



REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS

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**Report of the Secretary-General
on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
S/2020/255**

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S T A T E M E N T

by

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MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
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New York, 24 April 2020

Mr. President,

Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

Unfortunately, I address you today at a time when the whole world is facing the huge challenge posed by the coronavirus pandemic and I would like to voice my hope that our joint efforts, mutual solidarity and cooperation, will see us overcome this difficult situation in the very near future. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my deepest condolences to the families of the victims of the coronavirus throughout the world and to show the strong solidarity of Serbia with all countries affected by the pandemic. I wish to point out the importance of this session being held as it conveys a strong message to the people in Kosovo and Metohija that they have not been forgotten, at this difficult hour, and that we care for them more than ever before, well aware of the fact that their living conditions were difficult even before the pandemic outbreak. We have undertaken decisive measures to help Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija fight the epidemic - by supplying medical and protective equipment, sending medical doctors and staff, but we have also expressed readiness from the very beginning to fully cooperate with Albanians and work together with representatives of the provisional institutions in Pristina to combat the epidemic. Persons who had been infected in Kosovo and Metohija and who have been receiving medical treatment in central Serbia include both Serbs and Albanians, and last week we donated 1000 coronavirus test kits to the Institute of Public Health in Pristina. I would like to reiterate that Serbia will continue to extend all the necessary assistance and show solidarity to all in these difficult times as well as that the fight against coronavirus and the protection of human lives are the top priority today. In this context, I will only briefly reflect on the previous period covered in the Report.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Serbia has time and time again, and most notably in the past year, demonstrated its strong commitment to finding a compromise solution for the issue of Kosovo and Metohija that would secure lasting peace and stability, while also showing its readiness to reach a solution by which neither side would be an absolute winner, but would gain enough for the solution to be a long-term and sustainable one. To all the unilateral and discriminatory actions of Pristina PISGs Serbia has responded with restraint, while refraining from countermeasures and acting as a responsible partner, one contributing to stabilization of the situation and aiming to secure conditions for an unimpeded course of dialogue.

We hoped that the October election in Kosovo and Metohija and the appointment of new authorities in February this year would be a good opportunity for Pristina PISGs to turn over a new leaf in their approach to the dialogue, to finally show readiness for talks and revoke the controversial decision on the imposition of tariffs which resulted in the dialogue being stalemated for a long time now. However, we ended up being faced with positions even more extreme and an absolute lack of goodwill for the dialogue, which was all made blatantly obvious in the programme

presented and decisions made by the Albin Kurti government. Their position as to the tariffs imposed by Pristina on goods originating from central Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, thus inflicting immeasurable political and economic damage on Serbia and the region as a whole, has best illustrated their approach to the dialogue as well. Despite all of this, Serbia has continued to show its commitment to the resolution of all issues relevant to the lives of our citizens, while striving to promote connectivity and freedom of movement as well as the flow of goods, capital, services and people. In view of the above and as a token of goodwill we have recently signed letters of intent to establish air and railway traffic between Belgrade and Pristina, and the statement of intent to finalize the construction of motorway connecting the two cities. I take this opportunity to express gratitude to Ambassador Richard Grenell, Special Envoy of the U.S. President, for his initiative and all efforts he made towards reaching the agreement. Support and assistance in the context of dialogue is always welcome. We hope that the engagement on the part of the EU will also gain new momentum with the appointment of Miroslav Lajčák as EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and that conditions for the continuation of the dialogue will be in place immediately upon the end of the pandemic. All that takes for this to happen is one step to be made by Pristina. We have heard countless calls made by all the stakeholders involved for the revocation of the senseless tariffs, including at UN Security Council sessions, but Pristina has persistently refused to do so. We have recently been informed that Kurti made a decision to lift the tariffs, but to also impose "reciprocity measures" at the same time. Such a disingenuous move by Pristina was meant to "pull the wool over the eyes" of everyone who called for the revocation of the tariffs, while practically making no difference as compared to the previous measures.

For this reason I would like to remind once again that the SC Resolution 1244 remains the only UN valid document which must be respected and that the formation of the Community of Serbian Municipalities is Pristina's obligation in accordance with the Brussels Agreement.

