary. We therefore urge Kosovo's new leaders to capitalize on the momentum offered by the February elections and continue efforts to consolidate the rule of law, combat corruption and uphold human rights.

We also believe that this momentum should be used to engage fully in important high-level political processes, such as the European Union-facilitated dialogue with Serbia. We also encourage the parties to resume the dialogue based on the Brussels agreements through a mutually acceptable compromise. An agreement between Kosovo and Serbia on the full normalization of relations is key to avoiding a frozen conflict and to achieving economic development. This is paramount for the future development of Kosovo and of the region.

Norway will continue to work closely with European Union (EU) institutions, key States Members of the United Nations, and the United States to get the negotiations back on track. There is no alternative to the EU-led dialogue, and it needs our full support. We call on all parties to uphold their commitments in order to consolidate and engage constructively towards resolving the conflict.

Kosovo continues to wrestle with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis. While we are pleased to see that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has adapted its activities to meet these new challenges, the negative socioeconomic and political impacts of COVID-19 in Kosovo have been significant. We express support and sympathy with the Kosovo Government during these exceptional times, with the ongoing pandemic and the public sector facing severe challenges. We see worrying trends of growing unemployment, continued loss of income, setbacks in the health and education sectors and an increase in domestic violence.

Yet democratization, the strengthening of the rule of law, freedom of expression, protection of human rights, and the fight against domestic and gender-based violence continue to be fundamental for social transformation. This is why we welcome initiatives designed to address these issues, such as those jointly implemented by UNMIK, United Nations entities and other stakeholders. This also includes the activities the Security and Gender Group is carrying out to fight gender-based violence, ensure property rights and ease the impact of the pandemic on women and girls.

We know that women are the key to peace. We call on the parties to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all aspects of dialogue and peacebuilding. The increase in the number of women in parliament and in the new Government is an inspiration for further work and inspires the greater inclusion of women in the peace dialogue. In this respect, let me also take this opportunity to

congratulate Vjosa Osmani on her election as President of Kosovo. Norway looks forward to working closely with President Osmani and the newly consolidated Kosovo institutions.

Let me conclude by reiterating Norway's support for Kosovo and the EU-led dialogue with Serbia and for finding sustainable solutions based on the Brussels agreements.

Annex XI**Statement by the First Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Dmitry Polyanskiy**

[Original: Russian]

Before I start, I would like to draw attention again to the disrespect for the Security Council and its decisions shown by the Kosovo Albanian representatives, who were invited to join this meeting in their private capacity. As you have just mentioned, we had to postpone the open video-teleconference to discuss this situation because, among other reasons, the Russian Federation and the majority of other members of the Council do not recognize Kosovo as an independent State. That is why displaying the flag of this non-recognized entity is unacceptable. Ultimately, our meeting was able to be resumed on the understanding alone that video-teleconferences of the Security Council take place in an informal and provisional format that is not fully covered by the Council's rules of procedure. Accordingly, Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz's choice of background — be it a flag or a photo of the Eiffel Tower — is not relevant and creates no precedent for the future.

We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zahir Tanin for briefing us on the situation in Kosovo. We welcome the participation of Serbia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Nikola Selaković. We agree with his assessments and the concerns he expressed with regard to the situation in the province.

The Russian position in relation to the Kosovo settlement is principles-based and unchanging. The Kosovo problem can be solved only in the framework of international law, in particular resolution 1244 (1999).

We regret the lack of progress in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina under the auspices of the European Union, which was authorized to act as a mediator by a decision of the General Assembly (resolution 64/298). The main reason for this lack of progress is the unconstructive position Pristina has taken. Even though it has been 12 years since the Brussels agreements were signed, Kosovo Albanians have failed to recognize the futility of artificial ultimatums and of ignoring the obligations they had undertaken, central among which is the obligation to create a community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo. In addition, Kosovo Albanian leaders have recently started to refer more frequently to the possibility of a referendum on Kosovo integration with Albania, and to issue ultimatums demanding that Belgrade recognize Kosovo's independence and pay certain "reparations". As for the dialogue under the auspices of Brussels, Kosovars have put it on the backburner as a non-priority task.

We call on the European Union to uphold the principle of impartiality. It is unacceptable to impose any time frames or ready-made scenarios, exert pressure on Belgrade alone — despite its proven deal-making capacity, in contrast to Pristina, which is not ready for any serious dialogue unless fostered from the outside. In the same context, we stand against Kosovo joining international organizations as a member.

We are not greatly surprised that dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina is not moving forward because the domestic political situation in Kosovo is a never-ending series of crises, the most recent of which was the so-called parliamentary elections and their numerous irregularities. On a very far-fetched pretext, the Kosovar authorities suspended many pro-Serbian candidates from participation, including two incumbent members of parliament. In the meantime, 14 members of "parliament" with outstanding court convictions had found their way into keeping their seats. It took the movement "Self-Determination" three attempts and the active involvement of diplomats from "non-indifferent" States before it was possible to choose a "president". To what "triumph of democracy", in the words of some of our colleagues, could this actually refer?

Among positive developments, we note the work of the Specialist Court in The Hague with regard to military crimes, organ trafficking and crimes against humanity committed by members of the former Kosovo Liberation Army. All those guilty must be duly held accountable, despite all attempts of the Kosovo Albanians to discredit the Court's activity in order to deflect the hit from reaching their leaders.

The province of Kosovo remains home to many chronic problems, the most pervasive of which are corruption and organized crime. They appear to explain why Kosovo Albanian police officers, affiliated with the beating and detention of on-duty personnel of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) on 28 May 2019 — among them a Russian national, Mr. Krasnoshchekov — have not yet been held to account. This appalling attack must not be dismissed; otherwise, it could affect the safety and security of peacekeepers across the globe. The investigation needs to be carried out to completion.

