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We thank Mr. Chandramouli Ramanathan, Controller, and Mr. Abdallah Bachar Bong, Chairman of the ACABQ, for their respective reports.

Serbia's commitment to the respect of international law and legally-binding United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999), adopted under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, has been consistent and unwavering ever since its adoption. The presence and the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in Kosovo and Metohija are of paramount importance for my country, as the United Nations framework based on this Resolution guarantees the status neutrality of the international presence in the Province. It is evident that UNMIK's key tasks and, by extension, the goals and objectives of the Resolution which established and defined its mandate have not been achieved, and that the political and security situation in Kosovo and Metohija continues to be unstable. In view of the fact that the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities trust UNMIK the most, it is of utmost importance that the Mission continues to be engaged in all questions relevant to a consistent implementation of the said Resolution, with its mandate unchanged and its scope and composition undiminished.

Serbia calls for a more active approach by the United Nations to the issue of Kosovo and Metohija and is against each and every attempt to marginalize it, especially because the situation in the Province continues to be unstable, tension-ridden and prone to incidents. Needless to say, this makes the international presence ever more necessary. Our position that UNMIK must remain fully engaged in tackling all of the issues falling within its mandate stems from the fact that the Mission has not achieved any of the key tasks for which it was established, such as the return of the Serbs and other non-Albanians expelled from Kosovo and Metohija. Let me recall that more than 200 000 internally displaced persons (IDP), forced to leave their ancestral homes due to threats and persecution, continue to live in other parts of Serbia outside of Kosovo and Metohija this very day, more than 20 years after the establishment of the international presence. Regrettably, we continue to witness incidents and attacks on Serbs and their property, as well as on their religious and cultural heritage even today. Unsurprisingly, only 1.9 percent of the IDPs realized sustainable returns, while the data from the Secretary-General's latest report on UNMIK provide ample evidence of a negligible number of returnees, calling at the same time on the Mission to pay more attention and further commit to the resolution of this question.

Pristina continues to take unilateral measures and resorts to provocations, further destabilizing the already volatile security situation in Kosovo and Metohija. The situation continues to be exacerbated by the ever more frequent raids by Pristina's special military units to the North under the pretext of battling organized crime. One of these incursions took place in May 2019, when 2 members of the United Nations staff were arrested and detained using excessive force. This practice of using disproportionate force against the unarmed population and even the international personnel is a telling proof of the lack of protection for anybody and the non-existence of peace and stability whenever Pristina decides to "demonstrate force". We recall that the United Nations Investigation Team conducted an internal investigation of the event and concluded that the arrest, detention and the criminal charges brought against UNMIK's personnel infringe upon the immunity

of the international staff. Also, the use of excessive force against UNMIK's personnel, usurpation of the Mission's property and the continuation of criminal prosecution had been in breach of the legal framework, including UNSCR 1244 (1999), UNMIK's rules and regulations and the international standards in the field of human rights.

The Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) in Pristina also violated UNSCR 1244 (1999) when they resorted to a unilateral decision to "transform" the "Kosovo Security Force" into the "Army of Kosovo", regardless of the warnings of the United Nations, the European Union and NATO. This dangerous step threatened the security in the Province and the region and went a long way towards worsening the situation of the Serbian and other non-Albanian population in Kosovo and Metohija. Let me point out that KFOR is the only legal military force in the Province and the only guarantor of security and survival of the Serbs and their property and religious and cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija.

Serbia reacted responsibly to all PISG unilateral and discriminatory acts, took no counter-measures and acted as a reliable partner contributing to the stabilization of the situation and creating conditions for an unimpeded continuation of the dialogue. On the contrary, the PISG continues with flagrant violations of the agreements reached within the Brussels dialogue thus far and continues to display unwillingness to engage in the dialogue. This is clearly shown by the decision to introduce tariffs on goods from central Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in November 2018, which caused enormous political and economic damage not only to Serbia, but also to the entire region, as well as effectively blocked the dialogue. We hope that, once the pandemic is over, conditions will be created for the continuation of the dialogue in which it will be essential for Pristina to revoke the tariffs and remove the so-called reciprocal measures, which entirely negate and void the agreements reached in Brussels since 2012.

