



## **THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

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71<sup>st</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly  
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Agenda Item 157  
Financing of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

*Check against delivery*

### **S T A T E M E N T**

by

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THIRD SECRETARY  
OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

New York, 03 May 2017

Mme Chair,

I would like to thank the Assistant Secretary-General, Controller B. Tucci Bartsiotas, for introducing the reports of the Secretary-General on the budget performance of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 and the proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 under agenda item 157. I would also like to thank the Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for presenting this body's related report.

The presence and role of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is of immense importance for the Republic of Serbia. Based on UNSCR 1244 (1999), its framework is the guarantee of the status neutrality of the international presence in Kosovo and Metohija. Because of the lack of inter-ethnic trust, the international presence is indispensable for the implementation of the agreements reached within the dialogue between Belgrade and Priština, conducted by the facilitation of the European Union. In that context, my country considers that UNMIK's continued presence and activities, strengthened in scope and unchanged in mandate, are of paramount importance and expects that its budget capacities will be increased in view of its substantive and long-term role in building and preserving stability in the Serbian southern Province. We fully agree with the observation made in the Report of the United Nations Secretary-General on the work of UNMIK to the Security Council for the October 2016-January 2017 reporting period in which it is said that, with regard to a delicate situation in the Province, UNMIK should continue to focus on providing support to Kosovo and Metohija communities and the importance is stressed of "ensuring that UNMIK is appropriately resourced to address current and emerging challenges, including the fragile reconciliation and the evolving threat of violent extremism."

Serbia calls for a proactive United Nations approach to the question of Kosovo and Metohija and considers the initiatives to marginalize it within the United Nations system counter-intuitive and very detrimental. The unjustifiable tendencies to reduce the Mission drastically year in, year out are of particular concern, all the more so as the situation in the field provides ample evidence that UNMIK needs proper personnel and financial capacities in order to respond to all the challenges to the implementation of its mandate.

UNMIK's increased visibility in the field would reflect positively on the trust and readiness of the Serbs and other non-Albanians to participate in the processes initiated by the Brussels dialogue. It is explicitly stated in the Report of the Secretary-General, containing the budget proposal for the 2017/2018 period, that UNMIK's activities are aimed at "encouraging long-term normalization of relations between Belgrade and Priština, as well as strengthening their respective commitment to the implementation of the political and technical agreements."

Mme Chair,

We believe that the Reports of the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) provide a solid basis for the upcoming negotiations on this agenda item in the Fifth Committee.

Serbia supports the concept of the programmatic activities across United Nations missions and the realization of their mandates through concrete projects. In the case of UNMIK, notwithstanding the welcome increase in the budget proposed by the Secretary-General, the complex political and security situation in the Province makes it incumbent upon us to consider additional increases, primarily with respect to the programmatic activities and confidence-building projects through which UNMIK seeks to improve the current situation in the areas of key importance for the realization of its mandate, such as rule of law, human rights and reconciliation among communities. In addition to the quarterly Reports of the Secretary-General on the work of UNMIK to the Security Council, the continued existence of numerous challenges in this field is on record also in the Memorandum of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human rights, released following his mission to Kosovo and Metohija last February. The Commissioner also expresses his concern over the deeply ingrained ethnic divisions, eighteen years after the end of the conflict. Evidently, the situation in the field calls for the strengthening of UNMIK's substantive component and, consequently, for the additional strengthening of its personnel. This is very important in the context of the endeavours to create conditions for a sustainable return of internally displaced persons. The Committee is reminded that only 1.9 per cent of these persons have returned and settled lastingly in Kosovo and Metohija since June 1999, which is the lowest percentage in the world in absolute terms. Less of 30 per cent of them are Serbs. More than 200 000 internally displaced persons still live in the central part of Serbia, while other 17 000 are displaced within Kosovo and Metohija itself. We believe that, with strengthened human and financial resources, UNMIK would be in a better position to make a contribution, through concrete projects, to a sustainable return of the internally displaced persons, which is one of the main tasks that UNMIK has been entrusted with under its mandate. The importance of the question of IDP returns in context of the realization of the programmatic activities is emphasized on a number of occasions in the Report of the Secretary-General as one of the most important stepping stones for achieving progress in the reconciliation among communities and their integration in Kosovo and Metohija.

The need to strengthen UNMIK personnel and programmatic capacities in the areas related, first and foremost, to the human rights of the non-Albanian communities is evinced also by a high number of incidents and frequent cases of violence against minority communities. Since 1999, there has been more than 8 000 ethnically motivated attacks in Kosovo and Metohija, more than one every day.

It is pointed out in the Report of the Secretary-General that, as a roof international presence in Kosovo and Metohija, the United Nations follows the reconfiguration of other international actors in the field and assesses continually their influence on developments on the ground. Hence the need for the adjustment and strengthening of

certain UNMIK's components on the basis of the implications that these reconfigurations have for the realization of its mandate.

Mme Chair,

We support the proposal of the Secretary-General to keep the existing and establish new posts within UNMIK. However, since it is projected in the Report of the Secretary-General that the INTERPOL-related workload will increase, and that the EULEX personnel working alongside UNMIK has been reduced, we consider that it is necessary to establish more than one post of United Nations police officer for functions related to INTERPOL. In that context, it is important to point out that the number of EULEX staff has been reduced from 8 to 3; the difference of 5 is bridged, erroneously, in our opinion, by establishing only one post within UNMIK. We believe it is necessary to ensure adequate personnel capacities necessary for cooperation with INTERPOL in a status-neutral way, especially in regard of drastic EULEX reductions on this plan.

My country does not understand the recommendation of the ACABQ, requesting the Secretary-General to provide additional justification for keeping the three existing posts (D-1 post of Chief Legal Affairs Office, D-1 post in the Office of Community Support and Facilitation and P-4 post in the Mitrovica Regional Office). This recommendation is made in respect of UNMIK alone and if applied across the board, it would result in requests being made for the justification of each and every approved existing post in all United Nations missions.

The attention of the Committee is also drawn to the fact that some UNMIK posts have been vacant for quite some time now. It is necessary to fill these vacancies expeditiously in accordance with the recommendation made in the ACABQ Report. In this connection, we intend to request the Secretariat to provide a table of vacant positions, indicating the dates when they became vacant and the dates when the recruitment process began.

Mme Chair,

This issue is of paramount importance for my country and we look forward to engaging constructively with other delegations during the informal consultations on this agenda item.

I thank you, Mme Chair.