The immaturity of Kosovo's political system entails the lack of progress in implementing essential reforms in the province. The coronavirus pandemic has undermined its subsidized economy. The level of youth unemployment is extremely high. Further, Kosovo is turning into a hotbed of militant Islamism whose malignant influence is spreading to neighbouring countries. The terrorist attack in Vienna in November 2020 shows that clearly. We must say that national radicalism has led to a growing number of attacks on Kosovar Serbs and other non-Albanians, as well as on schools and other social facilities, while the Kosovo law-enforcement institutions overlook it.

The issue of safeguarding the Serb religious and cultural legacy remains pressing for the province. We therefore would like to remind Council members that the responsibility for maintaining peace and security in this territory rests with the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo.

The return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their permanent places of residence has been at a desperate impasse for some time now. The authorities in Pristina make no efforts to preserve trust among the national communes that comprise the area. The situation with respect to the return to its lawful owners of Serb property usurped by Kosovo Albanians is absolutely unsatisfactory.

We have taken note of the so-called Kosovar Ministry of Defence's pledge to create a military base for the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) in the municipality of South Mitrovica. In this way, the KSF would gain a position on the territory adjacent to the north of the province and would oust all non-Albanian populations from the area, in violation of resolution 1244 (1999). This would create new threats for peace and security in the Balkans. Furthermore, such activity undermines the supervisory mechanisms in favour of regional arms control set forth under the Dayton Accords as endorsed by resolution 1031 (1995).

Another reason for concern is the news about KSF units and Camp Bondsteel, a military base that is situated in Kosovo, participating in NATO's Defender-Europe 2021 exercise. If KSF personnel take part in NATO military manoeuvres, that would help legitimize Kosovo's unapproved so-called army. It is worth mentioning that back in 2018 NATO condemned Kosovo's Parliament for adopting a legislative package aimed at transforming the KSF. In practical terms, however, NATO is increasingly involved in training Kosovo's militia.

In such unfavourable conditions, UNMIK's activity remains in high demand. We stand for keeping the Mission's budgetary and staffing capacities at current levels. We believe the frequency of open Security Council briefings on Kosovo should be maintained as negotiated. Moreover, we hope that the next report of the Secretary-General will reflect all the challenges that the province must face. The situation there remains volatile and requires the continued attention of the international community.

Annex XII

Statement by the Political Coordinator of the Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Isis Gonsalves

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines thanks the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his comprehensive briefing and for the commendable work that his Office continues to do in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo and the region.

We believe that UNMIK and the United Nations Kosovo team continue to play a vital role in Kosovo by addressing the challenges of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic through the adaptation of their programmatic activities. In this regard, we commend the Mission for implementing such initiatives to support the needs of the people of Kosovo, especially those in vulnerable communities.

My delegation reiterates the importance of encouraging the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all segments of the political process. We are pleased with the high level of participation by women and youth in the recent elections and the increased proportion of women deputies, in numbers that exceed the established 30 per cent quota.

Furthermore, the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina is critical for stability in the region. We therefore encourage the parties to resume talks under the European Union-facilitated dialogue and constructively implement existing agreements. We underscore the importance of strengthening the rule of law, and we encourage efforts in Kosovo to fight against corruption and organized crime and promote socioeconomic development.

As we conclude, we reiterate our support to Mr. Tanin and his team for their efforts in promoting a safe and secure environment in Kosovo. We encourage the recently elected authorities in Kosovo to make full use of the opportunity to address the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and socioeconomic development and to engage fully in the European Union-facilitated dialogue.

Annex XIII**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Tunisia to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic]

At the outset, I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Zahir Tanin, for his valuable briefing on the latest developments in the situation in Kosovo, and the Secretary-General for his report on UNMIK (S/2021/332).

I also welcome Nikola Selaković and Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz.

Tunisia is following with interest the various international diplomatic efforts to advance the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and reach a final agreement on Kosovo.

UNMIK plays an essential role, and my delegation appreciates the Mission's active contribution to the maintenance of stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo, and its constructive communication with Pristina, Belgrade, and the regional and international stakeholders concerned.

We note with satisfaction the Mission's efforts to build confidence among the various communities in Kosovo, such as the initiative to promote the online study of the official languages, Albanian and Serbian. We also commend its efforts, in conjunction with the United Nations Kosovo team, to help institutions to manage the health crisis resulting from the coronavirus disease pandemic by coordinating the responses of public health bodies and mitigating the economic and social repercussions of the pandemic, in particular for the most vulnerable populations.

Important political progress has been made in Kosovo recently. We note with satisfaction the resolution of the constitutional crisis after the early elections in February 2021, in which many women and young people participated, the formation of a government and the recent election of a new president. We hope that those developments will help to normalize relations and give impetus to the European Union-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina dialogue through the honouring of previous commitments, so that progress can be made towards a comprehensive political settlement.

My country supports the efforts of the European Union Special Representative in Kosovo and welcomes the series of meetings held in the region in March to prepare for the next round of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue after the formation of the Government.

We hope that the next round of the dialogue will be completed in the near future and will enable tangible progress on a number of important issues, such as the implementation of relevant agreements, economic cooperation, the return of displaced members of minority groups and the determination of the fate of the remaining missing persons.

Sustainable peace in the region continues to be dependent on the willingness of the parties concerned to adopt a final, comprehensive and binding agreement in which all outstanding issues are addressed. We therefore call on both sides to overcome differences and focus on ways of arriving at consensus solutions; the only way to reach a comprehensive political settlement and achieve the aspirations of the peoples of the region for security, stability and economic and social development is through constructive dialogue, concessions on both sides, the building of mutual trust, and reconciliation. We also call on the international community and regional organizations, particularly the European Union and the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe, to continue their efforts in this regard.

