



THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

75th Session of the General Assembly
Fifth Committee
Second Resumed Session
Agenda item 163
Financing of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

New York

May 2021

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

Serbia is consistently committed to the respect of international law and the legally-binding UNSC Resolution 1244 (1999), adopted under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. We attach great importance to the activities of United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), as the United Nations framework based on the mentioned resolution is also a guarantor of the status neutrality of the international presence in Kosovo and Metohija. UNMIK's continued presence in Kosovo and Metohija is of exceptional importance, all the more so as some of its key goals and objectives arising from its mandate remain to be achieved. This presence is also important considering that the political and security situation in the Province continues to be unstable and that the Serbian and other non-Albanian populations 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.

UNMIK's need to remain fully committed to all the questions relative to its mandate is supported by the fact that the Mission has not yet fulfilled some of the key objectives that accounted for its establishment, including, among others, the creation of conditions for a sustainable return of internally displaced persons and the protection of non-Albanians and the Serbian religious and cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija. Particularly worrisome is the fact that, after more than 20 years, more than 200 000 internally displaced persons still live outside the Province and that only 1.9 per cent of them has achieved a sustainable return. The Secretary-General's Reports on the work of UNMIK, regularly submitted to the Security Council, provide ample evidence of a negligible number of returnees and are a clear indication of the need for the Mission to accord additional attention to, and engagement in, this issue. Equally worrisome are the data that the number of attacks on Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija and their property are on the rise. Only last year more than 80 vandal attacks and incidents, the targets of which were the Serbs, their property and religious establishments, took place in the southern Serbian Province. According to the data of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, the number of these incidents only in the second half of 2020 rose by more than 30 per cent compared to the same period in the preceding year.

Furthermore, physical attacks on the establishments of the Serbian Orthodox Church are becoming ever more frequent: as many as seven Christian Orthodox establishments in Kosovo and Metohija were targeted by vandals only within a period of two weeks. The situation in which the Serbian cultural and spiritual heritage in the Province, including the four cites on the UNESCO List of Cultural Heritage, have found themselves is a disgrace. Serbia expects that the international presences in Kosovo and Metohija, including UNMIK, step up their efforts to protect and preserve the Serbian cultural and religious heritage by monitoring the situation in the special protective zones. In this regard, it is surprising that, unlike last year, the Secretary-General's budget proposal makes no reference of UNMIK's contribution to the protection and preservation of the Serbian cultural and religious heritage by monitoring the situation in special

protective zones, through continued liaison with the UNESCO and the facilitation of constructive dialogue between the Serbian Orthodox Church and Kosovo authorities.

It is pointed out once again that, for a long time, Pristina has taken one-sided measures and destabilizing provocations that represent a serious threat to the already fragile situation in Kosovo and Metohija. Proper, visible and timely reaction by the United Nations to all the acts of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) in Pristina in violation of UNSC Resolution 1244 (1999) or the agreements reached within the Brussels dialogue that threaten the rights and security of the non-Albanian populations is, therefore, of paramount importance. It is noted with regret that the PISG continue to drastically breach the agreements reached within the Brussels dialogue so far demonstrating, all along, a lack of readiness to engage in the dialogue. On the other hand, Belgrade has never taken counter-measures and has always behaved as a reliable partner whose aim has been to make a contribution to the stabilization of the situation and the creation of conditions for an unimpeded continuation of the dialogue. We continue to believe that talks are the only way to reach agreement and will not relent in our efforts to find a sustainable and compromise solution to the question of Kosovo and Metohija through dialogue.

The current situation speaks volumes of our interdependence, as well as of the importance of our cooperation and inter-linkage. Regrettably, for the PISG in Pristina even Serbia's assistance and solidarity in the fight against COVID-19 are questionable; they have been politicized and used for brutal attacks and baseless accusations that have been condemned by the entire international community. Serbia continues to be ready to help all those who need the help and calls for reason and responsibility, particularly in these difficult times.

It is exactly for the failure to implement many provisions of UNSC Resolution 1244 (1999), the consequent rise of tension and the threat to the stability and security in the Province that the continuation of the implementation of UNMIK's mandate is of paramount importance for the fate of many people in Kosovo and Metohija. We are convinced that the sensitivity of the overall situation and the frequency of incidents give us every reason to believe that our efforts to the continued active engagement of UNMIK in Kosovo and Metohija are justified.

We welcome the fact that the Secretary-General has recognized the specific conditions of UNMIK's engagement and that, in that context, no decrease in its existing capacities is envisaged in the budget proposal. The Secretary-General's Report and the Report of the ACABQ provide a solid basis for the forthcoming discussions of this issue in the Fifth Committee. Alongside with the other Member States, we stand ready to engage actively in its consideration in order to provide UNMIK, as well as any other peace keeping mission, sufficient resources to function unimpeded in these challenging times. Guided by the situation in the field, Serbia will not support any proposal to reduce the number of posts within UNMIK and attaches special importance to preservation of international posts because of their important role in the implementation of the very sensitive mandate of the Mission.

It is with regret that we note that the negative trend of non-filling of posts in UNMIK continues and express serious concern at the data in the ACABQ Report that as many as 23 posts are currently vacant, a dramatically high number for the mission of this size. We therefore call

once again for all vacant posts to be filled expeditiously in accordance with the relevant UNGA resolutions. The problems regarding the recruitment and keeping of UNMIK's personnel and the continual lack of resources on its account are also serious causes for concern. We therefore hope that the Mission and the United Nations Secretariat will take necessary steps to overcome these problems. In view of the constant delays and the problems encountered by the Mission in the recruitment process, we cannot fully agree with the ACABQ recommendation that the current vacancy rate within UNMIK should serve as a parameter for the next budget.

We welcome the Secretary-General's proposal that special funds still be provided in the next budget cycle for programmatic activities and confidence building projects which will continue to enable UNMIK to render a more proactive contribution to the stabilization of the situation in Kosovo and Metohija through concrete projects. As in the past, we are interested in getting a detailed insight in the projects to be realized from these funds, to make sure that they are geared towards the areas that are most important for the vulnerable communities in Kosovo and Metohija.

The negotiations this year, again, are taking place in the conditions of a global crisis that also affects peace keeping operations. It is, therefore, important that we continue to invest efforts in preventing any possible negative consequences on the implementation of the established mandates of missions and their important role in safeguarding international peace and security. To that end, it is necessary that peace operations' budgets to be considered correspond to the needs mandated by the situation in the field.

