

KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Speech by

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UNMIK Briefing to the Security Council

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Mr President,

I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Mr Zahir Tanin, for his briefing, as well as the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr Ivica Dačić, and the Ambassador of Kosovo to the United States, Ms Vlora Çitaku, for their interventions.

Mr President,

I would first like to focus on recent developments that have not been conducive to a climate in which relations between the two parties can be normalised.

We have noted the adoption by the Kosovo Assembly of laws strengthening the mandate and capacity of the Kosovo Security Force (KSF). While we recognise Kosovo's sovereign right to legislate in this area, Belgium nevertheless regrets the timing of this initiative as well as the lack of consultation both internally and externally.

We also regret the continued imposition of customs duties on imports from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and call on the Kosovar authorities to remove them immediately.

It should be noted, however, that the two measures I have just mentioned are part of a broader framework of conflictual relations between the two parties. We therefore call on Serbia and Kosovo to refrain from any action or statement that could lead to tensions.

Mr President,

The conclusion of a comprehensive and legally binding agreement on the normalisation of relations is the only way to achieve regional stability. We call on the Serbian and Kosovar Presidents to fully commit to the dialogue conducted under the aegis of the European Union. Both sides must implement their commitments in order to create an environment conducive to dialogue.

We stress the importance of involving civil society, including women and young people, in this process.

Belgium fully supports the efforts of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union, Mrs Federica Mogherini, and the various contacts she is making in Brussels to this end.

Mr President,

We welcome the compromise on reducing the cycle of meetings and reporting. UNMIK and the United Nations have undoubtedly helped to improve the situation compared to that of 20 years ago. However, the challenges currently facing Kosovo are mainly addressed in a context of European integration, with the cooperation of EULEX, the European Union Rule of Law Mission. Furthermore, the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo is conducted under the aegis of the European Union. We join our European colleagues in their call to refocus UNMIK's efforts and fully adapt them to this development.

Mr President,

We are convinced that Serbia and Kosovo have a European future, but that the achievement of this ambition is largely in their hands.