Serbia continues to call for a return to dialogue and a refrain from unilateral acts. More than ever before, the ongoing situation shows us that we have to rely on one another and that we must work together and be inter-connected. Regrettably, the prevalent political atmosphere in Pristina led to the situation in which even Serbia's assistance and solidarity rendered in the context of the fight against the coronavirus is being politicized and used for brutal attacks and unwarranted accusations condemned by the entire international community. Yet, Serbia continues to believe that negotiations are the only way forward to reach agreements and it will continue its constructive commitment to a quest for a compromised and sustainable solution for the issue of Kosovo and Metohija through dialogue.

It is exactly due to the non-compliance with, and the violation of, the provisions of UNSCR 1244 (1999), which led to the increase in tensions and the threat to stability and security in the Province, that a continued implementation of UNMIK's mandate is of paramount importance for the fate of many people in Kosovo and Metohija. Serbia believes that the United Nations, the Security Council and UNMIK must remain fully engaged in all issues relevant to a consistent implementation of the tasks UNMIK has been entrusted with in Kosovo and Metohija.

As it did in the past, Serbia will continue to call, if not for an increase in, then at least for the maintenance of the present level of the UNMIK's budget. We must not lose sight of the possibility that any further deterioration of the situation in the field would cost us dearly and we should therefore continue to point to the need of providing the Mission with adequate personnel and financial capacities. It is of crucial importance to make sure that the Mission has sufficient financial and human resources in order to be able to contribute, as mandated, to the stabilization of the situation in Kosovo and Metohija in a proactive and effective way.

The budget proposal reports of the Secretary-General and the ACABQ provide a good basis for the negotiations in the Fifth Committee on this issue. We are ready to actively engage in its consideration in order to make sure that the resources proposed are sufficient to make it possible for the Mission to function unimpeded and successfully in the coming period.

It is with regret that we have to note again this year that many vacant posts within UNMIK have not been filled. We therefore express our serious concern over an ACABQ Report data that as many as 20 positions remain vacant at this moment, 2 of them longer than 2 years. This is an exceptionally high number for a mission of only 356 civilian personnel. What is also a cause of concern is continuing deterioration of the cash position, which was also addressed in the ACABQ Report, reminding the Member States of their obligation to pay their contributions on time, in full and without conditions. Serbia calls for all vacant posts to be filled expeditiously in accordance with the UNGA resolution on missions' budgets and considers that the Secretariat is in breach of the relevant UNGA decisions by allowing that vacancies within UNMIK remain unfilled. Therefore, we do not concur with the ACABQ that the requirement for posts vacant for 2 years or longer should be reviewed and would rather see them filled without delay. What should be assessed, though, is how we have found ourselves in the situation to have the posts that have been approved by the budget stay vacant for such a long period of time. Due to a constant delay of the UNMIK personnel recruitment process by the Secretariat, the current vacancy rate cannot serve as a parameter for the next budget.

The resources proposed this year by the Secretary-General for the programmatic activities and confidence-building projects are telling evidence that these activities have been useful and purposeful and enabled the Mission to be more proactive in its quest to improve conditions in certain areas encompassed by its mandate. It is important that adequate resources for these activities among communities be approved, so that concrete results could be achieved in the field of confidence-building, sustainable IDP returns, promotion of human rights and the rule of law.

In the current conditions of a global crisis, which also affect peacekeeping operations, it is important to invest additional efforts in preventing negative consequences for an unimpeded implementation of the established mandates of the missions that play important roles in safeguarding international peace and security. In that context, it is necessary to approve adequate financial resources for peacekeeping operations, in accordance with the needs in the field.