Annex XIV

Statement by the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations

Thank you to Special Representative Tanin for his briefing. Welcome to Minister for Foreign Affairs Selaković and Foreign Minister Gërvalla-Schwarz and thank you for your statements.

First, we want to applaud Kosovo's authorities and the people of Kosovo on the handling of the recent parliamentary elections and to congratulate them on the appointment of a new President, both reflecting the strong will of the people. The smooth conduct of the elections, the certification of the final results and the successful formation of a new Government shows just how far Kosovo has come and the strength of its democratic institutions. We note in particular that Kosovo has elected its second female President and that women now represent six out of 15 Cabinet Ministers, and 43 out of 120 members of the Assembly — real progress in gender representation that we hope will set an example to others in the region.

We note the concerns raised in the report (S/2021/332) about the difficulties experienced by candidates running in opposition to Serbian List candidates in some areas. These concerns were also reflected in the conclusions of the United Kingdom's own election monitoring mission. It is imperative that Kosovo Serbs have an opportunity to vote for a variety of candidates and to participate in credible elections.

On behalf of the United Kingdom, I welcome the formation of the new Government in Kosovo, and we look forward to a period of much-needed stability at a challenging time when Kosovo, alongside other nations, battles the health and economic threat of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In this regard, we are very pleased to note the commencement of vaccination programmes in Kosovo following the arrival of the first vaccine doses through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility. We praise the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo UNMIK (UNMIK) in assisting with the fight against COVID-19, particularly addressing the needs of minority communities through language resources. United Kingdom-funded work with United Nations agencies in Kosovo is further supporting the pandemic response.

We also welcome Prime Minister Kurti's commitment to addressing rule-of-law challenges in Kosovo and, as ever, stand ready to support Kosovo in that important work.

The new Government's popular mandate brings further opportunities for Kosovo to make progress. That includes commitment to the European Union (EU)-facilitated dialogue with Serbia under EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajčák. We encourage Kosovo and Serbia to continue working constructively towards a comprehensive and sustainable normalization agreement that will benefit the people of both countries.

As part of that process, it is essential that all parties work hard to address the legacies of the conflict. The work of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers is a significant part of that, but it is also important that both parties ensure justice for the victims of all crimes committed during the 1998-1999 conflict. This includes continued efforts to prosecute the perpetrators; support for victims, including those of conflict-related sexual violence; and working together on resolving issues, such as missing persons, that continue to impact the daily life of families in Kosovo and Serbia.

Once again, we call upon all those in positions of authority to refrain from inflammatory and derogatory language. Such rhetoric is disrespectful to the

memories of the victims of conflict and their families and does not contribute to the reconciliation that is strongly in the interests of all people of the region.

Kosovo has made huge progress since 1999, when resolution 1244 (1999) was adopted. UNMIK has played an important role in helping Kosovo to develop into a stable and inclusive democracy, but the conditions on the ground almost 22 years since UNMIK was founded are completely different. It is therefore time for a review of UNMIK's role and responsibilities to ensure that its mandate remains relevant and the Mission operates efficiently.

Finally, we welcome the appointment of Michael Davenport as the new Head of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission in Kosovo and wish him luck. We welcome the continued close coordination of efforts between UNMIK and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, notably on human and minority community rights.

Annex XV**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Richard Mills**

I thank Special Representative Tanin for his briefing. The United States appreciates the Special Representative's leadership and his dedicated support for the Republic of Kosovo, especially during the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease pandemic. We have had a long morning. I will attempt to be brief.

The United States wants to begin by applauding Kosovo for conducting free, fair and transparent elections in February that ushered in a new Government, which, as the Foreign Minister mentioned, reflects the will of Kosovo's population for reforms to strengthen peace, justice and prosperity in country.

We commend Kosovo's continued advances in promoting women's rights, including the Kosovo Assembly's adoption of a constitutional amendment that would give direct effect in national law to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. This is a milestone that underscores Kosovo's commitment to advancing the United Nations women and peace and security agenda and providing for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women at all levels of decision-making.

The United States looks forward to working closely with President Osmani, Prime Minister Kurti and the Government of Kosovo on our many shared priorities, including enacting reforms to increase Government transparency and accountability, fighting corruption, fostering economic development and normalizing relations with Serbia.

The United States fully supports the European Union (EU)-facilitated dialogue. With Kosovo's Government now formed, we welcome the EU Special Representative's plans to reconvene the parties in the near future. Progress has been made by the parties, although that might not be evident from our briefings this morning. Nevertheless, that progress has in turn contributed to improvements in the lives of citizens in both Kosovo and Serbia.

Similarly, the commitments made by Kosovo and Serbian leaders at the White House in September 2020 have strengthened the foundation for economic cooperation, development and normalization. We believe that there is much to build on and little time to lose. The United States therefore urges both parties to implement past agreements and to approach the resumption of dialogue talks pragmatically and productively, with the goal of concluding a comprehensive normalization agreement.

Finally, let me take a moment to say that the United States wants to reiterate its position that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has long since fulfilled its original purpose and should move towards closure. We call on our fellow Security Council members to sunset UNMIK and determine a more relevant role for the United Nations in helping Kosovo realize its full potential.

Let me end by congratulating Kosovo and Israel on establishing diplomatic relations. The United States looks forward to a deepening relationship between the two countries, through economic development and other forms of partnership, which will help further peace and stability in the Balkans and the Middle East.

