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KTC Briefed About the Proposed Pensions Policies

PRISTINA – The Kosovo Transitional Council was today briefed about UNMIK's plans to pay pensions, starting in early 2002. It was also briefed about a consultation with the Bosniac and Gorani communities.

The director of the Kosovo Institute for Forensic Medicine, Dr. F. Blakaj, also appeared before the KTC to discuss the issue of Kosovar forensic pathologists visiting Serbia to take part in the exhumation of mass graves.

The heads of the Central Fiscal Authority, Tony Preston-Stanley, and Social Welfare, Sandra Hudd, made brief presentations on the pension plans, outlining the broad principles of UNMIK's policy. These are: to avoid recreating an old socialist pension system; to create a pension system that covers the whole population; to address the needs of all population groups and to seek a comprehensive solution addressing all ethnic groups.

Mr. Preston-Stanley explained that several groups will have to be considered for the pensions scheme---the elderly over 65 who contributed to the previous pension system; elderly over 65 who did not contribute to the previous pension system; previous recipients of disability and family/survivor pensions; older people nearing retirement and younger workers.

Several members raised the issue of assistance to the war invalids and their families. Sandra Hudd informed the members that her department had recently started accepting applications from war invalids for payment of social assistance. The applications will be accepted till the end of September, and depending on the number of applicants and money in the budget, a decision will be taken on the level of social assistance.

The members appreciated UNMIK's effort to start the pension scheme, though they pointed to the difficulties faced by pensioners who have not been paid in at least two years. Mr. Preston-Stanley told the members to write to him or Ms. Hudd with suggestions about the pension contribution and payment system.

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The director of the Forensic Institute, Dr. Blakaj, told members that he needed guidance on the proposed visit to Serbia to observe the exhumation process. DSRSG Tom Koenigs, acting Head of Mission, asked Dr. Blakaj to discuss the issue with the KTC Working Group on the Missing and the Detained, chaired by Ms. Sevdije Ahmeti. All members by and large supported the idea of Kosovo experts being present for the exhumation of bodies in Serbia, as many are believed to be from Kosovo.

UNMIK Community Affairs Officer Jean-Philippe Laberge, briefed the members about the second consultation with Bosnian and Gorani communities in June this year. He explained that many of the demands of these communities had been addressed, although UNMIK had not been able to deliver on all. For instance, the KPS procedure for minority applications had been changed. Minority community applications are now processed in the UNMIK Police headquarters in Pristina. The result was that while in October 2000, only 67 Bosniacs and 11 Goranis were part of the KPS, in June this year, the number had risen to 223 Bosniac and 22 Gorani KPS officers. Similarly in the municipal assemblies and municipal committees in Kosovo, the number of Bosniacs and Goranis has risen to 40.

But, Mr. Laberge said it has not been possible to start classes in Bosniac at the higher education level because of a lack of sufficient number of students.