

Key excerpts from Pieter Feith's speech at the Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy, Medford MA – Monday 22 September 2008

“It is a distinct pleasure to return to my alma mater today to share with all of you the progress that we are making in Kosovo and the challenges that still confront us seven months after Kosovo declared its independence.

“Following the June 15 entry into force of the Kosovo Constitution and the adoption of legislation to support it, the UN is reconfiguring as Kosovo institutions take over UNMIK's governance functions. The government has, thus far, mostly complied with the obligations entrusted to it in the Constitution and the Comprehensive Status Proposal, important among these the rights of minority communities, protection of religious and cultural heritage and decentralization.

“The changing realities on the ground in Kosovo have recalibrated the matrix of the international presence.

“What is clear is that we have moved from a hierarchical organization to ‘network politics’ – the Kosovo Government in the lead, assisted by international partners with their individual mandates.

“My own strategic priorities for the ICO for the coming six months include decentralization, rule of law and security sector reform. These are neither exclusive nor static but give us a strategic vision for our own work and are also the fundamentals for building a stable, functional, modern Kosovo with equal rights for all.

“As an international presence, vested with different yet also complimentary areas of responsibility, we are determined to be a unified asset for Kosovo and for stability in the region as a whole. I intend to intensify coordination efforts with all my international partners so that we maintain cohesiveness, in support of the institutions and the people of Kosovo.

“Several challenges, both short and long term, remain to be addressed as we move forward in the upcoming period. One immediate challenge is effective outreach to the non-majority communities. Success here will enable them both to cooperate in building Kosovo institutions as well as to partake in the benefits these institutions have to offer to them.

“Other challenges remain as well, the Kosovo government needs guidance and support in organizing its fiscal affairs, in gaining the trust of the non-majority community, protecting religious and cultural heritage, and dealing with corruption and organized crime.

“Finally, in addition to the EU institutional support for Kosovo and its future, I must emphasize the transatlantic partnership between the EU and US. Without the consistent support of, and partnership with, the US from the very inception of planning for the EU's follow-on role in Kosovo until the present and for the road ahead, it would be impossible for us to accomplish the goals envisaged for Kosovo, and for the entire Western Balkans. In the ICO, we have received a dedicated team of professionals seconded by the State Department, as well as contracted

American staff, who are working in very close partnerships with their European colleagues in all departments.

“Our aim is to ensure that this new chapter in Kosovo’s history is a success and to ensure that the long saga of Yugoslavia breaking apart finally comes to an end with the constituent peoples looking to a future within the European Union.” Ends