Annex XVI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dang Dinh Quy**

At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing. I would also like to welcome the presence of Mr. Nikola Selaković, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, at today's briefing and thank him for his statement. I also take note of the statement to be made by Ms. Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz.

Despite the progress made, Viet Nam notes with concern the lack of implementation of agreements on key areas between Belgrade and Pristina, as reflected in the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/332) and Mr. Tanin's briefing. We regret the fact that, although talks were held at expert level, no high-level meetings were organized between Belgrade and Pristina within the framework of the European Union-facilitated dialogue.

At the same time, we are concerned over reports of the rising number of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases in Kosovo and its heavy impact on the socioeconomic situation in Kosovo. It is also regrettable that response to the pandemic has resulted in certain frictions between the two sides.

Viet Nam supports efforts aimed at a durable and comprehensive solution to the issue, in accordance with the fundamental principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and resolution 1244 (1999) for sustainable peace and development for all peoples in Europe.

We therefore stress the importance that both parties engage in dialogue and uphold their commitments to implementing the agreements in order to ensure security and stability in Kosovo. We urge both parties to push forward further dialogue, resolve their differences, join efforts to mitigate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure the livelihood and development of all communities in Kosovo.

In that regard, we recognize the initiatives undertaken by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), in coordination with the United Nations agencies and programmes in Kosovo, in maintaining continuity of operations, protecting its personnel and assisting the local authorities and communities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate UNMIK's approach to supporting local communities through various forums, conferences and trust-building projects. We encourage UNMIK to continue to fulfil its objectives and mandates in promoting security and stability in Kosovo.

We call on the international community to continue making efforts to help Belgrade and Pristina set aside their differences and reach peaceful, long-lasting solutions for the well-being of all communities and for peace and security in the region.

Annex XVII**Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia,
Nikola Selaković**

At the outset, I have no choice but to lodge a protest against the abuse of the video-teleconference format of this meeting on the part of the representatives of Pristina in order to promote the symbols of the so-called statehood of Kosovo. Despite the fact that the representatives of Pristina were warned on several occasions, including by the President of the Security Council at a previous meeting, that such abuses of Security Council meetings are absolutely unacceptable and constitute a flagrant violation of the Security Council rules on participation of representatives of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Pristina, under rule 39 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure, we are again faced with their reckless disregard for the rules of this organ. Let me reiterate our call for the necessary steps to be taken to prevent such abuses.

It is my great pleasure to address the Security Council at this meeting on the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in Kosovo and Metohija. At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Guterres, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMIK, Mr. Tanin, for the report submitted (S/2021/332) and for their efforts towards the implementation of the UNMIK mandate. I also thank the members of the Security Council for the continued attention that they have devoted to the issue of Kosovo and Metohija. The Republic of Serbia highly values the activities of UNMIK in Kosovo and Metohija and supports it in carrying out its work as efficiently as possible and undiminished in scope, aiming to build and preserve security in the province.

In the previous period we faced political instability in Kosovo and Metohija. We recently had elections in the province, which unfortunately confirmed that political extremism among Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija is not decreasing but, on the contrary, is becoming stronger. We have witnessed Albanian leaders competing among themselves in efforts to find the best way to provoke an incident in Serb communities in order to score political points of the Albanian electorate. During the election campaign, a large number of offensive and threatening graffiti appeared in Serb communities. Albanian politicians visited Serbian towns and villages unannounced in the company of armed persons with terrorist Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) insignia, while also installing election campaign billboards on the edges of Serb-majority settlements showing emblems of the terrorist KLA as well as billboards with the image of Ramush Haradinaj, one of its former commanders. The Provisional Institutions in Pristina went a step further in exerting institutional pressures on the Serbian people in the province. From the very beginning of the election process they endeavoured to diminish the support enjoyed by the Serb List party in Kosovo and Metohija by resorting to a series of irregularities, such as arbitrarily deleting voters from the voter list, changing voters' polling stations and creating polling boards, while disregarding the ethnic structure of the population, et cetera. Under the pretext of amending the voter list, a large number of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija were deprived of one of their fundamental political rights — the opportunity to elect their political representatives. Out of the approximately 140,000 citizens of Kosovo and Metohija who were removed from the voter list in the latest election process, 85 per cent are Serbs.

Despite numerous challenges and problems, the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija have shown, by the high turnout and a convincing victory of the Serb List, which won all 10 seats reserved for Serbian representatives, that nothing can stop them from resolutely defending their position. Political pressures on Serbs continued even after the election process was completed by denying Serbs fair representation

in Provisional Institutions, as the new so-called Government in Pristina decided to assign only one ministry to the Serb community.

Unfortunately, it was not only during the election activities that we witnessed the unreasonable anti-Serb policy being pursued by the Provisional Institutions in Pristina. That went to the length of breaking into the health centre in Štrpce, in the south of Kosovo and Metohija, by police inspectors and officers from Pristina in January this year, who conducted a search aiming to discover coronavirus disease vaccines there, originating from central Serbia, which they did not find. In doing so, they demonstrated force and threatened to arrest the director of the health centre, medical staff and doctors. At a time when the whole world is fighting the pandemic, with vaccines being the only way to end that challenge, while Serbia is showing support and solidarity by donating vaccines and medical equipment to all in need in the region, Pristina wants to destroy vaccines only because they originate from central Serbia. As the whole world expresses gratitude to medical doctors, who have made great and heroic sacrifices in combating the virus, the Provisional Institutions in Pristina are attacking Serbian doctors for doing their job.