I take this opportunity to once again call for a return to dialogue and refraining from unilateral moves. The ongoing situation has taught us better than any before that we need to rely on each other and be aware of the importance of cooperation and connectivity. Regrettably, the current political atmosphere in Kosovo and Metohija has resulted in even the assistance and solidarity of Serbia in the combat against COVID-19 being a subject of politicization and misinterpretation by way of brutal attacks and unseemly accusations, to which the entire international community responded with condemnation. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us to set aside our differences once we overcome the coronavirus pandemic, and arrive at decisions and solutions that will ensure normal and peaceful life to all communities in Kosovo and Metohija. I need to reiterate once again that we see it as unacceptable to draw any correlation between the imposition of anti-civilizational tariffs and the decisions to revoke recognition of Kosovo UDI, particularly bearing in mind that Pristina, on their own admission, has continued lobbying across the globe in favour of the recognition of the so-called "Kosovo", in which, as they have claimed, they enjoyed selfless support by some of you. If you are requesting that we stop campaigning for the revocation of recognitions, would it not make perfect sense for you to stop lobbying in favour

of Kosovo UDI first, while asking the so-called Kosovo authorities to do the same? In February this year, when the fake news appeared that Jamaica purportedly recognized Kosovo UDI, Pristina representatives, including Hashim Thaci and Behgjet Pacolli, expressed their gratitude to U.S. Congressman Eliot Engel for his assistance. In a letter to Secretary of State Michael Pompeo, U.S. the same Congressman Eliot Engel and Senator Robert Menendez requested to be informed "why the [U.S.] Administration has neither imposed those sanctions nor actively pressed Serbia to end its global de-recognition efforts". Please, let me know how could such steps be considered as conducive to a good climate for the continuation of the dialogue? Only if everyone stops lobbying, the same can be asked of Serbia.

Mr. President,

In the previous period, we were particularly alarmed by two highly important issues concerning the vows to make military service compulsory in Kosovo and Metohija and to pass the so-called law on war crimes, genocide and alleged Serbian aggression.

I will remind you that a special Security Council meeting was held in December 2018 to address the announced establishment of the so-called Kosovo armed forces and that we have on that occasion, and several times after that, warned about the serious consequences of such steps that would immediately threaten the safety of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija and drastically deteriorate the security situation in the region. The statement about military service indicates another forthcoming unilateral and absolutely unacceptable act by Pristina, in violation of UNSC Resolution 1244 and the KFOR mandate it established, as the only legal and legitimate military structure in the Province.

As regards the announcement to bring a case against Serbia before the International Court of Justice on the count of alleged genocide this has been clearly motivated by Pristina's attempts to somehow obscure the issue of trials for crimes committed by the so-called KLA, particularly now that it has become apparent that it is highly likely that, despite years of delays, formal indictments will soon be raised before the Specialist Chambers.

Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

If it is indeed our wish to build a future together, we are also obliged to act in a responsible way and say that those who suffered the most in the conflicts in Kosovo and Metohija were innocent civilians, regardless of their ethnicity. We cannot allow only one side to assume the role of a sole victim while denying the crimes committed against the Serb population. The farming families killed in Staro Gracko and children victims in Goraždevac, victims of the massacre at

Lake Radonjic and the Klečka killings as well as each and every one of the 200,000 Serbs persecuted by the so-called KLA from Kosovo and Metohija, of whom only 1.9% have achieved sustainable return, and who are not able to get back to their homes in Kosovo and Metohija for safety reasons even after more than 20 years, all deserve answers. Therefore, it is our hope that the activity of the Specialist Chambers for crimes committed in Kosovo and Metohija will contribute to justice being served for all.

Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

At a time when the whole world is facing one of the greatest challenges of the century, when we are required to show maturity and seriousness, Pristina authorities have demonstrated that they did not consider the safety and the lives of citizens a top priority, and that nothing mattered to them more than who will assume political power. They have shown an utmost lack of understanding of what a responsible approach meant, while failing to address the difficult challenges we are all facing at the moment.

Political messages conveyed by representatives of the then new government, which was dismissed in less than two months in a vote of no-confidence, can be taken seriously or not, or seen either as only serving local political purposes or messages addressed to the international public. However, it is a fact that every word uttered at any time and a decision we make can have unforeseen consequences for all citizens. The weight of responsibility is all the bigger if one is dealing with a sensitive situation as is the case in Kosovo and Metohija. The main victims of political conduct showing no signs of readiness for a compromise solution that would satisfy the interests of both the Serbian and Albanian side are not the politicians, but Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, instead, who have been physically assaulted, threatened and exposed to hate speech on a daily basis, and also Albanians who are now rushing to Serbia to receive medical treatment. Therefore, the responsibility lies with political leaders not to generate contexts which prevent the development of a society towards a democratic and modern one. Sadly, I cannot help but conclude that Pristina politicians have, through their behaviour in these difficult times, once again affirmed the fact which has been clear to all, but some of you would not admit it, that the project to create an independent state of Kosovo was a big mistake made by a part of the international community as well as that states cannot be created by unilateral decisions.

Mr. President,

Let me reiterate once again that the Republic of Serbia firmly believes that problems should be resolved through dialogue, hoping that conditions for this will be in place as soon as possible. Serbia's endeavour is that we build a joint future by pursuing a policy of peace and cooperation.