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Referendum Lacks Support of International Community

PRISTINA---SRSG Hans Haekkerup told the Kosovo Transitional Council (KTC) today that the idea of referendum does not have the support of the international community and goes beyond the provisional period of self-government.

Briefing the KTC about the work on the Legal Framework, Mr. Haekkerup said the referendum issue had come up at the meeting of the Contact Group last week in Paris, but it was opposed by the participants. It was also discussed during his visit to Tirana and the Albanian government also did not support it. He said the UN Security Council resolution 1244 does not mention a referendum. And while the Rambouillet accord speaks of the will of the people, it does not say how this is to be expressed.

A free wheeling discussion on this subject saw KTC members expressing their views on many issues, including some of the unresolved ones, such as the name of the document, the institution of president, the constitutional court and the referendum. There was general agreement among the Kosovo Albanian members and non-Serb minorities, cutting across party lines, on some of these issues.

Mr. Haekkerup reiterated that “we need an inclusive process that takes into account the legitimate interests of all communities”. He said the Serbs were back in the Joint Working Group on the Legal Framework although “we are still waiting for the response from the Serb expert”. SRSG once again clarified that the Legal Framework was a document on provisional institutions of self-government in Kosovo, which should not prejudice the final status. The issue of final status has to be negotiated by the future elected leaders of Kosovo with the international community.

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Mr. Haekkerup also briefed the KTC members about his meetings in Paris, Albania and Belgrade. He also told them about his meeting with presidents of municipalities yesterday.

Specifically on his discussions in Belgrade on the issue of the detained and the missing, he said the FRY President Vojislav Kostunica had informed him that the cases of the Gjakove group would be soon reviewed by the courts in Serbia. As for the missing, the DNA from the remains of the people in UNMIK's possession would be compared with the DNA samples of the relatives of the missing, he said.

He said even though Belgrade didn't say it in so many words, all discussions pointed to the fact that it favoured elections in Kosovo.

Answering a question about the continued detention of Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) officers after being released by a court, Mr. Haekkerup said he was worried that some KPC members had turned into terrorists, though "fortunately this was limited to a few members... It's a shame for the KPC to have such members".

Those detained were behind the Nis bus bomb attack, there was intelligence information against them, which he couldn't reveal, evidence was being collected, investigations were going on and the matter would be decided in a court of law, Mr. Haekkerup said.