Although we believe that intrusions into health-care institutions are inadmissible, our reaction was restrained this time as well. We did not want our decisions to cause escalation and politicization of activities that are solely aimed at protecting public health. We organized the vaccination of citizens from Kosovo and Metohija at three locations in central Serbia, and thus clearly demonstrated that people's lives are the top priority for us. Serbia continues to be ready to help all in need of assistance, and we call for reason and responsibility, especially in such difficult times.

This is not the first time that the Serbian health-care system in Kosovo and Metohija and our health workers there have been targeted by Pristina and extremists. Symbols of the terrorist KLA are being graffitied on health institutions and outpatient care facilities are being stoned and broken into. The latest attack took place the previous weekend in the village of Gojbulja, where an outpatient care facility was broken into. Attacks targeting Serbs and their property have been increasing. In the past year alone, more than 80 attacks and incidents took place in our southern province, targeting Serbs, their property and religious sites. According to the information provided by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission in Kosovo and Metohija, in the second half of last year, the number of incidents increased by more than 30 per cent as compared to 2019. Therefore, we cannot agree with the assessment that the "security situation in Kosovo remained stable, with a few incidents reported affecting non-majority communities" (S/2021/332, *para. 15*). Last weekend, for example, an entirely unprovoked physical attack by a group of Albanians on two Serb young men took place in the northern part of Kosovska Mitrovica.

Serb returnees represent a particularly vulnerable category, who spend every day in fear of being attacked. The fact that a family of returnees was the target of seven attacks clearly indicates the persistence of those who do not want Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, in attempts to intimidate and expel the already small number of returnees. There is absolutely no trace of political will in Pristina for more than 200,000 displaced Serbs who have been living outside Kosovo and Metohija for 22 years to return to their homes. To be very specific, 212,995 persons are still temporarily housed in central Serbia or Serb-majority municipalities in the north of the province. I remind you that the southern Serbian province is still the area with the lowest return rate of displaced persons in the world. Since 1999, the rate of sustainable return of internally displaced persons in Kosovo and Metohija has been only 1.9 per cent, which, according to United Nations data, is officially the lowest percentage of return the world over of an expelled population after a conflict.

One of the methods used to discourage returnees involves the continuous and systematic destruction of the economic basis for sustainable return. Pressure on business entities in Serb-majority communities in Kosovo and Metohija, south of the Ibar River, have continued through the so-called Privatization Agency of Kosovo. The abuse of legally unfounded procedures is destroying the economy, and the liquidated property is being sold to Albanian businessmen, which is why the Serb population from those municipalities loses jobs and income. Internally displaced persons and returnees have continuously been targets of rigged political trials and unwarranted arrests. There are many such examples in the previous period, and the abuse of war crime indictments is especially problematic. Often, Serb returnees are indicted if they return to renovated homes or refuse to sell their property under pressure.

In addition to arresting internally displaced persons, Pristina authorities are exerting maximum pressure on the Kosovo Specialist Chambers in The Hague with a view to blocking the further prosecution of a number of cases against members of the terrorist group KLA on charges of serious crimes committed against both Serbs and people of other nationalities during the conflict in Kosovo and Metohija. Judge Trendafilova, President of the Specialist Chambers, recently warned that, should the pressure continue, it would have significant consequences for the trials in progress. President Trendafilova characterized the phenomenon of witness intimidation as highly problematic, as victims are key to ensuring successful proceedings and the rendering of a proper verdict.

Although the wait for indictments was far too long, it is commendable that efforts have finally been made to punish the perpetrators of numerous serious crimes committed both during the armed conflicts a little over two decades ago and upon the arrival of international forces to Kosovo and Metohija. For example, to this day no one has been held accountable for the killings and abductions of 17 journalists during the conflict in Kosovo and Metohija, which is currently the largest number of unsolved cases of murdered and kidnapped journalists in Europe.

Furthermore, none of the perpetrators of the mass crimes committed against Serb civilians after 1999 have been brought to justice. These cases include 14 Serb farmers killed in the village of Staro Gracko; 12 displaced Serbs killed and 43 wounded in the attack on the Niš-Ekspres bus in Livadicë, near Podujevo; and, in Gorazdevac, near Peć, unknown persons armed with automatic weapons opened fire on children who were swimming in the Bistrica River, killing two Serb children and seriously injuring four more.

We therefore hope that relevant international actors will continue to support the Specialist Chambers in The Hague and that special attention will be given to witness protection.

We expect the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) to continue to support the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office, as well as its additional engagement in the field of the rule of law. Special attention needs to be devoted to witness protection and determining the fate of missing persons. Numerous tasks set before this Mission, including those related to the implementation of what was agreed in the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, clearly indicate that the functioning of EULEX in the existing framework must not be called into question. We also expect the European Union to decide to extend its mandate in the period ahead.

International missions in Kosovo and Metohija — the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, the Kosovo Force (KFOR), EULEX and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission in Kosovo — are an integral part of the international civilian and security presence in our southern province, under the administration of the United Nations and in line with resolution

1244 (1999). These missions play a key role and make a major contribution to the preservation of peace and the protection of the population. We support and respect their engagement and efforts made in the framework of their mandates with the common goal of creating conditions for the peaceful and safe coexistence of the inhabitants of Kosovo and Metohija. The Serb and other non-Albanian population in Kosovo and Metohija have the utmost confidence in the international presence and consider it a guarantor of security and a barrier against the arbitrariness of the Provisional Institutions in Pristina. This further demonstrates the need for international missions to remain engaged at their current level in order to ensure the consistent implementation of resolution 1244 (1999).

