

Transcript of press point at the second International Steering Group meeting, Vienna

Thursday 17 April 2008

Pieter Feith: Let me just lead off with a few initial comments and then we can take some questions very briefly.

This was now the second meeting of the International Steering Group which I have the honour to chair. The group noted the great progress made by the Government of Kosovo since its Declaration of Independence. It has adopted a significant amount of laws related to the implementation of the Comprehensive Settlement Proposals. These laws have been passed by the Assembly. I would in particular note the adoption of the Constitution of Kosovo which will enter into force on the 15th of June.

Leaders of Kosovo have shown great maturity and resolve. The Group feels that they have handled the sensitive time that we have now passed with great foresight and concern for all Kosovo's citizens.

The ISG deplored any resort to violence and looks to all parties to take active measures to prevent violent incidents from reoccurring.

And finally the group discussed and agreed on the importance of multi ethnicity in Kosovo. Institutional separation along ethnic lines will not lead to long term stability or advance the interests of any of Kosovo's communities.

Question: Did the group discuss the date of the takeover of EULEX, and was there any discussion about new negotiations, Mr Rupel said that as far as cables are reliable there is a rumour in New York about Mr Guhenno taking up new negotiations?

PF: Well on the first point, the start of the EULEX mission was not on the agenda, this is a matter for the European Union and the United Nations to take further in consultation. On the dialogue with Belgrade, we discussed some of this and that is what I can inform you of at this point.

Question: how is the international community reacting to the Serbian attempt to have the elections in the northern part of Kosovo and how will you try to prevent that from happening?

PF: Well as you will see in the statement that will be circulated, the ISG has expressed its support to the position of UNMIK. UNMIK has declared that the holding of municipal elections on 11 May would be in violation of UNMIK's mandate, its exclusive mandate under resolution 1244.

Question: Will elections be held in Mitrovica or other places?

PF: Well if it concerns Parliamentary elections there is less of a concern because it is recognized by the Government of Kosovo that Serbs in Kosovo have dual nationality and should be entitled to participate in these elections.

Question: Regarding the extension of your office into the north of Kosovo you said you would like to wait for the Serbian elections on 11 May. What are your expectations if the so-called pro-European government would come into office in Belgrade?

PF: Well, it's not what I said, it had to do with EULEX and it is a matter for EULEX to pursue and it is the head of mission of EULEX who will take forward the modalities for deploying the mission in Kosovo and throughout the territory of Kosovo. I don't think you should be particularly hung up on the specific date of 11 May. The intention remains as it has been to deploy through out Kosovo, we see this as an important contribution to strengthening the rule of law and that will help us all move closer towards the European Union so the modalities of the deployment of the mission is more for the head of EULEX to answer on.

Question: Was there any discussion about the Netherlands' position on Serbia and the SAA?

PF: No. Thank you very much.