

Second Meeting of the International Steering Group (ISG) for Kosovo

17 April 2008 - Vienna, Austria

1. On 17 April 2008, the International Steering Group (ISG) for Kosovo met in Vienna. International Civilian Representative (ICR) Pieter Feith chaired the meeting and provided an update on developments in Kosovo.
2. The ISG welcomes the great progress the Republic of Kosovo has made in its first two months as an independent state. Kosovo's independence has already been recognized by nearly 40 states, including nearly three quarters of the European Union and NATO and all but one of the G8 countries. Kosovo's leaders have shown maturity and resolve as they build the institutions of their new state. The ISG will do its utmost to ensure that this progress is sustained.
3. The ISG welcomes progress made to implement provisions of the Comprehensive Settlement Proposal (CSP). In particular, we note the Assembly of Kosovo's adoption of nineteen related laws, including priority legislation on the rights of communities, decentralization and the protection of cultural heritage. Kosovo's leaders should continue this work and ensure that adoption of laws leads to tangible improvements in the lives of all Kosovo's citizens.
4. The ISG welcomes the Assembly of Kosovo's approval of a new Constitution, which the ICR certified on 2 April as being in accordance with the CSP. This Constitution meets the highest standards of human rights and offers broad protection for all communities living in Kosovo, notably the Kosovo Serbs. The ISG notes that the Constitution will enter into effect on 15 June 2008.
5. The ISG deplores recent violence in Kosovo against international personnel which led to the tragic death of a UN policeman on 17 March. All parties should unambiguously condemn such violence and take active measures to prevent its repetition. Similarly, all parties should avoid provocative actions and statements.
6. The ISG supports the position taken by UNMIK that the holding of Serbian municipal elections on 11 May 2008 in Kosovo would represent a violation of UNMIK's exclusive competence under UN Security Council Resolution 1244.
7. The ISG reaffirms its support for multi-ethnicity in Kosovo and urges Kosovo's authorities to intensify their engagement with all of Kosovo's communities in order to create a state for all Kosovo's citizens. Institutional separation along ethnic lines will not lead to long-term stability or advance the interests of any of Kosovo's communities. All of Kosovo's communities should be encouraged to participate in democratic, multi-ethnic institutions of governance.
8. The ISG reiterates its full support to ICR Pieter Feith and his team in the International Civilian Office (ICO) as they prepare to assume their full responsibilities throughout the territory of Kosovo.