In addition, I would like to emphasize the importance of the KFOR international forces and point out that any unilateral attempt to assign or have another party assume a part of KFOR's mandate and responsibilities constitutes a violation of resolution 1244 (1999) and is a potential source of instability and tension. I remind the Council that Pristina, in violation of international law and with total disregard for the interests and positions of the Serb community in the province, refused to abandon its plans to install a new security entity in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija. We consider the unilateral decisions on the formation of the Ministry of Defence and the initiated process of transforming the so-called Kosovo Security Force into the so-called Kosovo army to be unacceptable. I would like to reiterate that such unilateral moves on the part of Pristina constitute a gross violation of resolution 1244 (1999) and the Military Technical Agreement, according to which only the international security forces — KFOR — have a mandate to handle all military aspects of security in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija.

In that context, an additional cause for concern is the announcement of the construction of the largest Kosovo Security Forces base in the southern part of Kosovska Mitrovica, which Serbs in the north of Kosovo and Metohija perceive as an open provocation and threat to their physical safety.

We also express serious concern about the announced participation of members of the so-called Kosovo Security Force at the multinational military exercise organized by the United States Armed Forces entitled "Immediate Response 21", to be held from 17 May to 2 June. It is also concerning that a part of the military exercise is planned to be carried out in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, which is beyond the scope of KFOR's engagement. This would be the first time that non-KFOR military forces are deployed on the territory of Kosovo and Metohija. I caution that Pristina's unilateral moves in the process of militarizing the so-called Kosovo Security Force represent a threat to stability and the maintenance of peace in the entire region.

It is particularly worrisome for the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija that there were frequent physical attacks on the property of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the latest period, especially in March. In just two weeks, as many as seven Orthodox landmarks in the province were targeted by vandals. We all remember the March 2004 pogrom against Serbs and Serbian holy sites in Kosovo and Metohija. The condition of Serbian cultural and spiritual heritage in Kosovo and Metohija is disgraceful, including with regard to the four monuments inscribed on the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger — the Visoki Dečani monastery, the Church of the Holy Virgin of Ljevisa, the Gračanica monastery and the Patriarchate of Peć monastery. Numerous administrative and technical barriers are being imposed on priestly and monastic communities, which makes it more difficult, or even impossible, for them to survive on church property.

A striking example of the disrespectful attitude towards Serbian cultural and religious monuments in the province is the case of the Visoki Dečani monastery, whose exceptional universal value is attested to by its inclusion on the UNESCO

World Heritage List. We once again remind the Council that the Visoki Dečani monastery is the most frequently attacked cultural heritage site in Kosovo and Metohija and was the first monument in Kosovo and Metohija to be inscribed on the World Heritage List. The monastery has been attacked as many as four times, including two mortar attacks carried out in 2000, eight mortar shells fired at it during the March 2004 pogrom and another mortar attack in 2007, which ultimately led to a court verdict. In addition, graffiti promoting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Shams (ISIS) appeared on the walls of the monastery in 2014, and four armed Albanians were arrested in front of the monastery in 2016 — two of whom had been blacklisted as ISIS sympathizers. This Serbian monastery is under the physical protection of KFOR soldiers because it is in danger.

I also remind the Council of the problem with the construction project for a Dečani-Plav main road within the protected zone around the monastery, which significantly undermines its integrity and authenticity. This issue was addressed only when pressure was brought to bear by the international community. Furthermore, the monastery is still unable to register more than 24 hectares of land in its possession, despite a final and executive decision to the contrary, which is a blatant violation of international standards. For that reason, the Europa Nostra organization last week rightly included the Visoki Dečani monastery on the list of the seven most endangered cultural and historical monuments in Europe.

Instead of addressing the endangerment of Serbian heritage in Kosovo and Metohija, which is also a valuable part of European Christian heritage, Pristina reacted by denying the problem and claiming that self-proclaimed Kosovo is an oasis of religious tolerance and multiculturalism. Pristina's approach in that regard only further threatens Serbian cultural heritage. The situation reached the pinnacle of absurdity when a non-governmental organization that refers to itself as the Council for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms, which happens to be close to the political structures in Pristina, last weekend requested that an investigation be launched against the abbot of the monastery, Sava Janjić, for war crimes.

The reason for Pristina's nervous behaviour is all too obvious, as the project of so-called independence today fails to be recognized by more than half of the States Members of the United Nations, including five members of the European Union. It is high time for Albanian leaders in Kosovo and Metohija to assume responsibility for honouring their commitments and demonstrate their sincere commitment to reaching a compromise solution and building mutual trust. The lack of trust is one of the fundamental problems in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. An agreement cannot be reached through inflammatory rhetoric and provocations, such as announcements of unification and the creation of a greater Albania or of plans to build the largest base of the so-called Kosovo Security Forces in the north of the province.

I remind the Council that the current Prime Minister of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Pristina, Albin Kurti, has repeatedly threatened to unite the self-proclaimed Kosovo and Albania. A member of Kurti's Self-Determination party, Fidan Ademi, publicly said last weekend that the self-proclaimed Kosovo and Albania would be united "with rifle and gunpowder or referendum boxes".

I need not explain why such dangerous ideas constitute a direct threat to peace and stability. They violate resolution 1244 (1999) and continuously destabilize not only our southern province but the entire region. They hamper, and in no way contribute to, the dialogue process.

We have demonstrated time and time again our commitment to dialogue as the only way towards a peaceful, political solution to the problem in Kosovo and Metohija. Even today, after many years of negotiations, in addition to the failure to

honour what was agreed and constant unilateral moves and provocations on the part of the Provisional Institutions in Pristina, we are still ready to sit down at the table and talk.

