

**KINGDOM OF BELGIUM**

Speech by

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**UNMIK Briefing to the Security Council**

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Madam President,

I would like to thank the Permanent Representative, Mr Zahir Tanin for his detailed presentation. I regret that an additional briefing by the Special Representative of the European Union, Mr Miroslav Lajčák proved impossible. However, it is primarily thanks to his determined action that we have been able to make further progress in the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. The European Union is therefore demonstrating once again its firm determination to fully play its role as facilitator.

Madam President,

Belgium welcomes the resumption of dialogue on 12 July 2020 and the commitment of both parties. We encourage both parties to continue

along this path in a spirit of openness and compromise. Belgium calls on both parties to take part in good faith in order to reach a global and legally binding agreement on the normalisation of their relations. Such an agreement will contribute not only to regional stability, it is also vital if both parties are to continue moving towards the EU.

We call for the implementation of the agreements already concluded within the framework of the dialogue. This would already considerably improve the lives of many Serbian and Kosovan citizens. Recent developments relating to the Common Crossing Point at Merdare, financed and constructed with EU aid, are an important step in this respect.

We welcome the renewal by the parties of their commitment to making progress on the humanitarian issues of refugees, displaced persons and missing persons. These issues are vital for lasting reconciliation and healing. We call for additional efforts in this area.

Women and young people play a key role in the consolidation of peace and their meaningful participation must be guaranteed. This involves a significant representation of women in delegations and in the working groups created to feed into the dialogue.

Madam President,

The new Kosovo government has reaffirmed its strategic commitment to moving closer to the EU. Kosovo must now pull out all the stops to relaunch the reform process. We call on all the Kosovan political parties to come together on this issue.

Belgium continues to monitor the rule of law situation very carefully. In particular, we strongly condemn the extremely worrying attempts to weaken the Kosovo Specialist Chambers or limit their actions. As this transitional justice mechanism makes it possible to bring truth to the victims and establish responsibility for extremely serious crimes, it is essential for restoring the trust of the population and thus achieving lasting peace.

We reiterate our full support for the work of EULEX, which plays an important role in the ongoing development of strong, effective and accountable Rule of Law institutions.

We welcome the recent adoption by the Kosovo Assembly of an amendment to the Constitution which makes the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence directly applicable.

Madam President,

We welcome the commitment of UNMIK and the United Nations Kosovo Team to combating COVID-19, in cooperation with the local authorities. The European Union and its Member States have also become an important partner in this fight. Concrete regional cooperation is vital for combating the virus and its consequences, and we encourage the parties to work to achieve this. We reiterate the appeal of the Special Representative to all institutions and stakeholders in Kosovo to respect human rights and leave no one behind in the fight against COVID-19.

Thank you.