We are ready for dialogue but will not be blackmailed or threatened — especially not by Albin Kurti's recent ultimatums. I remind the Council of his statement that dialogue will be low on the list of priorities of the Pristina authorities, yet recently spoke about the four principles he believes should be the basis for dialogue. It is bewildering how Pristina refers to ultimatums that completely undermine any chance for dialogue — as the European Union also pointed out — as principles and how it persistently insists that Belgrade should recognize the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo, after which, they believe, all else would be resolved. What is the purpose of dialogue then, if Belgrade is only expected to recognize so-called Kosovo? Does dialogue imply that one side should give up everything only for the other to win it all? And does the dialogue, in Pristina's opinion, imply that what was agreed should not be fulfilled?

I remind the Council that Pristina still refuses to follow up on its obligations arising from the agreements reached so far and does not agree to discuss their implementation in the context of the dialogue. The situation is quite simple — in April 2013, the first agreement, signed in Brussels, envisaged four obligations: one for Pristina and three for Belgrade. Belgrade has fulfilled all its obligations, but the only obligation for the Provisional Institutions in Pristina — to form the community of Serb municipalities — has remained unfulfilled for 2,917 days now. In fact, 19 April marks eight full years since the agreement was reached in Brussels and of Pristina's failure to fulfil the obligation to form a community of Serb municipalities.

There are also problems in the implementation of those agreements that Pristina does not nominally dispute. Pristina substantially violates or obstructs almost all these agreements, with the most notable problems being in the fields of energy, the judiciary, freedom of movement and visits of officials. For example, in the energy sector, the Provisional Institutions in Pristina have registered their transmission system operator KOSTT, thus realizing all their interests from the energy agreement reached within the dialogue. However, they did not previously fulfil their part of the obligations under those agreements and, to this day, they are preventing the establishment and licensing of Serbian energy companies, which, according to the agreements should carry out those activities in the north of Kosovo and Metohija.

The arbitrariness that Pristina is demonstrating in connection with the implementation of the agreement on the freedom of movement is especially absurd and makes no exceptions — not even for officials or other persons from central Serbia, or whether they are pilgrims, internally displaced persons, athletes or journalists. We would recall that the Provisional Institutions in Pristina recently prevented a team of journalists from Radio Television of Serbia from entering Kosovo and Metohija, to which Special Representative Tanin reacted, pointing out the importance of media freedom, the right to information and freedom of movement. However, Pristina continues to breach the agreements, careless of the fact that such actions constitute major violations of international standards on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Regardless of the discouraging messages heard from Pristina and the fact that the dialogue has been in progress for many years, Serbia is determined and will not give up on identifying a compromise solution that will be sustainable for future generations as well. Lasting peace and stability can be achieved only if none of the participants in the dialogue pursues maximalist demands and insists on the complete humiliation of the other. The Serbian and Albanian peoples, as the two most numerous peoples in the Western Balkans, need to find a way to achieve

reconciliation and a basis for cooperation in terms of both the economy and shared prospects for membership in the European Union.

Belgrade has taken sincere steps in that direction by being one of the initiators of the idea of easing the flow of people, goods, capital and services, popularly referred to as mini-Schengen. However, even though that idea is supported by both Albania and North Macedonia, Pristina has so far shown no willingness to work on thawing the political atmosphere through regional economic initiatives. Quite the opposite: Pristina has violated the Central European Free Trade Agreement whenever the opportunity has arisen.

I must state with concern that political forces are in power in Pristina today whose activists in the recent past have physically hijacked and overturned trucks containing goods originating from central Serbia. That is why I have very serious reason to doubt interpretations according to which self-determination is a force that will democratically revitalize society in Kosovo and Metohija and contribute to post-conflict reconciliation and cooperation.

As far as Serbia is concerned, we are convinced that the only way to build lasting peace and stability in our region is by working to build trust and insisting on positive political agendas. The inhabitants of Kosovo and Metohija of any nationality, be they Serbs or Albanians, deserve nothing less.

Annex XVIII

Statement by Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz

The period covered by the current United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) report (S/2021/332) ends just a week before the new Government of the Republic of Kosovo was elected by a new Parliament, following a historic election. For the first time in any Balkan country to date, the majority of the people voted to free themselves from corruption and crime.

The Republic of Kosovo is entering a new era. We are on a journey to fulfil the will and the requests of our people, namely, to make our young country a fully recognized and respected member of the family of nations where the rule of law, democracy and a fair chance for everyone is the law of the land.

As the Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo, I therefore take the liberty of addressing you in all openness.

We will refer to details of the report later, but it is important to understand the qualities of the new Government and its approach.

It goes without saying that Kosovo, like all countries, is still fighting the pandemic. But at the same time, we are preparing measures for the implementation of that new era, dealing with a wide range of issues in a way that will enable us to leave a corrupt era behind and transform ourselves into a real state based on the rule of law.

Pressing issues range from justice reform to investment and jobs, foreign investment and the rule of law instead of corruption, in a young, vibrant, European-minded country. We fought for those changes for many years, within parties, in non-governmental organizations or as private citizens. Now the people have entrusted us with that historic change, and we are committed to delivering.

Kosovo continues to be committed to the path of integration into the European Union and NATO, as you might easily determine from the flags behind me. For many a great joy, for some a concern, we are also looking to become a Member of the United Nations at a certain point in future.

We extend our hand to everybody of good faith, since all of us are bound together in a common fate on our tiny and fragile planet.

With our cultural heritage of more than 3,000 years, we are, along with the Greeks, one of the two most ancient cultures in Europe. Our tiny but very special country is not afraid. On the contrary, we are eager to enter into substantial, serious talks even with those who are responsible for most of the conflicts and even the genocide in Bosnia and Kosovo in recent decades.

In this new Government of the Republic of Kosovo, you will find courageous, open-minded, internationally experienced people who do not shy away from addressing even painful issues in order to find a solution. We are open, we are proud, and we are not afraid of anything or anyone.

We are in favour of reconciliation, even though many of our people have had horrifying encounters with Serbia. The Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo was tried as a student in a political show trial by the authoritarian Serb regime and subsequently terribly mistreated in jail for more than two years.

Our newly elected Vice-President of the Parliament of Kosovo, when she was only 13 years old, survived a wilful massacre carried out by Serb forces against civilians in which her mother, her grandmother, two of her younger brothers and

other relatives were murdered. That innocent girl was found with 16 gunshot wounds and barely survived.

One of the new members of our Parliament who received the most votes from the people was raped by Serb soldiers when she was only 16. She had the courage to overcome the painful burden of talking about those crimes in public. She gives a voice to all the 20,000 victims of rape, and she is widely admired for carrying that burden. None of the Serb rapists in all those cases has been held accountable so far.

The current UNMIK report, touches, quite far down, on a topic that ranks among the top five priorities in our country. Every one of us has here a mother — my American colleague, my Serbian counterpart, my Norwegian colleague, my Russian counterpart, literally everybody. I am a mother myself, and a proud one, too.

There is nothing, literally nothing on earth, that is more painful, more horrific and in a true sense unbearable than losing a child. I would like to invite you to read and to listen to the group of mothers known as “The mothers of Gjakova”. Those brave women, who lost their innocent children to a merciless and murderous campaign waged by the Serb regime, are filled with sorrow and in pain. But they are standing tall; for many, many years they have not given up.

Again and again, they request to know and ask nothing else than to be told where their children are. They are aware that they have to expect the worst.

But it should not be an issue at all to tell those mothers where their children were buried after they were assassinated. So our question is: why is it that Serbia seems incapable of showing some empathy for mothers looking for the remains of their children?

It is important to note that we are not talking about events that took place in the nineteenth century here. We are not talking about the brutal, outrageous and unspeakable war crimes committed during the First World War or the Second World War in the Balkans, Europe and in many other places on our globe. What we are talking about here is living memory. Most of the victims who survived are still alive.

Most of the perpetrators who committed those unspeakable crimes, which caused more than 15,000 deaths in just a few months in our tiny country, are still alive. They are enjoying their life in Serbia and elsewhere and are even celebrated often for those atrocities.

To put that in perspective, imagine the figures if they applied to your own countries. That number of victims would amount to more than 1.2 million Russians killed in Russia in just one year. It would mean 2.6 million Americans killed in America in a year. It would mean more than 11.6 million Chinese murdered in China in just one year.

The world is watching and seeing that only a few of those war criminals are being seriously prosecuted, in many cases in show trials, and just cleared of any guilt. Serbia is doing all that, and it is not even admitting that the greatest crimes against humanity committed on European soil after Nazi Germany were committed in the name of Greater Serbia just in recent decades.

Serb leaders still praise war criminals and refuse to fully cooperate with international United Nations bodies; alleged war criminals are even still sitting in Parliament. All those blatant violations of most basic norms of the United Nations, and, moreover, of humanity, are not things about which you can say, “Just get over it”. This is about the basic values of humanity, and this is about our country, which will never, ever get under the command and control of those who committed those atrocities and do not even acknowledge it.

Serbia has to acknowledge and accept that it has to pay a price for its murderous atrocities. Serbia should confront its past, free itself from its genocidal roots and try to become a truly civilized, European country.

Serbia has locked itself in the past — a dark past. It was a medieval kind of thinking, staying in the dark and staying in the past, within too many of the Serb elites that drove Serbia to racism and finally fascism and genocide in the 1990s.

It was exactly 80 years ago today that Nazi Germany started to bomb Belgrade and committed genocide against the Serbs, the Jews and others, including the Albanian people, who stood up against fascism.

Let me ask in all openness: what is it that makes victims of genocide and fascism commit genocide themselves, ending in fascism, and not even face their responsibility in the aftermath?

We are convinced that once Serbia recognizes the facts, if it addresses its dangerous history of aggression and destabilization of the region, if it stops aggressively interfering in the affairs of its neighbouring countries, from Bosnia to Montenegro to Kosovo, it has the potential to normalize its behaviour and thus become a normal country that its neighbours do not have to consider to be a ticking time bomb. Once Serbia has achieved that, it will move from being the greatest threat to peace and stability in the region to a perhaps complicated but no longer risky partner.

We as a neighbouring country have every interest in normalizing our relationship with Serbia. We have an interest in a European-minded, not a backward-minded Serbia. We have an interest in an open dialogue about our common past and, hopefully, our common future.

We are a tiny but very special country. We are small, but we are standing tall. We have a lot of reliable friends, and we on our part are reliable.

My own father, a dissident, an intellectual, a writer, a musician and a journalist, was assassinated by the Belgrade regime, on foreign soil, in Germany, where we had fled from the brutality of that regime. I tell my children that this is not about the Serbs in general and that one has to make the distinction. Serbia has to make that distinction, too.

The world knows, and most of its adversaries even know, that the independence of the Republic of Kosovo is a done deal. The earlier Serbia accepts that reality, the quicker it can move from its dark past into a bright future.

Serbia is a still dangerous neighbouring country, and not only for Kosovo. We want it to calm down, to open up, to start making friends in the region. It should identify war criminals and bring them to justice, cooperate with the United Nations and us in finding the mass graves of those who remain missing, fight fascism in their country, stop playing games and come to the table and talk seriously. Then we might find a historic solution not only to our bilateral problems but also in terms of reconciliation in the Balkans in general.

We on our part remain open, despite all the harm Serbia did to our people, to extend a hand, to talk and to recognize each other.

Let us begin a new era.
